

**Edward W. and Harriet (Clark) Peck  
Letters, 1850-1931 (Bulk: 1860-1880)  
MSA 786-787**

## **Introduction**

This collection consists chiefly of correspondence to Edward W. Peck (1823-1906) and his wife, Harriet (Clark) Peck (1824-1903), of Burlington, Vermont, and various family members especially during the period 1860-1880. The collection was purchased by J. Brooks Buxton from Merrill's Auctions of Williston, Vermont, and donated to the Vermont Historical Society in June 2016. The collection is housed in two archival flip-top storage boxes, and occupies one linear foot of shelf space.

## **Biographical Sketch**

Edward Williams Peck was born January 20, 1823, in Burlington, Vermont, one of John and Almira Peck's nine children. Edward's siblings were John Henry (1810-1874), Cassius P. (1812-1872), Frances C. (1814-1815), Samuel C. (1816-1816), Theodore Augustus (1817-1871), George Huntington (1819-1903), William Ware (1821?-1897), and Helen M. Y. (1825-1827). Around 1806, Edward's father left Woodbury, Connecticut, to settle on a large plot of land on College Street in Burlington, Vermont. John became a leading merchant and a bank president in Burlington. He was descended from Joseph Peck (1610-1700), who is said to have emigrated from Yorkshire, England, to New Haven, Connecticut.

Edward Peck (1823-1906) married Harriet Clark (1824-1903) of Milton around 1845. In 1867 Edward worked at his brother-in-law Jediah P. Clark's wholesale grocery business in Burlington. By 1873, Edward was running his own firm, E. W. Peck & Co. on College St., "dealers in nails, salt, lime, flout &c." Edward served as a bank director in that city, and as president of Champlain Mutual Fire Insurance Company. After Edward retired from retailing, his company was carried on by two employees (and possibly relatives), James (1831-1898) and John E. Peck (1835?-1909), originally of Bristol, Connecticut. Edward then served as Chittenden county treasurer for many years, and briefly as an agent for the steamer *Herald* out of Burlington. Edward and Harriet had no children. They made their home on the Peck family property at 326 College St. in Burlington's Centre Ward. Edward died, a widower, on June 25, 1906, in Burlington; Harriet had predeceased him in 1903.

Harriet Clark (1824-1903) was born into a prominent and prosperous family. She was daughter of Joseph Clark (1795-1879) of Milton, Vermont, and his wife, Louisa Lyon of Colchester, Vermont. Joseph Clark was born in 1795 in Bridport, Addison County, Vermont, where his parents, James and Submit (Hazelton) Clark, had arrived from Connecticut. The family removed to Milton, Vermont, between 1795 and 1797, and in 1801, they moved west to Nelson, a town near Syracuse, N.Y. Joseph returned to Milton as a young man in 1816. He took up the lumber trade there, clearing vast tracts of forest and selling the wood in the Montreal and New York City markets. As a budding

entrepreneur, Joseph purchased a sawmill and a gristmill at the falls in Milton and later became partner in a general store there. Joseph was instrumental in the development of the growing town and amassed a large fortune in the process. At the dawn of rail travel in Vermont, he and partners built several railroad lines in the northwest corner of the state, including an extension of the Central Vermont Rail Road from the main line into Milton. This allowed the town to develop into a prosperous Lake Champlain summer vacation destination. Clark remained on the boards of these railroads. He was also associated with the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank in Burlington with John Peck, Edward's father. Clark was active in Milton affairs all his life and served three terms in the Vermont senate. The Clark Memorial Building in Milton was originally Joseph Clark's family home and remained in the family until 1916 when his heirs deeded it to the town for use until no longer needed.

The Peck family in Burlington had several illustrious members. Edward's brother, Theodore Augustus Peck, was a Burlington druggist whose son Theodore "Theo" Safford Peck served as Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard for over twenty years. Theo received the Congressional Medal of Honor after a notable military career in the First Vermont Cavalry and Ninth Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. He held many positions of importance in military organizations and associations. Theo was founder and principal of T. S. Peck Insurance in Burlington. His daughter Theodora (née Mary) Agnes Peck achieved note as an author of historical novels and poetry in the early 1900s. Edward's nephew Dr. Edward "Ned" Sprague Peck was an oculist and professor of surgery at the University of Vermont, while another brother, William Ware Peck, was an attorney in Burlington. Yet another brother, George Huntington Peck, struck forth on the high seas, to eventually end up as an early settler of California in 1849. Trained as a lawyer at University of Vermont, George embraced the many different vocations his adventurous life dictated: lawyer, sailor, ocean explorer, farmer, miner, produce merchant, and finally, educator (principal, school superintendent) in California in its formative years.

### **Scope and Content**

This collection mainly consists of the personal correspondence of members of two very prominent Vermont families – the Pecks and the Clarks, of Burlington and Milton, Vermont, respectively, primarily during the period 1850-1931. Most of the letters were written to Harriet (Mrs. Edward) Peck and her husband from their siblings, nieces and nephews, between 1850 and 1896. Many of these letters were sent "back home" from relatives who had moved to the mid-west. Among them are many letters from Theodore "Theo" Safford Peck and his family. Letters from Harriet's sister-in-law Lucia (Mrs. Cassius Peck) contain news of the latest New York fashions and include details of purchases made for Harriet of clothing, fabric, and other items. There is a small group of letters between Harriet and Edward, in addition to letters to Edward concerning business matters.

The collection also contains a small group of invoices and receipts for clothing and food items, a group of calling cards, and an interesting group of miscellaneous

papers, including a list of homestead expenses by Edward Peck, a list of places he visited on his “Journey of 1871 & 1872,” and the financial accounts for and narrative about the Clark farm in Milton, Vermont.

Unfortunately, there are no diaries, photographs, or first-hand genealogical information in the collection itself, which could have added some context to the correspondence.

### **Related collections**

The VHS museum collection contains three items related to the Peck family:

- “[O]ne of the first saddles rode by Col. T.S. Peck into Richmond after Lee vocuated of the 1<sup>st</sup> Vt Cavery Co L” [sic], as acc. 1991.54.1 a-b.
- A brass desk plaque, presented by the Grand Army of the Republic Post #2 to Capt. T.S. Peck, as acc. 2008.15.1.
- A glass inkwell donated by Theodora Peck to the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, Vermont, as acc. 1965.26.2.

The library collection contains:

- Sheet music for Theodora Peck's poem, *The Spirit of the Flag*, at 784.71 J767s.
- Theodora Peck's book, *Hester of the Grants : a romance of old Bennington*, at 813 P336h 1905.
- A group portrait of military personnel containing the image of Theodore Safford Peck is found in a photo album at FB-1:3.
- A map of Burlington with an engraving of John H[enry] Peck's residence may be found at 912.7431 B925p 1853.
- *Journal kept aboard ship while collecting bird's eggs and skins off coast of Newfoundland, 17 June - 10 August 1838*, by George Huntington Peck (1819-1903) may be found at 920 P334.

### **Inventory**

#### Correspondence

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| MSA 786:1 | Edward Peck with Harriet Peck, 1859-1876, and undated             |
| :2        | Invitations from Harriet Peck, 1854, and undated.                 |
| :3        | To Harriet and Edward Peck, from various people, 1850-1864.       |
| :4        | _____, 1865-1870.   |
| :5        | _____, 1871.  |
| :6        | _____, 1872, January through March.                               |
| :7        | _____, _____, April through October.                              |
| MSA 787:1 | _____, 1873-1875.   |
| :2        | _____, 1876-1896.   |
| :3        | _____, undated.   |
| :4        | _____, _____ (continued).   |
| :5        | Other correspondence, 1863-1955, and undated.                     |
| :6        | _____, fragments of letters from Theodore Safford Peck, c. 1870?. |

Other materials

- :7 Calling cards, undated.
- :8 Invoices and receipts, 185?-1878, and undated.  
Includes details on dressmaking purchases in 1875 and detailed expenses for a trip (undated).
- :9 Misc. papers, 1851-1931, and undated.  
Includes program for Washington Ball, 1856; Masonic excursion on Lake Champlain, 1870; program of a concert, 1871; list of places visited by E.W. Peck [?] in 1871-1872; "Cost of house" list by E.W. Peck; "Daily Report of Wood Delivered C.V.R.R." 1881; fragment of financial statement for Champlain Mutual Fire Insurance Co., E.W. Peck, Pres., 1874; financial account from Clark Farm in Milton, Vermont, 1931.

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