

1998.122 Lynch / Whitney Family Collection

Extent: 7 boxes

Inclusive Dates: 1739-1963

Bulk Dates: 1760-1900

Scope and Content:

The Lynch / Whitney Family Collection was donated to the Stockbridge Library, Museum & Archives by descendants of Lawrence Lynch. The collection covers the Lynch family from Lawrence Lynch (1735-1815) through his son Moses Lynch (c. 1769-1852), his grandson Reuben Lynch (1797-1888), his great-granddaughter Mary Elizabeth Lynch (1825-1908), and his great-great-grandson, John Cooper Lynch (1875-1937). The Whitney material starts with Silas Whitney (1762-1807) and includes his sons George Whitney (1795-1825) and William Whitney (1797-1866) and George's son, George Fenn Whitney (1820-1893), who married Mary Elizabeth Lynch.

Personal papers include correspondence, school material, photographs, and scrapbooks. The majority of records are financial or legal, documenting land and other transactions. Included are deeds, mortgages, maps and surveys, leases, bonds, agreements and contracts, stock certificates, receipts, wills and estate papers, and an account book. A few family artifacts have also been donated, including a musket and an early lantern. A number of the deeds and land agreements deal with parties other than the Lynchs or Whitneys, particularly with Samuel Brown, Jr.

The collection both covers the history of the families and predates their settlement in Stockbridge. A large portion of the records deal with the early years of Stockbridge. The collection includes deeds and other legal papers documenting the transfer of land between individual members of the Mahican Indian tribe and the early settlers. Also included are notices and minutes of Proprietors' meetings in Stockbridge, Yokumtown (now Lenox), and Greenock (Lee), a petition from the Mahicans to the General Court, and an undated motion that may relate to Shay's Rebellion. Appointments of settlers as guardians to local Native Americans are included. Early deeds, leases, and other legal transactions cover geographical areas now included in Stockbridge, Lenox, and Richmond (Richmont and Mt. Ephraim). Key members of the tribe are mentioned, including Konkapot, Cheeksaunkun, Mtoksin, and Solomon Uhhaunnahaunnuhmut. Early settlers including Woodbridge, Timothy Edwards, Silas Pepoon, Samuel Goodrich, Henry Dwight, Cornelius Van Schaack, Oliver Partridge, Ephraim Williams, and various members of the Curtis family are recorded as well as a bill from Samuel Brown, Jr. and Timothy Edwards to the state of Massachusetts for supplies for Colonel James Easton's troops during the Revolutionary War.

Early nineteenth century records illustrate the expansion of the town in the northwest section into the areas known as Larrywaug and Curtisville (Interlaken). Several maps, surveys, and stock shares pertain to the Housatonic River Turnpike Company. An iron works is also mentioned in connection with bonds and deeds.

Later eighteenth and early nineteenth century deeds and documents pertain to the migration of a group of Stockbridge residents to the Chenango and Susquehanna valleys in southern New York State. The towns of Tioga, Owego, and Dorranceburg, NY and Athens, PA are mentioned. There is also material connected to the Brownhelm community in Ohio, another destination of Stockbridge settlers and speculators. Early Stockbridge names, including Samuel Brown, Timothy Dwight, Timothy Edwards, and Elnathan and Abel Curtis appear on many of the documents.

Twentieth century material consists of a small amount of personal correspondence of John Cooper Lynch. There are blueprints for additions onto the Lynch home. Scrapbooks hold personal ephemera, photographs, postcards, and typed commentaries of the 1911 and 1925-1926 European trips of Mr. and Mrs. John Lynch and John Lynch, Jr. A fifth scrapbook consists of clippings about activities of the Lynchs and other residents in Stockbridge from 1920 to 1938, with the bulk of information in 1936 and 1937, providing a capsule history of the town's activities at that time. Although John Cooper Lynch was involved in town planning and served on the Stockbridge Library Board of Trustees, the Housatonic Bank, and other organizations, there is little in the collection to show this involvement other than mention in this scrapbook and the memorial from the Three Arts Society. There is no mention of his 35-year career with the telephone company.

Two binders contain extensive research into the genealogy of the family and include information on the Bradley, Fenn, Hosford, Hollister, Hallock, Cadwell, Root, Kilbourne, Byington, Palmer, Miner, Goodrich, Marvin Colden, and Treat connections.

Historical Note:

Lawrence Lynch (b. Ireland, 1735; d. Nov. 15, 1815) was the first Irishman to settle in Stockbridge. He came to the area in 1752, presumably with General Joseph Dwight, to whom he may have been indentured. For a while he lived in the Mission House with General Dwight and Mrs. Abigail Williams Sergeant Dwight (who was the widow of John Sergeant). Lynch bought parcels of land in the north section of town near the current junction of routes 183 and 102, supposedly from the Indian, Solomon Uhaunnaunwaunmut. The area continues to be referred to as Larrywaug (Larrywang or Larrawaugh). He married Dorcas Root of Sheffield/Great Barrington (1740-1799) with whom he had fourteen children. He acquired more land, which he farmed. These are represented by deeds in the collection. At his death the land passed to his son Moses.

Moses Lynch was born in Stockbridge and married Lois Cadwell (c. 1774-1851), his cousin. While young, he worked for Dr. Erastus Sergeant. He lived in the Sergeant home, as did Dr. Oliver Partridge. During Shay's Rebellion, Lynch was taken prisoner and was probably a member of the Stockbridge militia. Moses and Lois had three children. Their son Reuben inherited the property.

Reuben Lynch lived on the Larrywaug property with his wife, Sarah Hosford Lynch, and their three children. He purchased several additional tracts of land. He and his wife were active participants in the Stockbridge Congregational Church, where Lynch served as deacon

for several years. They had three children, including Charles (c. 1832-1916), father of John Cooper Lynch (1875-1937), and Mary Elizabeth, who married into the Whitney family.

The Lynch and Whitney families converge in the marriage of Mary Elizabeth Lynch (1825-1908) to George Fenn Whitney (1820-1893) on April 23, 1845.

The Whitney history in Stockbridge began with Captain Silas Whitney, who married Mamre Bradley (1765-1833). Silas was a farmer while Mamre was the daughter of a deacon who had settled in Stockbridge. The Whitneys had seven children. Their marriages account for many of the names in the collection: Luke Ashburner, James Fowler, Elisha Curtis, Pamela Fenn, and Anna (Nancy) Jones. A son, William, was a farmer who married Anna Jones, lived on Main Street, and was involved in local affairs. Another son, George, was a lawyer in Stockbridge, who married Pamela Fenn. Several of the daughters ran a school for girls. Much of the property along Church Street originally belonged to the Whitneys. The homestead was referred to as Elm Cottage.

George and Pamela's son, George Fenn Whitney, married Mary Elizabeth Lynch. George and Mary Elizabeth's daughter, Sarah Hosford Whitney Stedman, is the mother of one of the collection's donors, Grace Stedman DeMott.

Processing Information:

The collection has been processed, in part, at least three times. The Whitney papers were sorted by the donors and listed, with explanations, at the time of donation. The Lynch papers may have been initially arranged by John Cooper Lynch. It appears that Mr. Lynch may have gathered some of the papers together to prepare a history of Stockbridge.

The next arrangement was done in the late 1960s or early 1970s by a consultant (Ann Ebitz) hired by the library. At that time, the papers were divided by topic and/or geographical area. Several documents were moved to other artificial collections, often marked "from the Lynch Collection." A set of index cards was created, detailing individual items, seemingly those from the auction or estate. The cards were given consecutive numbers (to 302) that do not indicate any pattern. Some of these numbers appear on the computer catalog in information files. Not all items have cards and not all cards have been matched to documents. The cards are retained as a cross reference, arranged by number.

Later, documents were retrieved from artificial collections, using folder designations and descriptions on the index cards, and returned to this collection. One card indicates that #91 through #103 were given to the Great Barrington Historical Commission in June 1975.

Since there was an overlap between the Whitney and the Lynch documents, and because it was not always clear which group they belonged to, the decision was to merge the material into one collection with a series for each branch of the family. Items that predate the family were assumed to be part of the Lynch donation. A Whitney will that was found with the Lynch material but did not have a card was returned to the Whitney series.

Within each series a subseries of personal papers, mainly consisting of correspondence, was obvious. A combined financial/legal subseries was created since many of the documents were of both types. The sub-subseries, which are arranged alphabetically, generally follow the descriptions noted on the documents by the original owners. Within sub-subseries, the documents are arranged chronologically.

Arrangement:

Series I: Lynch

- Subseries A: Personal Papers
- Subseries B: Financial and Legal Papers
- Subseries C: Community Records
- Subseries D: Artifacts

Series II: Whitney

- Subseries A: Personal Papers
- Subseries B: Financial and Legal Papers
- Subseries C: Artifacts

Administrative Information:

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