

Dwight collection
RC.1986.7

Finding aid prepared by Venus Van Ness



Norman Rockwell Museum Archives - Reference Center Collection
Processed in 2011

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Summary Information

Repository	Norman Rockwell Museum Archives - Reference Center Collection
Creator	Dwight, R. H. W. (R. Henry W.), 1859–1920
Title	Dwight collection
Date	1700's
Extent	49.0 Linear feet
Contact	Norman Rockwell Museum Archival Collections, The Norman Rockwell Museum, 9 Glendale Road, Route 183 Stockbridge, MA 01262, 413-931-2251 Venus@nrm.org
Language	English
Abstract	The Dwight Collection contains materials documenting the lives of members of the Dwight and Williams families and was assembled by R.H.W. Dwight in the early 1900's. Also contained in the collection are documents relating to the early history of Berkshire County.

Preferred Citation

Dwight Collection, Norman Rockwell Museum Archives, Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Biographical note

The Dwight Collection, which documents the early history of Berkshire County and the lives of certain members of the Dwight and Williams families, was assembled by R. Henry W. Dwight (1859–1920). R. H. W. Dwight left the Dwight Collection (except for one volume given to Williams College) to his eldest son Winslow. Before 1934, the collection was on loan to the Massachusetts Historical Society. After returning to the Dwight family in Stockbridge, the collection was donated in 1986 to the Norman Rockwell Museum.

Born February 26, 1788 in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, his father was also named Henry Williams Dwight (1757–1804) and mother was Abigail Welles (1763–1840). His grandfather was Joseph Dwight (1703–1765), and mother traced her ancestry to Thomas Welles (1590–1659). Dwight attended Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts where he studied law. He was admitted to the Massachusetts bar in 1809 and practiced in Stockbridge. During the War of 1812 Dwight served as aide-de-camp with the rank of colonel on the staff of General Whiton, and kept the title colonel for the rest of his life. He served as member of the Massachusetts State house of representatives in 1818.

Dwight was elected as a Federalist to the Seventeenth Congress starting on March 4, 1821. He was reelected as an Adams-Clay Federalist to the Eighteenth Congress.

Dwight was elected as an Adams candidate to the Nineteenth and Twentieth Congresses, and was re-elected as an Anti-Jacksonian to the Twenty-first Congress until March 3, 1831. He was not a candidate for re-nomination in 1830 to the Twenty-second Congress. He was again a member of the State house of representatives in 1834. He became a trustee of William College, and nominated Mark Hopkins as its president in 1836. He married Frances Fowler (1797–after 1874) on November 10, 1824. They had one daughter who died young, followed by two sons. Henry Williams Dwight, III was born September 23, 1825, and died May 16, 1861. James Fowler Dwight was born January 30, 1830. He later joined the Union Army in the American Civil War and rose to rank of colonel.

Dwight died in New York City on February 21, 1845. He was buried in Stockbridge Cemetery in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Scope and Contents

The four individuals whose lives are most fully documented in the Dwight Collection are Col. Elijah Williams (1732–1815), son of Ephraim Williams, Sr., founder of West Stockbridge; Henry Williams Dwight (1757–1804), Revolutionary War soldier, treasurer of Berkshire County, and clerk of the county court; and his sons Col. Henry Williams Dwight (1788–1845), lawyer, president of the Berkshire Agricultural Society, and member of Congress (1821–1831); and Rev. Edwin Welles Dwight (1789–

1841), first headmaster of the Foreign Mission School, Cornwall, Connecticut, and minister in Richmond, Massachusetts (1819–1837).

The Dwight Collections includes several hundred items such as royal commissions, deeds, bonds, bills of sale of property, memorandum books, and letters. Three of the volumes relate to Elijah Williams and are arranged in chronological order. The earliest is a Middlesex County deed signed by Ephraim Williams in 1717. A letter dated 1754 relates to George Washington. There are bills of sale for a slave and the signature of the first white child born in Stockbridge. Paul Revere's name appears on a receipts for jewelry sold.

A second volume contains a statement of iron being shipped to England from Massachusetts in 1767. There are letters from Boston Gaol After Williams' arrest as a Tory and a bundle of letters relating to his Toryism. A paper dated 1808 relates to the arrest of a citizen for traveling on horseback on a Sunday.

Volume 4 contains a collection of letters from Charles W. Dwight during the Civil War. Volume 5 contains the first survey made in Berkshire County, the original manuscript on vellum. There are royal commissions of Josiah Williams to Crown Point in 1765, and Joseph Williams to Fort Iroquois in 1756.

Volume 6 contains the genealogical register of R.H.W. Dwight. Volume 7, relating to Stockbridge, contains a large number of Indian papers. One paper has the signature of Perez Hamlin of Shay's Rebellion fame.

Volume 8 relates to Joseph Dwight and contains notable signatures including those of John Hancock and William Pepperell. Volume 9 and others relate to Henry W. Dwight and contains his Revolutionary War diary. Volume 10 contains papers relating to Great Barrington. This volume also contains papers drawn up by William Cullen Bryant.

There is also a card index numbering approximately 15,000 arranged by subject, names and places.

Arrangement

The content within each volume is arranged chronologically

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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Access

The collection is open to researchers by appointment.

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Provenance

Materials donated by Lois D. McDaniel

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Massachusetts - Berkshire County

Personal Name(s)

- Dwight, E. W. (Edwin Welles) , Reverend, 1789-1841
- Dwight, Henry Williams , 1757–1804
- Dwight, Henry Williams , Colonel, 1788-1845
- Williams, Elijah, Colonel, 1732-1815

Subject(s)

- Williams College