

# Guide to the Chauncey Family Papers

MS 135



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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 135

**CREATOR:** Chauncey family

**TITLE:** Chauncey family papers

**DATES:** 1675-1928

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 8 linear feet (19 boxes, 1 folio)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers consist of correspondence, account books, financial records, diaries, journals, and other papers relating to the personal lives and professional careers of the Chauncey family of Connecticut. Material relating to the American Revolution and the colonial period includes the correspondence, legal papers, and financial records of Charles Chauncey (1747-1823). The legal papers of Charles Chauncey (1777-1849) document his work in Philadelphia. The European travel diaries for Nathaniel Chauncey (1824-1826) and Durham, Connecticut town records relating to Worthington Gallup Chauncey's municipal duties are also included in the papers.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0135>

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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.0135>.

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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. S. L. Pierpont, 1954-1955; Henry L. Savage, 1960-1964; and purchases, 1944-1946; 1955-1956.

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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

Chauncey Family Papers (MS 135). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Charles Chauncey was born in Durham, Connecticut, on June 11, 1747. He graduated from Yale College (A.M., 1779) and Middlebury College (LL.D., 1811). He practiced law in New Haven, Connecticut, became state's attorney in 1776, served as judge of the superior court from 1789-1793, and founded the first agricultural society in Connecticut. He died in New Haven on April 28, 1823.

Charles Chauncey was born on August 17, 1777, in New Haven, Connecticut. He graduated from Yale College in 1792 and received the degree of LL.D. in 1827. He practiced law in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania until his death in Burlington, New Jersey on August 30, 1849.

Elihu Chauncey (1779-1847), the second son of Charles Chauncey (1747-1823), graduated from Yale in 1796. His younger years he spent in politics, his later in finance. He was Director of the Bank of Pennsylvania. He worked on the City Councils of Philadelphia.

Nathaniel Chauncey (1789-1865) attended Yale (Class of 1806). He moved to Philadelphia to practice law, but returned to New Haven. Nathaniel traveled about in Europe (diaries) from 1823 to 1828. In 1836 he married Elizabeth Salisbury.

Worthington Gallup Chauncey (1772-1858), was a school-teacher and later served as town clerk, constable, school treasurer, and justice of the peace for the town of Durham and in the Connecticut General Assembly in 1811, 1814, 1816, and 1817.

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## Scope and Contents

The Chauncey Family papers consist of letters, legal papers, accounts, account books, diaries, Connecticut Court records, records of the town of Durham, Connecticut, and other miscellaneous materials. The greater part of the manuscripts are those of Charles Chauncey (1747-1823), his sons: Charles (1777-1849);

Elihu (1779-1847); Nathaniel (1789-1865), and Worthington Gallup Chauncey (1772-1858). All were Connecticut residents or Yale graduates.

Charles Chauncey (circa 1592-1671), the progenitor of the Chauncey family in America, was the second President of Harvard (1654-1671). This collection contains correspondence of his children and their descendants, with some references to the English branch of the family in relation to legal matters in America.

The first two generations of the Chauncey family devoted themselves to the ministry. The Reverend Charles Chauncey (1705-1787), D.D., of Boston, was the leader of the religious liberals who opposed the revivalism of Jonathan Edwards on the grounds that emotions were a poor guide to religion. He was also involved in the Controversy over Episcopacy. He was the son of Charles Chauncey (d. 1711), Boston merchant, the youngest son of Isaac Chauncey (1632-1712) and Sarah Walley. Sarah Chauncey was the daughter of Judge Walley and the sister-in-law of Joseph Sewall. Charles (1705-1787) married first Elizabeth Hirst, the niece of Joseph Sewall. He entered Harvard, age twelve in 1714 and succeeded President Wadsworth as pastor of the First Church in Boston, a post which he held from 1727-1778. There are several of his letters in the collection.

Reverend Nathaniel Chauncey (1681-1756) of Durham was the son of the Reverend Nathaniel Chauncey of Hatfield (ca. 1639-1692), and the grandson of Harvard's President. As his father had died when Nathaniel was very young, he was left with his uncle, the Reverend Israel Chauncey of Stratford (1644-1703, Harvard 1661). Israel Chauncey was one of the founders of Yale College; his nephew was the first to receive a degree from that institution. He studied theology with the Reverend Brewer of Springfield, who married his sister Katharine. He became a preacher in Durham; his theological sentiments lay with the Old Lights. He married Sarah Judson. The papers of their descendants form the major part of the Chauncey Family Collection.

Elnathan Chauncey (1724-1796) was his youngest son. He took his degree from Yale in 1743 and became a student of theology. He married Elizabeth (Worthington) Gale and had four children. To care for his father he settled in Durham and relinquished preaching.

Nathaniel William Chauncey (1761-1840) was Elnathan's first child. In the revolution he fought under his uncle, Colonel John Ely. He was a representative from Durham in the State Legislature (1804).

His brother, Worthington Gallup Chauncey (1772-1858), was a school-teacher in his younger years; he instructed the family of Major Van Rensselaer. On his return to Durham he took up residence with his brother, Nathaniel William, on a farm which they jointly administered. Both were concerned with agricultural improvements. W.G. Chauncey served as town clerk, constable, school treasurer, and justice of the peace for the town of Durham and in the Connecticut General Assembly in 1811, 1814, 1816, and 1817.

The eldest son of Nathaniel Chauncey (1681-1756) of Durham was Elihu (1710-1791) who wed Mary, the daughter of Samuel Griswold. He served in the State Legislature and acted as Chief Justice of the County Court.

His son, Charles Chauncey (1747-1823), LL.D (honorary Yale 1777), of New Haven, was a man of great eminence in Connecticut. He studied law under James Abraham Hillhouse and was admitted to the Bar in 1768. He served as court judge in Colony Courts and was appointed Attorney for the State in 1776. In 1789 he took a place on the bench of the Superior Court (boxes 11-12). He retired in 1793. In private practice he acted as lawyer for many important New Haven figures such as Benedict Arnold. During the Revolutionary period he had legal connections with American Loyalists: Amos Botsford, Joshua Chandler, William Jackson, Richard Mansfield, et al. Many papers on these men and others will be found in the period from 1776 to 1786. Mr. Chauncey was also associated with the New Haven Custom House (there is a little material dealing with this topic.)

After his retirement in 1793 he took a number of law students into his office, including Benjamin Silliman. This pupil made fast friends with his instructor's children, Charles and Elihu, the latter being a classmate at Yale.

Mr. Chauncey married Abigail Darling of New Haven. Their daughter, Sarah, (1780-1856), married William Walton Woolsey; their three sons all removed to Philadelphia where they rose to the head of the Bar.

Charles (1777-1849), the eldest, attended Yale College. He had been admitted by examination when ten years old but was held back by his father, so that he graduated in 1792 at age fifteen, one of the youngest ever to receive a degree from Yale. He studied law under his father and although he passed the Bar examination in 1795, he had to wait until he reached legal age in 1798. In Philadelphia he became one of the foremost of American lawyers. He had desired to study under Mr. Edward Tilghman, but he took no students. But Mr. Chauncey had the company of Mr. Tilghman, and other most distinguished men: Mr. Rawle, Mr. Ingersoll, Mr. Binny, etc. His home was a resort of a select group of gentlemen. The Connecticut members of Congress often gathered at his home on Walnut Street, such men as John Sargent, George Vaux, Robert Hare and Enos Bronson. The last was an editor of the "United States Gazette", as was Elihu Chauncey. All the Chaunceys were staunch Federalists.

Elihu (1779-1847), the second son of Charles Chauncey (1747-1823), graduated from Yale in 1796. His younger years he spent in politics, his later in finance. He was Director of the Bank of Pennsylvania. He worked on the City Councils of Philadelphia, often involved in negotiating loans.

The youngest child of Charles (1747-1823) was Nathaniel (1789-1865). He, too, attended Yale (Class of 1806). He moved to Philadelphia to practice law, but returned to New Haven to care for his aging father. After his father's death Nathaniel traveled about in Europe (diaries) from 1823 to 1828. In 1836 he married Elizabeth Salisbury (previous engaged to Henry Edwin Dwight, who died in 1832). His brothers married also, Elihu to Henrietta Teackle, Charles to Hannah, the daughter of Colonel John Chaster of Wethersfield.

The papers of these three brothers hold a major place in this collection. There are account books relating to Charles' legal profession (Philip Physick Estate, William Rolston Estate, etc.) but most information about his business is to be found in his correspondence, along with his private affairs. There are both diaries and copious correspondence to describe Nathaniel Chauncey. There are not many letters written by Elihu, but the letters amongst one another give additional information about each.

Charles Chauncey (1809-1831), the son of Charles (1777-1849) and Hannah Chauncey of Philadelphia, attended Yale, graduating Class of 1828, but died three years later at the age of twenty-two. His autograph album from Yale is contained in the Yale Publications Collection.

The correspondence of the children of Nathaniel Chauncey (1789-1865) and Elizabeth Sewall Salisbury brings the collection up to its latest date, 1916, when both Charles (1838-1916) and Elihu (1840-1916) died. There are a few letters from Charles, mainly to his brother. The papers of Elihu consist mainly of account books and records of real estate and some correspondence with Theodore Salisbury Woolsey.

There are but two letters relating to Commodore Isaac Chauncey (1772-1840) who joined with Edward Preble, Commander of the flagship Constitution, in the war on Tripoli, 1802-1805. He was given the command of the forces on Lakes Ontario and Erie in the War of 1812. When he was to reduce the fortifications and capture and destroy the enemy fleet commanded by Sir James Lucas Yeo.

Contained in the collection are several folders of material on the Estates of Charles Chauncey (1747-1823), Charles (1777-1849), and Elihu (1749-1847). There is also a series of appointments by various Connecticut governors to Elihu Chauncey (1710-1791).

Related to the history of Milford, Connecticut is material on the "One Bit Purchase", in which William Fowler, (related by marriage) had a part.

Joshua, Sachem, son of Uncas, willed a large tract of land to a group of Connecticut gentlemen. His will and patents are in the Chauncey Collection.

In a folio (box 20) are contained mainly indentures (deeds).

Letters and materials about the Chaunceys may be found in many other collections in Manuscripts and Archives, much of which will illuminate the Chauncey's connections with other Connecticut families. See card catalog for dates of letters of others to Nathaniel Chauncey and others.

Further information on the Chaunceys may be found in the Dictionary of American Biography, W. C. Fowler, Memorials of the Chaunceys, Salisbury, Family Memorials, Dexter, Yale Biographies and Annals, Burke's

Landed Gentry, supplement on American families, Scharf and Wescott, History of Philadelphia, New England Historical and Geneological Register, Fisher, Life of Benjamin Silliman.

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Kirtland, Dr. Jared Potter (1793-1877), medical account book kept in Durham, Connecticut  
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Chauncey and Fowler family genealogy publications and notes  
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Real estate book for the Philadelphia and New Jersey area  
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Physick, Philip Syng (1768-1837), estate account book  
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Notebook, largely concerning preaching, of an unidentified family member  
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The Comprehensive Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments ..., 3rd edition, corrected (Hartford:  
Judd, Loomis & Co.)  
b. 19, f. 151

Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments ... (New York: American Bible Society), given by her  
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Oversize indentures and other legal documents, military and diplomatic appointment papers,  
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## 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

Business  
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### Geographic Names

Connecticut  
Europe -- Description and travel  
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