

**American Antiquarian Society
Manuscript Collections**

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Stearns, Samuel, Papers, 1784-1810; 1904-1935

LOCATION(S):

Mss. boxes "S"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

one manuscript box

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

See J.C.L. Clark, "The Famous Dr. Stearns," in *PAAS*, vol. 45, pp. 317-424.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Gift of J.C.L. (John Calvin Lawrence) Clark, 1927 and 1934

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Samuel Stearns (1741-1809) was born in Bolton, Mass., and died in Brattleboro, Vt. He was a physician and astronomer who settled in Paxton, Mass., from 1771 to 1784, and issued annually a North-American Almanack. Because the "Sons of Liberty" dubbed him a Tory, his practice declined and in 1780 he was jailed in Worcester on the charge of passing counterfeit bills. He escaped to the protection of the British in New York, practicing on Long Island until the end of the war. In 1782, he published the first Nautical Almanack ever printed in America. In 1784 Stearns returned to Paxton and was once again jailed in Worcester until 1787, at which time he moved to Brattleboro, Vt. In 1788 he went to England to obtain reimbursement for his losses, and in 1790 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws from Aberdeen University in Scotland. His further travels in Europe at this time are described in his Dr. Stearns's Tour From London to Paris ... (London, 1790). In 1791 he published The American Oracle, a collection of his contributions to the Philadelphia Magazine, and other miscellaneous materials. He returned to the United States in 1791, and continued publication of his almanacs. His American Herbal was published in 1801. Stearns labored for twenty-eight years on a "Medical Dispensatory," a compendium of extant medical knowledge, but died before its completion.

This collection of papers, covering the period 1784 to 1810 and 1904 to 1935, includes correspondence and petitions, from 1784 to 1810. There are three letters to Stearns's sister Martha (1750-1823) and her husband, Simon Houghton (1737-1814), describing his stay at the Worcester jail. There is also a 1786 petition, plus a copy of a 1787 petition, to the Massachusetts legislature for his release from the Worcester jail. Also included is an undated copy of a petition for contributions for the relief of Stearns, who was at the time in jail in Keene, N.H.

The collection also includes the undated, uncompleted manuscript of “The North-Americans Dispensatory,” which attempts to list prescriptions and index diseases and their remedies. With the manuscript is a 1904 letter of John Calvin Lawrence Clark (1871-1936) discussing the manuscript, along with a page from a 1904 book dealer catalog listing this manuscript for sale.

There is a notebook from 1796 to 1803 that contains war poetry and other writings, including a copy of Stearns’s lengthy 1796 proposal for support for his medical publications; an undated essay entitled “Medical Communications,” discussing different kinds of pain; and a copy of Stearns’s 1797 letter to the Providence Gazette, condemning the Connecticut medical convention for refusing to support his publications. Also included are copies of letters, from 1797 to 1799, to other physicians concerning his publications, and a copy of a 1799 petition to the King and Parliament requesting reimbursement for his losses. Also in this notebook is an undated deposition, setting forth injustices done him, and other miscellaneous material. This notebook is numbered consecutively, and follows the numbering started in the incomplete manuscript, “The North-Americans Dispensatory.”

This collection of Stearns papers also include a volume of John Calvin Lawrence Clark’s original manuscript of his paper on Dr. Stearns, published in the 1935 AAS Proceedings, including a bibliography of Asa Houghton (1775-1829) almanacs (Asa learned his trade from Stearns) which was not published in the Proceedings.

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**American Antiquarian Society
MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT**

STEARNS, SAMUEL, PAPERS, 1784-1810; 1904-1935
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FOLDER	CONTENTS
1	Papers, n.d.; 1784-1810 --includes correspondence and petitions
1a	Papers, n.d.; 1904-1933 --includes a copy of a petition and papers related to the collection
2	“The North-Americans Dispensatory ...” by Samuel Stearns [242 pp.]
3	Notebook, 1796-1803 [pp. 243-396; 411-412] --contains poetry, proposals for medical publications, correspondence, etc.
4	“The Famous Dr. Stearns” by J. C. L. Clark [111 pp.]