

THING FAMILY PAPERS, 1814-1903

Collection #
SC 2360

Table of Contents

[User information](#)
[Historical sketch](#)
[Scope and Content note](#)
[Cataloguing information](#)

Processed by
Charles Latham
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USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 4 folders

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1814-1903; bulk 1814-1831

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Spencer P. Ballou, Richmond VA, 28 January 1993

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ACCESSION NUMBER: 93.0212

NOTE: This collection was donated in memory of the donor's grandmother, Helen Prescott Pardoe.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

John and Samuel Thing and their sister Nancy were members of a family in the lake district of New Hampshire centering around Lake Winnepesaukee. About 1814 Samuel Thing went west, stopping in Cincinnati and settling in Vincennes. Samuel married his first wife, Nancy, in Cincinnati, and they had a son, also named Samuel.

Samuel was at first very enthusiastic about the frontier, but soon became disillusioned, particularly by the prevalent sickness, which brought his wife to an untimely end. However, unable to sell his house and ill himself, he stayed on, eventually marrying a second wife, Nancy Flynn, about 1826. A supporter of John Quincy Adams, he named a son of this second marriage after the President. He died of tuberculosis about 1831.

John Thing remained in New Hampshire; he was addressed at Meredith, Guilford, and Gilmanton. He was a

Jacksonian in politics. The sister, Betsey, married Samuel Gilman, and moved with him to Chateaugay, New York, near the Canadian border. They had at least five children.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection contains ten letters written by Samuel Thing to his brother John between 1814 and 1828, and an 1831 letter from his son Samuel reporting his father's death.

These letters, in Folders 1 and 2, go through an evolution, which is probably typical of many who moved West. The first letters are full of the advantages of the country, the fertility of the soil and the chances to prosper. Then comes a period when the family and the community are struck by sickness, when wife and neighbors die of fever and consumption, and when Samuel longs to return home. Just when he wants to sell his house, times are hard because of the Panic of 1819, and the sale is impossible. Finally he remarries, and sticks it out until his own death from consumption.

The later letters have quite a bit of political discussion in them. Oddly enough, the western brother supports New Englander John Quincy Adams in the 1820s, and considers Andrew Jackson unqualified to be President and what is more "a d...d barbarous tyrannical self conceited old scoundrel, and not the feeling of a human." The New Hampshire brother, for his part, calls Samuel a Tory, and applauds Jackson as a war hero.

Folder 3 contains Xerox copies of the letters in the collection. Folder 4 contains transcripts of letters in the collection, and also of two letters from Samuel Gilman and two others, all of which are stored at New Hampshire Historical Society.

Because of the fragile condition of the originals, the copies and transcripts should be used by patrons.

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Thing, Samuel, d. 1831?

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Thing, Samuel, d. 1831?

Thing, John, fl. 1810-1830

Gilman, Samuel, fl. 1820-1825

Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845--Public opinion

Adams, John Quincy, 1767-1848--Public opinion

Frontier and pioneer life--Indiana--Vincennes

Panics (Finance)--Indiana

Vincennes (Ind.)

United States--Politics' and government--1783-1865

END