

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Washburn Family, Papers, 1811-1881

LOCATION(S):

Mss. boxes "W"
Octavo vols. "W"
Folio vols. "W"
Oversize vols. "W"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

3 manuscript boxes; 3 octavo volumes; 1 folio volume (216 pp., many blank); 1 oversize folder

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Papers relating to Washburn's estate were removed from the collection of Peter Child Bacon papers, which were given to the AAS by Thomas H. Gage. Much of the family and business papers and the volume of donations were transferred from the Cheever-Wheeler Family papers, which were the gift of Eunice Wheeler, 1979.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Ichabod Washburn (1798-1868) of Worcester, Mass., was born on 11 August 1798, the son of Ichabod and Sylvia (Bradford) Washburn. A leading manufacturer of wire in the U.S., he diversified his interests into many businesses related to the wire industry. His firm, known as Washburn and Moen after 1850, remained in the control of the Washburn family after his death on 30 December 1868. He was devoutly religious and donated much money to various religious, educational, and charitable organizations.

Washburn married, first, on 6 October 1823, Ann G. Brown (c. 1804-c. 1855). They had three children: a son born on 1 December 1824, who died in infancy; Eliza Ann (1826-1853), who married Philip Louis Moen (1824-1891), future partner of Washburn; and Lucy Pamela (1832-1855). He married, second, in 1859, Elizabeth Bancroft Cheever (1812-1893), of Hallowell, Me.

The collection includes family correspondence and personal papers, business correspondence and legal and business papers, and papers relating to Ichabod Washburn's estate. The family correspondence, for the years 1811 to 1869, includes letters from his daughters, Eliza and Lucy, as well as occasional letters of Washburn and his first wife, Ann, to their daughters. Eliza's letters to her parents illuminate boarding school life in Hatfield, Mass., and Hanover, N.H. She described her studies, daily social activities (with a few comments about the boldness of Dartmouth students), and included several recipes for her mother. After her marriage in 1846, Eliza spoke of daily activities in Brooklyn, N.Y., and later, difficulties in maintaining reliable servants in Worcester in 1847. In 1853, her sister, Lucy, wrote an account of Eliza's illness and death, and

wrote of her own stay at a health spa in 1854. There is also a small collection of poems and school compositions written by Eliza.

The family correspondence also includes letters written between Washburn and his twin brother, Charles (1798-1875), who eventually joined in his manufacturing interests. The letters began when the two were young boys and Washburn left the family home in Kingston, Mass., to be apprenticed as a harness maker in Duxbury, Mass., and then as a blacksmith in the Worcester area. Later, Charles wrote of his activities at Brown University and family and business matters. He also referred in detail to religious revivalism in Harrison, Me., where he lived for a time.

The business correspondence, for the years 1845 to 1868, consists mostly of letters of George Bedson (- 1884), general manager of the Bradford Iron Works near Manchester, England. The letters contain descriptions of Bedson's new techniques for rolling mills and other new equipment available to Washburn, some accompanied by sketches. Bedson also worked with Washburn to secure his patents in America and took an eager interest in the progress of the American Civil War, frequently offering his opinions of the war, the British government's attitude, and his support of the North. Later, he commented on the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the probable failure of the Atlantic Cable, and a court case in the U.S. involving one of his patents. The business papers include bills, receipts, memoranda, and balance sheets, for the period 1862 to 1865, for I. Washburn and Moen.

There is also a collection of papers pertaining to Washburn's will, 1868, which was contested by one of his legatees, the American Bible Society. Included are legal papers and correspondence for various beneficiaries of his will, a copy of his will, papers concerning Bedson's patents, and the efforts of Washburn's second wife, Elizabeth, to settle the estate.

Other items in the collection include a schoolbook kept by Washburn, c. 1812; a small leather case containing his passports, 1851 and 1860 (in the oversize folder); a diary he kept of his 1860 trip to Europe; and a volume of sundry expenses and donations made by Washburn, 1844-1856. The latter volume also contains notes on mills visited by him, accompanied by several sketches. There is also a small account book, 1856-1863; newsclippings that refer mainly to his will; and legal papers and patents, 1846-1867.

The folio volume is an account book, c. 1821 – c. 1822, of Stephen R. Tenney (-) and Washburn, who evidently engaged in the manufacture of lead pipe. At the end of the volume are approximately thirty pages of household accounts, c. 1826 – c. 1828.

See Contents List.

American Antiquarian Society

MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT

WASHBURN FAMILY, PAPERS, 1811-1881

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- 16 1869 - 1873
- 17 1878; 1880
- 18 Ichabod Washburn, Will (copy), 1868

Bills, receipts, etc. of the Ichabod Washburn Estate, 1868 - 1881

- 19 1868 - 1869, January
- 20 1869, February - May
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- 22 1869, July - November
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		American Missionary Association
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30	1873 - 1881	
31	Newclippings re: "The Washburn Will Case," 1870 - 1871	
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**OCTAVO
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		Volumes of Ichabod Washburn
1	Donation Book, 1844 - 1856 [gift of Eunice Wheeler, 1979]	
2	Summary of Accounts, 1856 - 1863	

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European Trip Diary, 1860