

**American Antiquarian Society
Manuscript Collections**

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Bigelow Family, Papers, 1785-c. 1883

“B”

“B”

“B”

LOCATION(S):

Mss. boxes

Octavo vols.

Folio vols.

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

two manuscript boxes; one octavo volume (265 pp.); one folio volume (409 pp.)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

Selected letters have been printed in the American Antiquarian Society *Proceedings*, v. 40 (1930), pp. 305-406. See card catalog.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Gifts of Daniel Berkeley Updike, excluding uncataloged documents, 1933, and N. David Scotti, 1979.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Abijah Bigelow (1775-1860), the son of Elisha and Sarah (Goodridge) Bigelow, studied at Leicester Academy in New Ipswich, N.H., and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1795. In 1798 he was admitted to the Worcester County bar. He served three terms as a Federalist Congressman from Leominster, Mass., 1810-1815, and viewed the War of 1812 in a decidedly negative light. In 1817 Bigelow moved to Worcester, Mass.

Bigelow married, on 8 April 1804, Hannah Gardner (1780-1857), of Leominster, Mass. They had nine children: Sarah (1805-1886), who married Seth Adams (1800-1866); Francis Elisha (1807-1880), who married Elizabeth Colton (-); Susan (1809-1883), who married Charles G. Greene (-); Hannah (1812-1874); Abijah (1814-1817); Elizabeth (1815-1838); Lucinda Gardner (1817-1875); Anne Gardner (1818-1875); and Mary (1821-1872).

This collection contains many letters of Abijah Bigelow to his wife detailing Congressional debate and reaction to the War of 1812, as well as recounting many political developments of the period. The letters also discuss family affairs and

illuminate the daily life of a Congressman. Some Abijah Bigelow correspondence deals with legal and financial affairs, as well as the Bigelow family genealogy, in addition to politics and family concerns. There is a bound folio volume of typescript copies of some of the letters of Bigelow to his wife, evidently used to edit the correspondence for publication. Seven letters are in typescript form for which there do not appear to be originals. These letters are designated “Abijah Bigelow Typescript Letters.”

The collection includes letters of Susan Bigelow Greene to her father and to her husband; letters of their daughter, Susan Elizabeth Greene (-), a struggling Boston artist, to her father while Dr. Greene served in a Norfolk, Va., army hospital during the Civil War; and letters of Seth Adams (1800-1866) to his Bigelow sisters-in-law concerning the disposition of the estate of their late father, Abijah.

There is correspondence between Sarah Bigelow Adams and her parents, and her sister, relating to family social activities and travels in New England. There are typescript commentaries with several letters, prepared by Daniel Berkeley Updike (-). There is also genealogical information in these letters.

The collection also contains a drama and a dialogue in verse, as well as an undated notebook of Abijah Bigelow containing essays and creative writings. Most of the pages in the book have been cut out. Other papers include deeds stemming from Bigelow's legal practice, a few receipts, and sermons of Francis Gardner (1736-1814) of Leominster, Mass., as well as a poetry book, 1824-1825, of Susan Bigelow Greene.

There is also one octavo volume of receipts of Abijah Bigelow for the period 1 May 1804 to 17 March 1808 that records, on partially printed forms, moneys collected in Leominster by Bigelow for various clients.

Catalog cards designated “Abijah Bigelow Papers,” “Abijah Bigelow Letters,” “Bigelow Family Letters,” “Bigelow Family Papers,” and Abijah Bigelow Typescript Letters” are included within this collection.

See Contents List.

4 March 1976
revised 23 July 1979
contents list added 7 February 1991

American Antiquarian Society
MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT

BIGELOW FAMILY, PAPERS, 1785-C. 1883
CONTENTS LIST

- Box 1, Folder 1: Miscellaneous Papers, n.d.; 1781-1875 [uncataloged]
--includes deeds, receipts, legal papers, etc.
- Box 1, Folder 2: Miscellaneous Papers [cataloged]
--includes notebook of Abijah Bigelow; essays, drama, dialogue, etc.;
genealogical information
- Bigelow Family, Papers, 1791-c. 1883 [cataloged]
- Box 1, Folder 3: 1791-1811
Box 1, Folder 4: 1812
Box 1, Folder 5: 1813
Box 2, Folder 1: 1814, January-August
Box 2, Folder 2: 1814, September-
December
Box 2, Folder 3: 1815-1825
Box 2, Folder 4: 1826-1859
Box 2, Folder 5: 1860-c. 1883

Box 2, Folder 6: Miscellaneous Items [uncataloged]

Octavo Volume 1: Abijah Bigelow, Receipt Book, 1804-1808

Folio Volume 1: Abijah Bigelow, Letters to his wife, 1810-1815 [typescript]