Guide to the Chauncey Family Papers

MS 135



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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	
Immediate Source of Acquisition	4
Conditions Governing Access	4
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Biographical / Historical	4
Scope and Contents	4
Collection Contents	8
Correspondence, legal documents, and financial accounts, 1675-1928	8
Chauncey, Charles (1747-1823), 1747-1857	11
Chauncey, Charles (1777-1849), undated, 1849-1857	. 12
Chauncey, Elihu (1840-1916), 1863-1916	. 13
Chauncey, Nathaniel (1789-1865), 1681-1865	. 19
Durham, Connecticut, court records, 1765-1834	. 20
Legal papers, 1741-1848	22
Correspondence index	. 36
Selected Search Terms	47

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives

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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.

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

b. box

f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

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

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

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

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.

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.

Collection Contents

Correspondence, legal documents, and financial accounts, 1675-1928

b. 1, f. 1	1675–1699	1675–1699
b. 1, f. 2	1700-1719	1700-1719
b. 1, f. 3	1720-1729	1720-1729
b. 1, f. 4	1730-1739	1730-1739
b. 1, f. 5	1740-1754	1740-1754
b. 1, f. 6	1755–1763	1755-1763
b. 1, f. 7	1764–1769	1764–1769
b. 1, f. 8	1770-1773	1770-1773
b. 1, f. 9	1774–1775	1774-1775
b. 1, f. 10	1776–1777	1776-1777
b. 1, f. 11	1779	1779
b. 1, f. 12	1780	1780
b. 2, f. 13	1781–1783	1781–1783
b. 2, f. 14	1784	1784
b. 2, f. 15	1785	1785
b. 2, f. 16	1786–1788	1786-1788
b. 2, f. 17	1789	1789
b. 2, f. 18	1790-1793	1790-1793
b. 2, f. 19	1794	1794
b. 2, f. 20	1795–1797	1795–1797
b. 2, f. 21	1798-1804	1798-1804
b. 2, f. 22	1805–1809	1805–1809
b. 2, f. 23	1810–1812	1810-1812
b. 3, f. 24	1813	1813
b. 3, f. 25	1814	1814
b. 3, f. 26	1815	1815
b. 3, f. 27	1816–1817	1816-1817
b. 3, f. 28	1818	1818

b. 3, f. 29	1819	1819
b. 3, f. 30	1820	1820
b. 3, f. 31	1821	1821
b. 3, f. 32	1822	1822
b. 3, f. 33	1823 Jan-Jun	1823 Jan-Jun
b. 3, f. 34	1823 Jul-Dec	1823 Jul-Dec
b. 3, f. 35	1824 Jan-Apr	1824 Jan-Apr
b. 3, f. 36	1824 May-Dec	1824 May-Dec
b. 4, f. 37	1825 Jan-May	1825 Jan-May
b. 4, f. 38	1825 Jun-Dec	1825 Jun-Dec
b. 4, f. 39	1826 Jan-May	1826 Jan-May
b. 4, f. 40	1826 Jun-Jul	1826 Jun-Jul
b. 4, f. 41	1826 Aug-Dec	1826 Aug-Dec
b. 4, f. 42	1827	1827
b. 4, f. 43	1828-1829	1828-1829
b. 4, f. 44	1830–1831	1830-1831
b. 4, f. 45	1832-1833 Jul	1832-1833 Jul
b. 4, f. 46	1833 Aug-Dec	1833 Aug-Dec
b. 4, f. 47	1834–1835	1834-1835
b. 4, f. 48	1836–1837	1836-1837
b. 5, f. 49	1838	1838
b. 5, f. 50	1839–1840	1839-1840
b. 5, f. 51	1841–1844	1841-1844
b. 5, f. 52	1845–1849	1845-1849
b. 5, f. 53	1850–1855	1850–1855
b. 5, f. 54	1856–1859	1856-1859
b. 5, f. 55	1860–1861	1860-1861
b. 5, f. 56	1862–1869	1862-1869
b. 5, f. 57	1870-1899	1870-1899
b. 5, f. 58	1900–1905	1900-1905

b. 5, f. 59	1906–1909	1906–1909
b. 5, f. 60	1910-1911 May	1910-1911 May
b. 5, f. 61	1911 Jun-Dec	1911 Jun-Dec
b. 6, f. 62	1912	1912
b. 6, f. 63	1913 Jan-Apr	1913 Jan-Apr
b. 6, f. 64	1913 May-Dec	1913 May-Dec
b. 6, f. 65	1914–1916	1914–1916
b. 6, f. 66	1928	1928

Chauncey, Charles (1747-1823), 1747-1857

b. 7, f. 67	Account book, Morocco Manufactory	1806
b. 7, f. 68	Account book, personal expense account	1810
b. 7, f. 69	Estate records	1747–1823
b. 7, f. 70	Financial records	1778-1805
b. 7, f. 71	Financial records	1808-1821
b. 7, f. 72	Journal of occurrences	1788-1806
b. 7, f. 73	Ledger of law practice in New Haven	1769–1775
b. 7 , f. 74	Personal papers	Circa 1747-1823
b. 8, f. 75	Accounts book, as a lawyer in New Haven	1774–1811
b. 8, f. 76	Daybook	1774-1792

Chauncey, Charles (1777-1849), undated, 1849-1857

b. 9, f. 77-78	Estate records	undated, 1849-1850
b. 9, f. 79	Estate records	1849-1857

Chauncey, Elihu (1840-1916), 1863-1916

b. 10, f. 80	Account book	1863–1866
b. 10, f. 81	Account book	1873–1916
b. 10, f. 82	Account book	1873–1878
b. 10, f. 83	Account book	1879-1886
b. 10, f. 84	Account book	1908
b. 10, f. 88	Financial records	1892-1907

Chauncey, Elihu (1710-1791), appointments, military b. 10, f. 85

Chauncey, Elihu (various), estate records b. 10, f. 86

Chauncey, Elihu (1779-1847), scrapbook of newspaper clippings and printed pamphlets b. 10, f. 87

Chauncey, Nathaniel (1681-1756), correspondence and a sermon b. 11, f. 89 $\,$

Chauncey, Nathaniel (1720-1798), legal notes b. 11, f. 92-93

Chauncey, Nathaniel (1789-1865), 1681-1865

b. 11, f. 90	Diaries kept in Italy, France, and the Low Countries	1824-1826
b. 11, f. 91	Diaries kept in France, England, and Scotland	1825
b. 11, f. 94	Lectures on various aspects of the scriptures	1810-1811
b. 11, f. 95	"Accounts of Robert Green with Nathaniel Chauncey;" Description de la Cathedrale de Strasbourg (Strasbourg, 1817); A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Hon. Daniel Waldo (Printed for Private Distribution, 1845)	1813-1845

Durham, Connecticut, court records, 1765-1834

b. 12, f. 96	1765–1805	1765–1805
b. 12, f. 97	1806–1807	1806–1807
b. 12, f. 98	1808	1808
b. 12, f. 99	1809	1809
b. 12, f. 100	1810–1811	1810-1811
b. 12, f. 101	1812–1813	1812–1813
b. 12, f. 102	1814–1815	1814–1815
b. 12, f. 103	1816–1820	1816-1820
b. 12, f. 104	1821–1831	1821–1831
b. 12, f. 105	1832	1832
b. 12, f. 106	1833–1834	1833-1834

Chauncey, Worthingon Gallup (1772-1858), personal papers b. 13, f. 107

Legal papers, 1741-1848

b. 13, f. 108	Fairfield Superior Court	1790-1793
b. 13, f. 109	Hartford Superior Court	1786
b. 13, f. 110	Hartford Superior Court	1790-1793
b. 13, f. 111	Litchfield Superior Court	1791–1793
b. 13, f. 112	Middlesex Superior Court	1789-1792
b. 13, f. 113	New Haven County Court	1741-1764
b. 13, f. 114	New Haven County Court	1765–1774
b. 13, f. 115	New Haven County Court	1776–1779
b. 13, f. 116	New Haven County Court	1776-1783
b. 13, f. 117	New Haven County Court	1782-1784
b. 14, f. 118	New Haven County Court	1782-1788
b. 14, f. 119	New Haven County Court	1783-1787
b. 14, f. 120	New Haven Justice of the Peace	1741–1759
b. 14, f. 121	New Haven Justice of the Peace	1742-1765
b. 14, f. 122	New Haven Justice of the Peace	1746-1776
b. 14, f. 123	New Haven Superior Court	1791–1792
b. 14, f. 124	New London Superior Court	1790-1793
b. 14 , f. 125	Tolland Superior Court	1791
b. 14, f. 126	Windham Superior Court	1789–1793
b. 14, f. 127-129	Various Connecticut courts	Late 18th century
b. 15, f. 130	Account book of Charles Chauncey and Philip Physick	1838-1848
b. 15, f. 131	Common plea docket book	1808-1837

Chauncey, William account book b. 16, f. 132

Real estate sales and purchases account book b. 16, f. 133

Kirtland, Dr. Jared Potter (1793-1877), medical account book kept in Durham, Connecticut b. 16, f. 134

Chauncey and Fowler family genealogy publications and notes b. 16, f. 135-137

Real estate book for the Philadelphia and New Jersey area b. 17, f. 138 $\,$

Chauncey family genealogy publication and typescript b. 18, f. 139

Physick, Philip Syng (1768-1837), estate account book b. 18, f. 140 $\,$

Notebook, largely concerning preaching, of an unidentified family member b. 18, f. 141 $\,$

Correspondence, documents, accounts, and printed materials of various family members b. 18, f. 142-149

Photographs of various family members b. 18, f. 150

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 father to Elizabeth Chester Chauncey, 18 Feb 1848 b. 19, f. 152

Oversize indentures and other legal documents, military and diplomatic appointment papers, correspondence, and other family documents b. 20, f. 153-155

Correspondence index

Yale graduation years are noted as parentheticals.

Abbott, Capt Edward

Ablall, David

Adams, Andrew 1736-1797

Adams, Samuel 1724-1803

Allyn, John

Alston, Joseph 1779-1816

Ambler, John Jaquelin 1801-1854

Ames, Reginald

Andrews, Andrew

Andrews, Elijah

Andrews, Joseph

Archbold, J.W.

Arnold, Benedict 1741-1801

Atwater, David 1723-1806

Atwater, Jeremiah

Atwater, Medad 1750-1832

Augur, Abraham

Austin, David 1759-1831

Austin, Elbridge Gerry -1854

Austin, Henry

Austin, Josy

Avery, John

Backus, E. F.

Bacot, Henry Hammond 1780-1833 (Y1798)

Baldwin, Barnabas

Baldwin, Simeon 1761-1851 (Y1781)

Ball, Stephen 1762-1842

Banks, Sir Thomas Christopher 1765-1854

Barker. Peter

Barnard, Bartholomew

Barnard, Jeremiah

Barnes, J. Cox

Bartholomew, Wyllys

Barton, William Tudor

Bassett, George William

Bayard, James Asheton 1767-1815

Bayard, Jason

Beach, William G.

Beaman, William S.

Beardsley, Ebenezer

Beebe, Jonah

Becker, John

Beech, Joseph

Beers, Isaac 1742-1813

Beldings, James

Bigelow, Jacob (1786-1892?)

Billings, Arnold

Binney, Charles Chauncey 1855-1913

Binney, Horace 1780-1875

Bishop, Nathaniel W.

Bishop, Samuel 1698-1779

Blatchford, Richard Milford 1798-1875

Bliss, Daniel 1715-1764

Boardman, W.

Booser, Jacob

Botsford, Amos 1744-1812 (Y1763)

Boyles, Daniel

Boyles, John

Bradford, Cornelius

Bradly, Abraham 1650-1718

Bradley, Abraham 1772-1842

Bradley, Ebenezer

Bradley, Joseph

Brewer, Daniel 1667-1733

Brewer, Katharine 1675-1754

Brimmer, Andrew

Bristol, Simon

Brockett, Giles

Brongiart,

Bronson, Enos 1774-1823 (Y1798)

Brown, James 1766-1835

Brown, N.

Bruen, Matthias 1793-1829

Buell, David

Buddington, Walter

Bull, Thomas

Burnham, Thomas

Burritt, Abel

Burroughs, Edward

Burroughs, Zachary

Camp, Anna A, Coe 1771-1848

Camp, Edward

Camp, Joseph 1744-1812 (Y1776)

Camp, Lyman Coe 1792-1838

Camp, Mary

Cannon, Lyman

Carr, Jacob

Carrington, Elias

Carter, Nathaniel Hazletine 1787-1830

Chandler, Joshua 1727-1787

Chauncey, Abigail (Darling) 1746-1818

Chauncey, Charles 1705-1787

Chauncey, Charles D. 1711

Chauncey, Charles 1747-1823

Chauncey, Charles 1777-1849

Chauncey, Charles 1809-1831

Chauncey, Charles 1838-1916

Chauncey, Elihu 1710-1791

Chauncey, Elihu 1779-1847

Chauncey, Elihu 1779-1865

Chauncey, Elihu 1840-1916

Chauncey, Elizabeth

Chauncey, Elizabeth (Chester)

Chauncey, Elizabeth Sewell (Salisbury) d. 1858

Chauncey, Elnathan 1724-1796

Chauncey, Hannah (Chester)

Chauncey, Henry 1795-1863 or 1825-1915

Chauncey, Ichabod Wolcott 1703-(1742)

Chauncey, Isaac 1772-1840

Chauncey, Mary

Chauncey, Nathaniel 1681-1756

Chauncey, Nathaniel 1720-1798

Chauncey, Nathaniel 1789-1865

Chauncey, Nathaniel William 1761-1840

Chauncey, Robert 1677- or (1701-)?

Chauncey, Walley

Chauncey, Worthington Gallup 1772-1858

Chester, John 1748-1809

Chester, Leonard 1750-1803 (Y1769)

Chester, Sarah

Chew, Samuel

Chittenden, Ebenezer

Clark, Hezekiah

Clark, J.Y.

Clark, Thomas

Clay, Edward Williams 1799-1857

Coe, Darius

Coe, Huldah

Coe, Robert

Cook, David

Cook, Isaac

Cook, Wilson

Cooke, Samuel 1687-1747 (Y1705)

Cooley, Timothy Mather 1772-1859 (Y1792)

Coolidge, Charles Henry

Cox, Timothy 1781-1849

Cull, Robert S.

Currie, James

Curtis, Benjamin 1790-1881

Daggett, David 1764-1851

Daggett, Henry 1741-1830 (Y1775)

Daniels, M. Royal

Darling, Charles W.

Darling, Joseph 1759-1850

Darling, Thomas 1720-1789 (Y1740)

Darling, Samuel (Y1769)

Darlington, Robert

Davis, Henry 1771-1852 (Y1796)

Delaplaine, Samuel

Denison, Charles 1778-1825 (Y1796)

de Thoet, Carvadossy

De Wolf, Hannah

De Youngh, Bill

Dillingham, William Henry 1790?

Dimmock, Charles

Dobbs, Alexander

Donnellan, Thomas

Doolittle, Isaac

Douglas, Benjamin 1739-1775

Dunbar, Daniel

(Dwight, E.)

Dwight, Edwin Willis 1789-1841

Dwight, Henry Edwin 1797-1832

Dwight, Theodore 1796-1866 (Y1814)

Dwight, Timothy 1778-1844

Dyer, Eliphalet 1721-1807 (Y1740)

Edwards, Pierpont 1750-1826

Elkinton, John A.

Ellsworth, Henry Levitt 1791-1858 (Y1810)

Ellsworth, Oliver 1745-1807

Ely, Cullick 1733-1821

Ely, John 1774-1849

England, John

England, Ann Engle, Jonathan

Evarts, Sherman 1859-1922

Field, Frederic S.

Fisher, Miers

Fisher, Samuel R.

Fitch, Asa (1786-1866)

Fitch, Ebenezer 1756-1833

Fitch, Jabez 1737-1812

Fitch, Jonathan

Fitch, Joseph

Fitch, Thomas 1700-1774 (Y1721)

FitzGerald, Stephen Salisbury

Fitzwater, Abel

Foot, Uriah

Forbes, Elijah

Ford, Emily Ellsworth (Fowler)

Ford, Gordon Lester 1823-1891

Ford, Rosalie Greenleaf 1859-

Ford, Worthington Chauncey

Fowler, Anne E.

Fowler, Charles Chauncey

Fowler, Eliza Ann

Fowler, John

Fowler, Joseph

Fowler, Joseph L.

Fowler, Hannah

Fowler, Harriet Webste

Fowler, Mary Ella (Camp)

Fowler, Reuben Rose

Fowler, Timothy

Fowler, William Chauncey 1793-1881

Fowler, William Worthington 1833-1881

Francis, J. G.

Francis, Tench d. 1758

Freeth, Samuel

Fry, Lewis G.

Furling, J. Kennedy

Galbraith, Josiah

Gale, Benjamin 1715-1790 (Y1733)

Garnsey, Bridgman

Garnsey, Ebenezer

Geary, Ebenezer, Jr.

(Gibbons,)

Gilbert, David

Gilbert, John

Goodrich, Chauncey 1759-1815 (Y1776)

Goodrich, Chauncey Allen 1790-1860 (Y1810)

Goodrich, Elizur 1734-1797

Goodrich, Elizur 1761-1849 (Y1779)

Goodrich, Elizur 1787-1868

Goodrich, James 1769-

Goodsell, Jonathan

Gould, James

Gould, William

Graham, Abigail (Chauncey) 1701-

Grave, Nodiah

Graves, Martha (Hicksox)

Green, Robert S.

Greenleaf, R.C.

Greenough, James

Grey, Daniel

Griffing, Peter

Grimke, Thomas Smith 1786-1834 (Y1807)

Griswold, Matthew 1714-1799

Griswold, Samuel 1685-1732

Hall, Benjamin 1731-1817

Hall, Charles S.

Hall Elihu

Hall, Elizur

Hall, Peter

Hall, Samuel

Hall, Timothy

Hand, Catharine Worthington (Fowler) 1801-1865

Hand, Joseph Winborn 1797-1844 (Y1813)

Hands, Bedinfield

Harrison, Benjamin 1787-1842

Hart, Abijah -1829

Harvey, Charles

Harvey, Isaac

Harvey, Samuel

Hayns, Joseph

Henry, Alexander 1766-1847

Hess, David

Hickcox, James

Hickcox, William W.

Hiessler, Peter

Higgeson, Stephen 1743-1828

Hille, Hannah

Hillhouse, James 1754-1832 (Y1773)

Hine, Mary

Hinman, Ephriam

Hirst, William L.

Hitchcock, Amos

Hitchcock, Samuel Johnson 1786-1845

Hoadly, George 1781-1857 (Y1801)

Hodge, William Ledyard 1790-1868

Holmes, Roswell William 1826-1897

Hopkins, Joseph 1730-1801

Hotchkiss, John

Hotchkiss, Obadiah

Hotchkiss, Seth

Howard, Henry

Howe, Hezekiah 1775-1838

Howell, Joseph

(Howell, Thomas 1719-1792)

Hubbard, Samuel 1785-1847 (Y1802)

Hull, Andrew, Jr.

Hull, Luzerne

Hulls, John

Ibbotson, Henry

Ingersoll, Jonathan 1747-1823 (Y1766)

Inman, Ralph

Isaacs, Ralph 1741-1799

Iselstine, John

Ives, Caleb -1827

Ives, Jefferson

Jackson, William (1759-1828)

(Jaudon,) A.G.

Johnson, William Samuel 1727-1819

Johnston, Francis 1761-1829

Johnston, John

Jones, Timothy 1737-1800 (Y1757)

Jordan, Joseph

Joshua, Sachem

Keating, John

Keith, Sir William 1680-1749

Kelcey, Daniel

Kelcey, Joseph

Kingston, Stephen

Kirtland, Jared Potter 1793-1877 (Y1815)

Langley, James

Langs, John

Law, Richard 1733-1806

Lawrence, John 1719-1802

Leavenworth, Eli

Le Couteulx, Lewis Stephen

Lee, Lothrop

Lee, Thomas

Leffingwell, William 1765-1834 (Y1786)

Lewis, I.S.

Lindly, Abial

Livermore, Ezra

Livingston, Henry B.

Lord, Tichard

Loveland, Horace

Lowber, John C.

Lucas, William

Lyman, David

Lyman, Ebenezer

Lyman, Jonathan Huntington 1783-1825 (Y1802)

Lyman, Thomas 1746-1832

McCall, George C.

McKean, Thomas 1734-1817

Mansfield, Jared 1759-1830 (Y1772)

Mansfield, Richard 1723-1820 (Y1741)

Marbois, Francois de Barbe, Marquis de 1745-1837

Marshall, Charles, Jr.

Marshall, Christopher

Marston, Thomas

Masters, Sarah

Mather, Thomas J.

Medad, Samuel 1687-1744

Meigs, Josiah 1757-1822 (Y1778)

Meredith, Gertrude Gouverneur

Meredith, William

Merrifield, Abner

Miles, Henry

Mills, George

Mills, Isaac 1767-1843 (Y1786)

Mix, Jonathan B. 1729? 1753-1817?

Mix, Samuel

Mix, Titus

Morris, Anthony

Morris, Isaac W.

Mott, Edward

Munson, Eneas

Munson, Joseph 1727-1793

Munson, Walter 1733-1902

Murray, John

Myers, Naphtalie Hart

Newton, Elisha Fairchild 1793-1868

Newton, John

Newton, Roger (1768-1848)

Niles,

Nixon, Henry

Northrup, Joel

Noyes, Abigail Pierpont 1696-1768

O'Finian, Father

Ogden, David Longworth 1792-1863

Olmstead, Nicholas

Osborn, Samuel

Parmelee, Dan

Parmelee, Eli

Parmelee, J.

Parnell, John

Parsons, Reverend David 1749-1823

Parsons, Ithamar

Parsons, Simeon

Parsons, Theophilus 1750-1813

Parsons, Theophilus 1797-1882

Partrigg, J.

Paul, John Rodman 1802-1877

Payson, John L.

Peale, Rembrant 1778-1860

Pease, Randolph

Peck, Ebenezer

Peck, Gad

Peck, John

Peck, Nathaniel

Penn, John

Penn, Richard

Penn, Thomas

Physick, Philip

Pierpont, James 1699-1776

Pierpont, Joseph 1730-1824

Pierson, Abraham 1756-1823

Pierson, William Seward 1788-1860 (Y1808)

Pitkin, J. William

Pitkin, William

Plant, James

Pomeroy, Elizabeth (Webb) 1697-1768

Pomeroy, Medad 1638-1716

Porter, David C.

Porter, John 1757-1806

Potter, Joseph

Powers, Rhoda (Hickcox)

Pratt, Simeon

Preble, Edward 1761-1807

Prout, John 1689-1776

Punchard, William

Quincey, Josiah 1772-1864

Ralston, Samuel F.

Ralston, William

Randolph, Beverly 1755-1797

Randolph, Edmund (Jennings)

Rawle, William 1759-1856

Redfield, Daniel

Reyner, Jean

Rice, James

Richards, Benjamin W.

Richards, James

Riviere, Melanie

Rivington, James 1724-1802

Robbins, Chandler 1738-1799

Robbins, Philemon 1709-1781

Roberts, Josiah

Robins, Thankful

Robinson, Jared

Robinson, Moncure 1802-1891

Robinson, M. H.

Rogers, J. Smythe

Root, Jesse 1736-1822

Ross, David 1755-1800

Ryan,

Salisbury, Daniel Waldo

Salisbury, Elizabeth Sewell -1850

Salisbury, Nancy (Gardner) -1865

Salisbury, Rebecca 1816-

Salisbury, Samuel 1769-1849

Salisbury, Stephen 1812-1875

Sanford, Benjamin

Sanford, Nathan H.

Sassenay, Marquis de

Savage, William Lyttleson 1812-1867

Schweizer, Jean Gaspard

Scranton, Abraham

Scranto, David

Seaver, Benjamin F.

Seaver, Ebenzer

Sedgwick, Miss

Sergeant, John 1779-1852

Sewall, Joseph

Seybert, Henry 1801-1883

Sharpless, Jesse

Sheldon, D.

Sherman, James

Sherman, John (1750-1802)

Shipman, Elias 1778-1833

Sidman, Isaac

Silliman, Benjamin 1779-1864

Slidwell, Alexander

Smith, Charles Jeffry 1740-1770 (Y1757)

Smith, Cotton Mather 1731-1806 (Y1751)

Smith, David 1767-1862

Smith, Elijah

Smith, Elizur Goodrich 1802-1873

Smith, Simeon Parsons 1809-1848

Stanley, Gad 1735-1815

Stannard, E. W.

Starkweather, Asher

Stedman, Charles

Stevens, Henry

Stewart, Walter 1756-1796

Stoddard, John

Stone, Richard

Strong, Asahel

Strong, Ebenezer

Sturges, Jonathan 1740-1819

Sutton, George

Talcott, John

Talcott, Joseph 1669-1741

Talmadge, Benjamin

Talmadge, Daniel

Talmadge, Josiah 1744-1834

Tappan, John 1781-

Taylor, Bayard 1825-1878

Taylor, John

Thomas, E. H.

Thompson, Isaiah

Thompson, James

Thompson, John

Thompson, Joseph

Thorp, Asa

Tibbals, Seth

Tilghman, B.

Tilghman, Edward 1751-1815

Todd, John

Todd, Michael 1722-1776

Townsend, Joseph

Townsend, William Kneeland 1796-1849

Tracy, Cyrus

Tracy, Uriah 1735-1807

(Tragnair, James)

Treat, Robert (1622)-1710

Trotter, Joseph

Trumbull, John 1750-1831 (Y1767)

Tryon, William 1725-1788

Turner, Isaac

Turton, John

Tuttle, Simon

Tuvilliers, T.D.

Twining, Stephen 1767-1832

Tyler, Jason

Usher, Donald

Van Zandt Jacobus, circa 1726-1817

Vaughan, John

Wadsworth, James 1730-1817

Wadsworth, James, Jr.

Wadsworth, Wedsworth 1782-1860

Walker, Thomas

Waller, A. B.

Ward, Albert

Warden, David Ballie 1772-1845

Warren, Moses

Watson, Jacob

Way, Eleazar

Webb, Benjamin

Webster, Noah 1758-1843

Webster, William Greenleaf 1801-1869

Welton, Peter

White, Dyer 1762-1841

White, Henry

White, J.

Whiting, John 1722-1786 (Y1740)

Whiting, Nathan 1724-1771

Whiting, William Joseph

Whitney, David

Whittelsey, Charles 1723-1764

Whittelsey, Chauncey 1746-1812

Whittelsey, Samuel 1686-1752

Whittelsey, Sarah (Chauncey) 1683-1767

Willet, Gilbert Golden

Willet, Isaac

Willett, Nathaniel

(Williams, Comfort 1783-1825)

Williams, Elisha 1694-1755)

Williams, Experience

Williams, Henry W.

(Williams, Joshua Lewis 1785-1832)

Willoughby, Frank 1672-

Wilson, Bird 1777-1859

Wise, John

Withers, John H.

Wolcott, Oliver 1760-1833 (Y1778)

Wolf, George 1777-1840

Woodbridge, William Channing 1794-1845

Woodhull, Richard

Woodward, John 1727-1797 (Y1752)

Woolsey, Sarah (Chauncey) 1780-1856

Woolsey, Theodore Dwight 1801-1889

Woolsey, Theodore Salisbury 1852-1929

Woolsey, William Walton 1766-1839

Woolsey, William Wolcott

Wooster, David 1711-1777 (Y1767) Wooster, John Wooster, Thomas Worthington, William Wright, Joseph Wyllys, George 1710-1796 Wyllys, Samuel Yeo, Sir James Lucas 1782-1818 Young, Samuel

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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 Clergy Families Law Lawyers

Geographic Names

Connecticut

Europe -- Description and travel

Middle Atlantic States New Haven (Conn.) Philadelphia (Pa.)

United States -- History -- Colonial period, ca.

1600-1775

United States -- History -- Revolution,

1775-1783

United States -- Politics and government

Genres / Formats

Diaries

Names

Adams, Andrew, 1736-1797 Adams, Samuel, 1722-1803 Alston, Joseph, 1778-1816 Arnold, Benedict, 1741-1801 Atwater, David, 1723-1806 Atwater, Medad, 1750-1832 Austin, David, 1759-1831

Austin, Elbridge Gerry, 1810-1854 Baldwin, Simeon, 1761-1851

Ball, Stephen, 1762-1842

Banks, T. C. (Thomas Christopher), 1765-1854 Bayard, James A. (James Asheton), 1767-1815

Beers, Ísaac, 1742?-1813 Binney, Horace, 1780-1875 Bishop, Samuel, 1698-1779

Blatchford, Richard Milford, 1798-1875

Bliss, Daniel, 1715-1764 Botsford, Amos, 1744-1812 Bradley, Abraham, 1650-1718 Bradley, Abraham, 1772-1842 Brewer, Daniel, 1669-1733
Bronson, Enos, 1774-1823
Brown, James, 1766-1835
Chandler, Joshua, 1727-1787
Chauncey, Charles, 1705-1787
Chauncey, Charles, 1747-1823
Chauncey, Charles, 1809-1831
Chauncey, Charles, 1809-1831
Chauncey, Charles, 1838-1916
Chauncey, Elihu, 1710-1791
Chauncey, Elihu, 1779-1847
Chauncey, Elihu, 1840-1916
Chauncey, Isaac, 1772-1840
Chauncey, Nathaniel, 1681-1756
Chauncey, Nathaniel, 1720-1798

Chauncey, Nathaniel William, 1761-1840 Chauncey, Worthington Gallup, 1772-1858

Chauncy, Elnathan, 1724-1796 Clay, Edward Williams, 1799-1857

Chauncey, Nathaniel, 1789-1865

Cooke, Samuel, 1687-1747
Cox, Timothy, 1781-1849
Curtis, Benjamin, 1790-1881
Daggett, David, 1764-1851
Daggett, Henry, 1741-1830
Darling, Joseph, 1759-1850
Darling, Thomas, 1720-1789
Davis, Henry, 1771-1852
Denison, Charles, 1778-1825
Douglas, Benjamin, 1739-1775
Dwight, Theodore, 1796-1866
Dwight, Timothy, 1778-1844
Dyer, Eliphalet, 1721-1807
Edwards, Pierpont, 1750-1826

Ellsworth, Henry Leavitt, 1791-1858 Ellsworth, Oliver, 1745-1807

Ely, Cullick, 1733-1821 Ely, John, 1774-1849

Evarts, Sherman, 1859-1922 Fitch, Asa, 1786-1866 Fitch, Ebenezer, 1756-1833 Fitch, Jabez, 1737-1812 Fitch, Thomas, 1700-1774 Ford, Gordon Lester, 1823-1891 Fowler, William Chauncey, 1793-1881

Gale, Benjamin, 1715-1790 Goodrich, Chauncey, 1759-1815

Goodrich, Chauncey A. (Chauncey Allen),

Fowler, William Worthington, 1833-1881

1790-1860

Goodrich, Elizur, 1734-1797 Goodrich, Elizur, 1761-1849 Goodrich, Elizur, 1787-1868

Grimké, Thomas Smith, 1786-1834 Griswold, Matthew, 1714-1799

Griswold, Samuel, 1865-1732

Hall, Benjamin, 1731-1817 Harrison, Benjamin, 1787-1842

Higginson, Stephen, 1743-1828 Hillhouse, James, 1754-1832

Hitchcock, Samuel J. (Samuel Johnson),

1786-1845

Hoadley, George, 1781-1857

Hodge, William Ledyard, 1790-1868

Hopkins, Joseph, 1730-1801 Hubbard, Samuel, 1785-1847 Ingersoll, Jonathan, 1747-1823

Isaac, Ralph, 1741-1799 Jackson, William, 1759-1828

Johnson, William Samuel, 1727-1819

Johnston, Francis, 1761-1829 Jones, Timothy, 1737-1800 Keith, William, Sir, 1680-1749

Kirtland, J. P. (Jared Potter), 1793-1877

Law, Richard, 1733-1806 Lawrence, John, 1719-1802 Leffingwell, William, 1765-1834 Lyman, Thomas, 1746-1832 Mansfield, Jared, 1759-1830 Mansfield, Richard, 1723-1820

McKean, Thomas, 1734-1817 Medad, Samuel, 1687-1744

Meigs, Josiah, 1757-1822

Mills, Isaac, 1767-1843

Munson, Joseph, 1727-1793

Munson, Walter, 1733-1802

Newton, Elisha Fairchild, 1793-1868

Newton, Roger, 1768-1848

Ogden, David Longworth, d. 1863

Parsons, Theophilus, 1750-1813 Parsons, Theophilus, 1797-1882

Peale, Rembrandt, 1778-1860

Pierpont, James, 1699-1776

Pierpont, Joseph, 1730-1824 Pierson, Abraham, 1756-1823

Pierson, William Seward, 1787-1860

Pomeroy, Medad, 1638-1716 Porter, John, 1757-1806

Preble, Edward, 1761-1807

Prout, John, 1689-1776

Quincy, Josiah, 1772-1864

Randolph, Beverly, 1755-1797

Rawle, William, 1759-1836 Rivington, James, 1724-1802

Robbins, Chandler, 1738-1799

Root, Jesse, 1737-1822

Ross, David, 1755-1800

Savage, William Lyttleson, 1812-1867

Sergeant, John, 1779-1852 Seybert, Henry, 1801-1883

Sherman, John, -1802

Shipman, Elias, 1778-1833

Silliman, Benjamin, 1779-1864

Smith, Charles Jeffery, 1740-1770

Smith, Cotton-Mather, 1731-1806

Smith, David, 1767-1862

Smith, Simeon Parsons, 1809-1848

Stanley, Gad, 1735-1815 Stewart, Walter, 1756-1796

Sturges, Jonathan, 1740-1819

Talcott, Joseph, 1669-1741

Talmadge, Josiah, 1744-1834

Taylor, Bayard, 1825-1878 Tilghman, Edward, 1750-1815

Todd, Michael, 1722-1776

Townsend, William Kneeland, 1795 or 1796-1849

Tracy, Uriah, 1755-1807

Treat, Robert, approximately 1622-1710

Trumbull, John, 1750-1831 Tryon, William, 1729-1788 Twining, Stephen, 1767-1832 Wadsworth, James, 1730-1817

Webster, Noah, 1758-1843

Webster, William G. (William Greenleaf),

1805-1869

White, Dyer, 1762-1841

Whiting, Eli, 1765-1825

Whiting, John, 1722-1786 Whiting, Nathan, 1724-1771

Whittlesey, Charles, 1723-1764

Williams, Elisha, 1694-1755

Willoughby, Francis, 1672-

Wolcott, Oliver, 1760-1833 Wolf, George, 1777-1840

Woodbridge, William C. (William Channing),

1794-1845 Woodward, John, 1727-1797

Woolsey, Theodore Dwight, 1801-1889

Woolsey, Theodore Salisbury, 1852-1929 Wooster, David, 1711-1777

Wyllys, George, 1710-1796

Families

Camp family Chauncey family Dwight family Salisbury family Whittlesay family Woolsey family

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