

# Guide to the Charles W. Stearns Papers

MS 1176



compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

August 1983

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1176

**CREATOR:** Stearns, Charles W. (Charles Woodward), 1818-1887

**TITLE:** Charles Woodward Stearns papers

**DATES:** 1840-1888

**BULK DATES:** 1870-1888

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.5 linear feet

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Correspondence, writings and legal and financial papers relating to Charles W. Stearns' family and his alumni activities on behalf of the Yale University class of 1837.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1176>

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## 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.1176>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](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

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mrs. Emlen T. Littell, 1941 and 1950.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

Charles Woodward Stearns Papers. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Charles Woodward Stearns, elder son of the Hon. Charles Stearns, of Springfield, Mass., was born in that city, September 24, 1817. His mother, Julia Ann Woodward, was a grand-daughter of the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Trumbull (Yale 1759), of North Haven, Conn.

He received his B.A. from Yale College in 1837. After graduation he studied for two years in the Medical School of Harvard College, but took his degree of M.D. at the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1840. He began practice in Springfield, but soon became a surgeon in the United States Army, and served in Florida and in New York Harbor in 1841-42. He then spent two years in Europe, and after his return resided mainly in Springfield and New York City, engaged in literary occupations in the exercise of his remarkable inventive genius, as well as in the practice of his profession. On the outbreak of the late Civil War he enlisted as a surgeon of the Third New York Infantry, and remained with that regiment until it was mustered out in May, 1863. After this he relinquished the practice of medicine.

While spending some months in Williamstown, Mass., in 1884, he was stricken with paralysis, and remained an invalid for the rest of his life. He died in Longmeadow, Mass., September 8, 1887, at the age of 70.

Dr. Stearns married, June 23, 1853, Elizabeth Wolcott, of Springfield. After her death he married, July 2, 1862, Mary E., daughter of W. C. Shaw, of Baltimore, Md., who died in New York City, May 30, 1877. He next married, April 23, 1879, Miss Amanda Aikin, daughter of Judge Albro Aikin, of Dutchess County, N. Y., who survives him. He left no children.

Among other writings of his which have been published may be mentioned, Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge (1865, 8vo, pp. 78), The Shakespeare Treasury of Wisdom and Knowledge (1869, 12mo, pp. 436), and A Concordance and Classified Index to the Constitution of the United States (1872, 8vo, pp. 153).

(Taken from *Yale Obituary Record*, 1880-1890, pp. 436-437).

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## Scope and Contents

These papers of Charles Woodward Stearns consist of correspondence, writings, and legal and financial papers. Some professional and family letters are included, as are a few letters concerning alumni activities of the Yale College class of 1837. The majority of the letters, however, deal with Stearns' finances and the settlement of family estates; the bulk are written by Stearns' nephew, William Checkley Shaw, and his business associates. The legal and financial papers also pertain to Stearns' personal finances and those

of his heirs; included are accounts, receipts, estate inventories, and letters patent issued to Stearns for improvements in flower-pot brackets.

Other papers in this collection are the manuscript of "Shakespeare's Commentaries," used by Stearn in a number of his writings, and his M.D. diploma from the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania.

These papers were donated to Yale University by Mrs. Emlen T. Littell in 1941. Papers of the Woodward family, to which Stearns was related may be found in the Benjamin Trumbull Papers, Ms. Gr. No. 505.

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## Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1 - 6	Correspondence	1875-1888, undated
b. 1, f. 7 - 10	Legal and financial papers	1858, 1870-1888
b. 1, f. 11 - 12	"Shakespeare's Commentaries" English	undated
b. 1, f. 13	Diploma	1840 April 3

## **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**

Families -- Correspondence

### **Names**

Stearns, Charles W. (Charles Woodward),  
1818-1887

### **Corporate Body**

Yale University -- Alumni and alumnae