

**American Antiquarian Society
Manuscript Collections**

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Way-Champlain Family, Correspondence, 1792-c. 1904

LOCATION(S):

Mss. boxes "W"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

two manuscript boxes

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

For biographical information, see Ramsay MacMullen, *Sisters of the Brush ...* (New Haven, c1997) and William Lamson Warren, "Mary Way's Dressed Miniatures," *Antiques*, Oct. 1992, 540-549.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Gift of Ramsay MacMullen, 2005

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Mary Way (1769-1833) and her sister Elizabeth Way (1771-1825) were born in New Haven, Conn., the daughters of Ebenezer Way (1728-1813) and Mary Taber Way (1737-1771). The sisters were both painters of small watercolors.

Mary Way moved to New York City about 1811 and advertised herself as a portrait and miniature painter, as well as a teacher of drawing. She had a studio in New York until 1820, when she went blind and returned to New London. Today she is recognized primarily as a producer of miniatures including "dressed miniatures."

Elizabeth Way painted in New London throughout her adult life. In 1794, she married George Whitefield Champlain (1771-1820) of New London, Conn., a shipping merchant. They had four children: George Oliver (1796-1835); Eliza Way (1797-1886), who was also an artist; Samuel (1800-1844); and William (1802-1832).

Eliza Way Champlain also pursued a career in painting in New York City until her marriage in 1826 to Edward Cort Riley (1799-1871?), son of Edward Riley (1769-1829), a New York musical instrument manufacturer and music publisher. Edward Cort Riley was himself a music teacher, publisher, and conductor.

The bulk of this collection spans the years from 1817 to 1831. The correspondence contains much material on family matters, as well as local affairs in New London. In addition to correspondence of the three women, there are letters from George Oliver Champlain, who beginning in about 1817 worked in Natchez, Miss., and New Orleans, La., as a book binder. By 1827, George was in New York City, and a few years later was clerk and manager of a theatrical company touring in New England. The letters of Mary Way and Elizabeth Way Champlain Riley from New York City describe the New York art world,

including sales and exhibitions, and discuss painting theory and techniques. A number of letters deal with the loss of Mary's eyesight. The women were interested in literature as well as art, and numerous letters contain poetry.

The entire collection was transcribed by Ramsay MacMullen, who also numbered the original letters. The collection contains a complete set of the transcriptions.

See Contents List.

**American Antiquarian Society
MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT**

WAY-CHAMPLAIN FAMILY, CORRESPONDENCE, 1792-c. 1904
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Miscellaneous Materials

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Box 1, Folder 2: Genealogical notes, etc., n.d.; 1792-c. 1904

Correspondence

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| Box 1, Folder 4: | 1818 January-July | (#30-59) |
| Box 1, Folder 5: | 1819 August-1821 February 10 | (#60-90) |
| Box 1, Folder 6: | [1821 February]-1822 May 15 | (#91-122) |
| Box 1, Folder 7: | [1822 May]-1824 January 11 | (#123-152) |
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| Box 1, Folder 10: | 1826 April 6-1827 October 12 | (#214-244) |
| Box 1, Folder 11: | 1827 October 20-1830 September 3 | (#245-276) |
| Box 1, Folder 12: | 1830 October 12-1832 April 23 | (#277-299) |
| Box 1, Folder 13: | [1832 April-June]-1879 | (#300-328) |

Transcriptions

- | | | |
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