

The Weed-Standish Collection

Special Collections
Benjamin F. Feinberg Library
Plattsburgh State University College
Plattsburgh, New York 12901

By

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Introduction

The **Weed-Standish Collection** is organized into four series:

Series One: Weed-Standish Family Correspondence

Series Two: Weed Business Affairs

Series Three: Weed Political Affairs

Series Four: Miscellaneous Materials

The material involved in this collection, (numbering some 3,820 individual pieces), can be split roughly into two halves in terms of content. The first half of the collection, (Series 1), deals with general correspondence to and/or from various members of the Standish family; Colonel Matthew Miles Standish, a lieutenant in the American forces that fought the British in 1814 in Plattsburgh, his wife Catherine Phoebe (Miller) Standish and their seven children. This part of the collection encompasses the period between 1812 and 1889, the bulk of materials pertaining to the 1850's and 1860's.

The last of Matthew and Catherine Standish's children, Caroline Leslie, (born 1836), Married Smith Mead Weed in 1859, thereby providing the link between the two families. Two genealogical charts have been drawn to show the relationships among the Standish and Weed families. These may be found at the end of this introduction.

Smith M. Weed's numerous business and political interests during the latter half of the nineteenth century included ties with various legal firms, (he was a lawyer), The Chateaugay Ore and Iron Company, local newspapers, The Delaware and Hudson Railroad Company (which constructed the line between Whitehall and Plattsburgh thus linking Albany with Montreal) and the State Democratic Party machine, (Weed was several times the democratic representative of Plattsburgh in the legislator between the years 1865 and 1874). His correspondences pertaining to the aforementioned affairs, constitute the bulk of the second half of the collection (series 2-4).

Thus, the two halves of the collection can be said to cover two different time periods. The first part documents to a great degree the lives of a middle to upper-middle class Plattsburgh family around the middle of the nineteenth century. The second half, that pertinent to Smith Weed, presents an interesting

portrait of the activities of a late nineteenth century ..Robber Baron" steadily adding to his wealth with a combination of shrewd business sense and contacts with influence won through political endeavors.

In accordance with the differing aspects of the two halves of the collection, they have been arranged somewhat differently from one another. The Standish correspondence is set out in chronological order, whereas the Weed correspondence is broken down within the series 2 to 4, separating various business affairs from political affairs.

Standish Family Genealogical Chart

Zachariah + Mary Standish (Scott)

Colonel Matthew Miles Standish

Born: August 18, 1794

Died: June 24, 1866

Married: September 2, 1818-----Catherine Phoebe Standish(Miller)

Born: August 6, 1800

Died: July 16, 1866

Children

- 1.) Mary Elizabeth, married: W.R. Bromley
- 2.) Margaret, married: A.C. Green
- 3.) Harriette (Hattie), married: Colonel Matthias O.Davidson
- 4.) John Miller
- 5.) George Henry
- 6.) Matthew Miles
- 7.) Caroline Leslie

■ Born: August 26, 1836

■ Died: January 24, 1886

Married: September 6, 1859 to S.M. Weed (see Weed family genealogy chart)

Weed Family Genealogy Chart

Smith + Hannah Mead.

Sarah A. Mead Born: 1812, Plattsburgh

Died: 1896, Plattsburgh

Married: 1831-----Roswell Alcott Weed

Born: 1797, W. Lebanon N.H.

Died: 1896, Plattsburgh

children

- 1.) Cornelia A., married: Thomas Benedict 1908
- 2.) Smith Mead

Born: July 26, 1833

Died: June 7, 1920

Married: September 6, 1859 to Caroline Leslie Standish

- 3.) William B

Died: 1880

- 4.) Mary E.

Married: Daniel A. Dickenson

- 5.) Sarah M.

Born: 1846 children

Died: 1914

Married: William Ketchum

- 6.) Hannah J.

Born: 1841

Died: 1856

- 1.) Roswell Alcott

Born: June 19, 1860

Died: June 4, 1899

- 2.) George Standish

Born: Feb. 13, 1862

Died: Jan. 18, 1920

- 3.) Margaret Celeste

Born: June 16, 1866

Died: Dec. 19, 1955

- 4.) Katherine Miller

Born: April 1, 1878

Died: Oct. 5, 1958

- 5.) Caroline

■ Born: Dec. 24, 1867

■ Died: Dec. 30, 1869

Weed-Standish Collection. Series Listing:

Series One: Standish-Weed Family Correspondence.

- A. Standish Family Correspondence 1812-1889
- B. Standish-Weed Family Correspondence
- C. Miscellaneous Standish Family Correspondence
- D. Undated Standish Family Correspondence
- E. Colonel Standish Letter Drafts 1855

Series Two: Smith M. Weed Business Affairs

- A. General Business Correspondence 1856-1893
- B. Railroad Correspondence 1869-1874
- C. Iron and Mining Correspondence 1872- 1889
- D. Miscellaneous Business Correspondence

Series Three: Smith M. Weed Political Correspondence

- A. Local 1866-1891
- B. State 1868-1894
- C. National/International 1884-1891
- D. Miscellaneous Political Correspondence

Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

- A. Plattsburgh Normal School
- B. State Prisons
- C. Personal Weed Correspondence
- D. Scraps and Unidentifiable Pieces
- E. Oversized Items
- F. Extra Oversized Items

Series One: Standish-Weed Family Correspondence

Series one is divided into five sections: Standish family correspondence 1812-1889, Standish-Weed family correspondence, Miscellaneous Standish family correspondence, undated Standish family correspondence, and Colonel Matthew Miles Standish letter drafts from 1855.

A great number of persons are represented in chronological order in section A. Three characters are most salient based on the number of letters to be found here: Catherine Phoebe Standish, her daughter Caroline Standish (Weed), and her other daughter Harriette Standish Davidson (also known as Hattie or Henriette). Section A, in fact, comprises the vast majority of series one, and forms a fascinating insight to the machinations of a North Country family. Catherine Phoebe Standish and her daughter Caroline were the recipients of a huge number of the letters in the section, often, as in the case of letters from "Hattie", as joint recipients. The correspondence written by "Hattie" is of pertinence to subject material further afield than Plattsburgh, and Clinton County. She married a Colonel Matthias Davidson of Plattsburgh, and together they traveled extensively throughout the United States. During the early 1860s a great many letters from Cuba, where they were at that time residing, were written.

Also present within section A are a great number of letters from other Standish Family members and a variety of other relatives and friends.

Section B. Weed-Standish family correspondence, encompasses a generally later time period, from about the late 1850's to the 1880's. A variety of correspondents are represented, including many members of the Standish family, writing to Smith and/or Carrie (Standish) Weed. The section centers however, upon the letters written between Smith Weed and Carrie, beginning actually with a number of letters written between the two before their marriage in 1859. Although many of the letters in this latter group are undated one can place them in some sort of chronological framework by their content. Smith Weed spent

much of the 1860's and 1870's in Albany, and it is during this period that many of these letters were written.

Sections C and D both are comprised of undated letters within the Standish family. Section C numbers only a very few items from various persons, whereas D centers upon Carrie and her sister Chattiest. a great number of letters written by the latter to the former.

Closing series one is section E. These are drafts of letters written by Colonel Matthew Miles Davidson in 1855. These number but 17 pieces.

Box 1: Series One: Standish-Weed Family Correspondence

A. Standish Family 1812-1889.

folder

1. 1812-1832 7
2. 1834 25
3. 1835-1839 15
4. 1842-1848 24
5. 1849: Jan.-June 20
6. 1849: July-September 21
7. 1849: Oct.-Dee. 24
8. 1850: Jan.-March 20
9. 1850: April-June 19
10. 1850: July-Dee. 21

TOTAL: 196

Box 2:

11. 1851: Jan.-April 19
12. 1851: May-August 18
13. 1851: September 19
14. 1851: October-November 25
15. 1851: December 20
16. 1852: Jar-Feb. 23
17. 1852: March-April 21
18. 1852: M 18. 1852: M
19. 1852: June-July 20
20. 1852: August-September 17
21. 1852: October-December 27
22. 1853: January-February 21
23. 1853: March-May 18
24. 1853: June-July 16
25. 1853: August-September 12
26. 1853: October 14
27. 1853: November-December 20

TOTAL: 325

Box 3:

28. 1854: January-June 21

29. 1854: July-December 14
 30. 1855: January-February 26
 31. 1855: March-April 23
 32. 1855: May-June 20
 33. 1855: July-August 24
 34. 1855: September-October 19
 35. 1855: November-December 12
 36. 1856: January-June 17
 37. 1856: July-December 25
 38. 1857: January-August 21
 39. 1857: September-December 16
 40. 1858: January-June 24
 41. 1858: July-December 19
- TOTAL: 281**

Box 4:

42. 1859: January-August 20
 43. 1859: September-December 9
 44. 1860: January-June 21
 45. 1860: July-December 19
 46. 1861 12
 47. 1862: January-August 18
 48. 1862: September-December 20
 49. 1863-1864 22
 50. 1865 20
 51. 1866 20
 52. 1867-1869 15
 53. 1871-1874 14
 54. 1881-1884 18
 55. 1886-1888 11
 56. 1889: January-March 26
 57. 1889: April-December 16
- TOTAL: 281**

Box 5: Series One:

B. Standish-Weed family correspondence

folder

58. letters to S.M. Weed 5
59. Undated: letters between S.M. and C.S. Weed 20
60. Undated: letters between S.M. and C.S. Weed 20
61. Undated: letters between S.M. and C.S. Weed 10

Box 5: Series One:

C. Miscellaneous Standish Family Correspondence

folder

62. Undated 21

63. Undated 8

Box 5: Series One:

D. Undated Standish Family Correspondence

folder

64. To C. Standish (Weed) 21

65. To C. Standish (Weed) 20

66. To C. Standish (Weed) 7

67. To C. Standish from Anne Mary Ketchum 20

68. To C. Standish from Anne Mary Ketchum 21

69. To C. Standish from Anne Mary Ketchum 25

70. To C. Standish from "Hattie" 20

71. To C. Standish from "Hattie" 23

72. To C. Standish from "Hattie" 12

73. Letters from "Hattie" to family members 21

74. Letters from "Hattie" to family members 18

75. Letters from "Hattie" to family members 20

76. Letters from "Hattie" to family members 22

77. Letters from "Hattie" to family members 22

78. Letters from "Hattie" to family members 19

79. Letters from "Hattie" to family members 18

Box 5: Series One

E. Colonel Standish Letter Drafts 1855

folder

80. 1855 17

TOTAL:410

Series Two: Smith Mead Weed, Business Affairs 1856-1893

Series two is divided into four sections: General Business Correspondence 1856-1893; Railroad Correspondence 1869-1874; Iron and Mining Correspondence 1872-1889; and

Miscellaneous Business Correspondence.

Section A (folders 81-107) is the largest section in Series Two. Within it may be found, in chronological order, an account of Smith Weeds many and varied dealings, ranging from legal matters to real-estate transactions, receipts and accounts. The year 1889, in particular, is extraordinarily well documented, providing the reader with an almost daily account of his activities.

Section B contains those letters pertinent to the establishment of the Whitehall-Plattsburgh railroad. Smith Weed was one of the primary actors in the venture and benefited himself quite substantially from its opening in 1875. There includes in this section many letters concerning the acquisition of land for the project and the obtaining of access and rights of way along its length. Because of the nature of this

venture many letters in this section could also perhaps be placed under the heading "Iron and Mining Correspondence" (Weed and others with an interest in the line hoped that the vastly improved access to markets, which would thereby be afforded, would bring huge profits to those involved in the iron and mining industry). Closing out Section B are, first, a series of letters from John Rogers, a local businessman and member of the U.S. Congress whose letters illuminate the use of political and financial muscle to 'clinch the deal", and second, letters from W. Shanley concerning the engineering and technical aspects of the project.

Section C consists of correspondence pertaining to Smith Weed's interests as president of the Chateaugay Ore and Iron Company. Most of the letters in this section are also dated 1889 and provide interesting insight into the workings of the concern.

Section D is a collection of five small series of letters from both individuals and companies. The section begins with letters pertinent to the Nicaragua canal company (1889 and 1891) of which Smith Weed was a director--- it was hoped by all those involved to cut a canal through the isthmus of Central America. Then there are the letters of the Williams Manufacturing Company (1883-1891), based in Montreal with a sewing-machine operation in Plattsburgh. Smith Weed was a vice-president of this company. Within a similar time period fall the letters of James P. Kimball. Next come the letters received from H.G. Burleigh, also written during the mid and late 1880'S. These cover a variety of topics from railroads to shipping on Lake Champlain. Lastly in Section D is the Pinkerton, Weed, Baber correspondence of 1888 and 1889 which revolves around legal and financial involvements with the Keeseville National Bank.

Box 6. Series Two: Smith M. Weed, Business Affairs 1856-1893

A. General Business Correspondence

folder

81. 1856-1870 15
82. 1871 19
83. 1872-1882 23
84. 1884 23
85. 1885-1887 10
86. 1888: Jan.-Aug. 13
87. 1888: September 25
88. 1888: Oct.-Dec. 12
89. 1889: January 1-7 21
90. 1889: January 9-16 21
91. 1889: January 17-28 21
92. 1889: January 29-31 19
93. 1889: February 1-11 21
94. 1889: February 12-18 20
95. 1889: February 20-28 15
96. 1889: March 1-8 20
97. 1889: March 9-23 21
98. 1889: March 24-31 17
99. 1889: April 14
100. 1889: May 1-July 11 21
101. 1889: July 12-31 27
102. 1889: August 17
103. 1889: September 20

- 104. 1889: October 12
- 105. 1889: November-December 25

Box 7:

- 106. 1891: January 34
- 107. 1891: August-December, 1893 and undated 22

TOTAL:528

Box 7: Series Two

B. Railroad Correspondence

- 108. 1869-1871 7
- 109. 1872 25
- 110. 1873-1874 23
- 111. 1872: Jan.-July, from John Rogers 23
- 112. 1872: Aug.-Dec. 20
- 113. 1874: From W. Shanley 11

Box 7: Series Two

C. Iron and Mining Correspondence

folder

- 114. 1872-1887 17
- 115. 1888 23
- 116. 1889: January 26
- 117. 1889: Feb.-April 20
- 118. 1889: May-Dec. 16

Box 7: Series Two

D. Miscellaneous Business Correspondence

- 119. 1889: Jan.-March Nicaragua Canal Co. 20
- 120. 1889: Apr.-Dec. and 1891 Nicaragua C.C. 20
- 121. 1883-1891: Williams Manufacturing Co. 22
- 122. 1883-1889: Letters from James P. Kimball 15
- 123. 1884-1887: Letters from H.G. Burleigh 7
- 124. 1889: Letters from H.G. Burleigh 28
- 125. 1888-1889: Pinkerton-Weed-Baber Correspo. 12

TOTAL:335

Series Three: Political Correspondence

The majority of material in series three falls within the decade of the 1880's. This series consists of four sections: Local Political Correspondence 1866-1891; State Political Correspondence 1868-1894; National/International Political Correspondence 1884-1891; and Miscellaneous Political Correspondence.

Section A consists of Correspondence pertinent to Plattsburgh and the North Country. There is contained here, interesting information to be found as to such matters as local elections and public sentiment in this region on a variety of matters.

Section B concerns politics on a statewide level during the 1870's, 1880's, and 1890's. Smith Weed served as a member of the Assembly in Albany in 1865, 1866, 1867, 1871, 1873, and 1874. In 1887 he was also nominated to run as Democratic Senator. Many of the letters here then pertain to his activities in this capacity.

Section C of this series, National/International Political Correspondence, consists of material written in connection with Weeds ties to the national Democratic Party. He was a personal friend of Samuel Tilden, Governor of New York, and on several occasions was known to have met or correspond with Senators, Cabinet members and even Presidents (at least two Presidents visited Weed at his residence in Plattsburgh).

In 1884 Weed participated in the National Democratic Convention leading up to the election; thus, many letters have relevance to this year. There are also many letters to be found written during the next election year of 1888.

Section D of Political Correspondence is labeled "Miscellaneous." This group of letters is comprised of 24 items from a B.B. Smalley of Vermont, written between 1884 and 1889, some are also undated. Their subject matter is of pertinence to those interested in North Country and/or northern New England politics of the period.

Box 8 Series Three: Political Correspondence

A. Local

folder

- 126. 1866-1881 16
- 127. 1884-1888 17
- 128. 1889-1891 12

Box 8 Series Three: Political Correspondence

B. State

- 129. 1868-1872 21
- 130. 1873-1886 21
- 131. 1887-1888 15
- 132. 1889: Jan.-Sept. 21
- 133. 1889: Oct.-Dec. 12
- 134. 1891-1894 23

Box 8 Series Three: Political Correspondence

C. National/International

- 135. 1884: Jan.-June 20
- 136. 1884: July-December and 1885 17
- 137. 1888 30

138. 1889: Jan.-March 24
139. 1889: July-Dec. and 1891 11

Box 8 Series Three: Political Correspondence

D. Miscellaneous

140. 1884-1889 and undated, from B.B. Smalley 24

Total: 284

Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

Series four consists of seven sections; Plattsburgh Normal School; Prisons; Personal Weed Correspondence; Scraps and Unidentified; Theft Value; Oversize Items; and Extra Oversize Items.

Once again many of the pieces in this section are dated during the late 1880's. Section A concerns the establishment of a State Normal School in Plattsburgh and the considerable role played by the Weed family. Section B contains items pertaining to Weed's influence within the State prison system, particularly in connection to the facility at Dannemora. Section C, entitled Personal Weed Correspondence, is made up of letters received by Smith Weed from numerous individuals requesting, among other things, employment, money, and the release from jail of relatives.

Section D is comprised of items which can be called scraps and are unidentifiable. Section E contains eight items which may be considered as being of theft value. All the materials to be found here are facsimiles of the originals.

Sections E and F contain oversize and extra-oversize items respectively. The two pieces within Section E are life-insurance policies on George H. Standish (brother of Carrie Standish) dated 1853. There are likewise two pieces to be found in section F. both are maps depicting land owned by Weed in the area of Plattsburgh enclosed by Pine and White streets.

Box 9 Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

A. Plattsburgh Normal School

folder

141. 1888-1889 12

Box 9 Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

B. Prisons

142. 1869-1888 12
143. 1889: Jan.-Feb. 11
144. 1889: March-December 19

Box 9 Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

C. Personal Weed Correspondence

145. 1873-1888 23
146. 1889: Jan.-Feb. 21

147. 1889: March-Dec. 19
148. 1891 and undated 10

Box 9 Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

D. Scraps and Unidentified

folder

149. 24 26

Box 9 Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

E. Theft Value 151. 8

Box 9 Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

F. Oversize Items

1853: Life Insurance Policy on G. Standish 2

Box 9 Series Four: Miscellaneous Correspondence

G. Extra-oversize items

153. Maps of land owned by S.M. Weed 2

TOTAL:189

Additional materials were received in the Summer, 1993. Preliminarily arranged as below by Patrick Harrington (pieces are not chronologically arranged within folders):

Folder 1 Standish Family. Correspondence.

Folder 2 Weed Family. Personal correspondence.

Folder 3 Weed, Smith M. Business correspondence.

Folder 4 Weed, Smith M. Personal correspondence to his wife, Caroline S. Weed.

Folder 5 Weed, Smith M. Personal correspondence.

Folder 6 Weed, Smith M. Autobiographical and biographical materials.

Folder 7 Miscellaneous.