

Guide to the Lewis Weld Family Papers

MS 559



compiled by Marguerite S. Witkop

October 1978

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	4
Immediate Source of Acquisition	4
Conditions Governing Access	4
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Biographical / Historical	4
Scope and Contents	6
Collection Contents	7
Inventory, 1781-1877	7
Selected Search Terms	8

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
Yale University Library
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CALL NUMBER: MS 559

CREATOR: Weld, Lewis, 1796-1853

TITLE: Lewis Weld family papers

DATES: 1781-1877

BULK DATES: 1853-1864

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.25 linear feet (2 boxes, 1 folio)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain correspondence, Civil War memorabilia, diaries, and photographs of Mason Cogswell Weld, Lewis Ledyard Weld, and Charles T. Weld, sons of Lewis Weld (1796-1853). The collection has letters written from Leipzig, Germany by Mason Weld, 1853-1855; and several letters from Lewis L. Weld describing his life and activities in Colorado, 1860-1863. The bulk of the correspondence, however, dates from the Civil War, in which all three brothers served.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0559>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0559>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mrs. Edward W. Root in 1936.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Lewis Weld Family Papers (MS 559). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

MASON COGSWELL WELD, 1829-1887

Mason Cogswell Weld was born at Philadelphia, Pa., on February 18, 1829, the eldest child of Lewis and Mary A. (Cogswell) Weld. His father, a graduate of Yale in 1818, was then principal of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, but removed to Hartford in 1830 for a similar engagement at the American Asylum.

From 1848 to 1853 he was a student under Professor Silliman, and during most of that time served as his assistant in chemistry; the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy was first granted in this department in 1852, but was not conferred upon Mr. Weld until 1858, when he was enrolled with the earliest graduating class. He also studied chemistry in Germany, under Professors Liebig and Bunsen. In August, 1862, he enlisted as captain in the 25th Connecticut Regiment, and before the expiration of his twelve-months' service was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. After this he devoted himself to scientific agriculture, turning his attention especially to dairy-farming. He became an authority on cattle-breeding, and contributed for many years to the editorial columns of several of the leading agricultural journals of the country. In his later years he was particularly interested in the introduction of the Guernsey breed of cattle, and for the last year and a half was editor and publisher of a paper devoted to this special interest. He died at his residence near Closter, N. J., September 25, 1887, in his fifty-ninth year.

He married, April 16, 1866, Miss Martha M. Coles, but left no issue.

(Taken from a biographical sketch of the members of the Yale Class of 1852)

* * * * *

LEWIS LEDYARD WELD, 1833-1865

Lewis Ledyard Weld, son of Lewis (Y. C., 1818) and Mary A. (Cogswell) Weld, was born in Hartford, Conn., May, 13, 1833. He fitted for college at the Grammar School in his native place, and entered our class at the beginning of its course.

After graduating, he was employed from Oct., 1854 to June, 1855, as a private tutor in Burlington, N. J. From July to Dec., 1855, he taught in Cleveland, O., and studied law in the office of Hon. Hiram Griswold. From Jan., 1856, to the summer of 1858, he was a law student in New York city, and for a portion of the time clerk in the New York county surrogate's office. Having been admitted to the bar, he removed in the summer of 1858 to Kansas, and opened a law office in Leavenworth, where in Dec., 1858, he became a member of the law firm of Pendery, Bailey & Weld.

In the spring of 1860, his health having suffered severely from the climate and the active life he had led as an uncompromising advocate of freedom, during the struggle to make Kansas a free state, he crossed the plains to the Pike's Peak gold region in the Rocky mountains. His health being restored by the change, and the prospects of that growing region being brilliant, he entered in a law partnership with Judge G. W. Perkins, and practiced there until the erection of that country into the territory of Colorado.

Upon Mr. Lincoln's accession to the presidency, he was appointed by him secretary of Colorado, and from December 1861, to April, 1862, when he resigned, was acting governor of the territory. During this time he was able, with the cooperation of staunch and true men, to save the territory to the Union, and to establish a loyal sentiment therein, overcoming by his energy the machinations of the large number of secessionists then in that community.

All the time he was in Kansas and Colorado, he was a frequent contributor to the press, and for a considerable time, after he resigned the secretaryship, was editor of the *Denver Common-wealth*. It was thus, through the press, as well as in frequent public speeches, that he was able to do much to form a correct public sentiment, and to unite, by their love for the Union, men, who otherwise might have been separated by their adherence to old party prejudices. He remained in the territory until early in 1863, when he returned to the east with the purpose of entering the army.

Choosing the hardest and most dangerous branch of the service, he at once applied for a position in the organization of the U. S. colored troops, and having passed the examining board of Gen. Casey, in Washington, was offered and accepted a captaincy in the 7th Regiment U. S. Colored Troops. The fall and winter of 1863 were passed in recruiting in Maryland, for that and other regiments, and in fitting the troops enlisted for the field. When in Feb., 1864, the brigade was ordered to the Department of the South, Captain Weld was placed on the staff of Brig. Gen. William Birney, commanding the district of Florida, as provost marshal general of the district, and was present in each of the advances and skirmishes with the enemy which took place during the spring and summer.

In Aug., 1864, the brigade was ordered to the Army of the James and attached to the 10th Army Corps. Immediately on their arrival in Virginia, Captain Weld rejoined his regiment, and with it participated in the two battles of Deep Bottom and Russel's Mills. Recrossing the James, the 10th Corps was ordered to the front of Petersburg, to do duty in the trenches. On Sept. 1, 1864, Captain Weld was again appointed on Gen. Birney's staff as acting Ass't Inspector General of the 3d division. In Oct., he received the appointment of major of the 41st Colored Infantry, and forthwith took command of the battalion then near Philadelphia, and soon after reported to Gen. Butler, with six companies. The regiment was placed in the 25th Army Corps, when that corps was formed, and in Dec., Major Weld was given the Lieut. Colonelcy.

Towards the close of the month, exposure on the picket line and in the trenches, had so increased a cold which had for some time troubled our classmate, that he was obliged to submit to medical treatment. On the 6th of Jan., he was removed by ambulance and boat to the hospital at Point of Rocks, on the Appomatox. Here he received the care and attention of several excellent surgeons, but their skill could not save him. After four days of acute suffering, he died on the morning of the 10th Jan., 1865, with a full realization of his condition and a peaceful trust in his Savior, having been attended, during his last hours, by his only surviving brother, Mason C. Weld, of the 25th Ct. Vols. Lewis retained to the last his sprightly humor and wit; yet his whole character was more serious, and his religious feelings more decided during the last few months of his career.

Any sketch of his life would be imperfect without an allusion to an event which produced a great and lasting effect upon his mind and character. While stationed in Florida, he made the acquaintance of an accomplished young lady, from New England, possessed of unusual charms of person and character. This acquaintance soon ripened into affection, and they became engaged to be married. A short time afterward

his affianced left Florida with her parents and sister, to return home; but during a short stay at Beaufort, S. C., she was attacked with the malarial fever and died before word could reach him. Those who knew the ardor of his nature, will readily understand that such an experience of sorrow, must have left its impression upon the whole man.

Lewis's body was embalmed and taken to Hartford, Ct., where it was deposited by the side of his brother Charles, who was an officer in the 17th U. S. Infantry, who died in 1863, of wounds received at the battle of Chancellorsville. On the graves of the two brothers, several of the friends of their earlier days have erected a most beautiful and appropriate monument. Perchance few of us may ever be able to visit it, yet no "Storied Urn" is necessary to keep fresh in our hearts the memory of one we loved.

(Taken from a biographical sketch of members of the Yale Class of 1854)

Scope and Contents

This collection contains correspondence, Civil War memorabilia, diaries, and photographs of Mason Cogswell Weld (Y. 1852), Lewis Ledyard Weld (Y. 1854), and Charles T. Weld, the sons of Lewis Weld (Y. 1818) and Mary A[ustin?] Cogswell Weld.

The correspondence covers the period 1831 to 1877. There are several letters from Mason to his mother from Leipzig, Germany, 1853-1855, where he was studying chemistry under Professors Liebig and Bunsen.

Lewis L. Weld taught for a short time after graduation and then studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1858. He went to Leavenworth, Kansas, and opened a law office. In 1860 he went by wagon train with the Ford Mining Company to Denver, Colorado and there is a diary of this trip. His letters contain lively and descriptive accounts of gold mining and Western trials. He was appointed Secretary of Colorado and was acting Governor of the territory from December, 1861 to April, 1862.

The bulk of the correspondence is from 1861 to 1864. In 1861 Charles Weld joined the 17th U.S. Infantry and in 1862 Mason joined the 25th Connecticut regiment. Mason's letters often have diagrams of installations and battles drawn with scientific precision. Charles died of wounds which he sustained in the Battle of Chancellorsville in May, 1863. Lewis had returned from the West and was with his brother during his last few days and wrote an account of his death.

Mason retired from the army so that Lewis could join. (One son could be out of the army to aid their widowed mother and sisters.) Lewis joined as Captain in the 7th regiment of Colored Troops under General Birney in Florida. In August, 1864 he was attached to the 10th Army Corps, Army of the James, and then rejoined his regiment and was in two battles, Deep Bottom and Russell's Mills. In October he was appointed Major in the 41st Colored Infantry. In December he became a Colonel. He died January 10, 1865 from an intense cold which had been worsened by trench duty. Mason was able to be with Lewis and there is a long account of his death.

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1781-1877

Correspondence

b. 1, f. 1-17	1831, 1847, 1850, undated, 1853-1863 Nov, 1864 January-September A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1831, 1847, 1850, undated, 1853-1863 Nov, 1864 January-September
b. 1, f. 17a	1865 January-March	1865 January-March
b. 1, f. 18	1870, 1877	1870, 1877
b. 2, f. 19	Speech to the Rocky Mountain Club, Newark, New Jersey	1856 October
b. 2, f. 20	Diary of a wagon trip from Leavenworth, Kansas to Denver, Colorado	1860 April-May
b. 2, f. 21	"Position of the Companies of the 17th Infantry on the 1st of May, 1863" English	1863 May 1
b. 2, f. 22	Diary of the death of Charles Weld by his brother, Lewis Ledyard Weld	1863 May
b. 2, f. 23	Description of the death of Lewis Ledyard Weld by his brother Mason C. Weld	Circa 1865 January
b. 2, f. 24	Family history	Undated
b. 2, f. 25	Photographs	Circa 1860s
b. 2, f. 26	Clippings	1887, undated
b. 2, f. 27	Part of a Yale diploma	1781
b. 2, f. 27	Part of a medical society certificate	1819
b. 2, f. 28	Printed Civil War forms	Circa 1862-1865
Oversize		
b. 3	8 items of memorabilia	

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African Americans
Families
Law
Students

Geographic Names

Colorado -- Description and travel
Colorado -- History -- To 1876
Europe
Germany
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
-- African American troops
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
-- Campaigns and battles
West (U.S.)

Genres / Formats

Diaries

Occupations

Soldiers

Names

Weld, Charles T.
Weld, Lewis, 1796-1853
Weld, Lewis Ledyard, 1833-1865
Weld, Mason Cogswell, 1829-1887

Families

Weld family

Corporate Body

Yale University -- Students