## Fairbanks Papers 1815-1889 Doc 1-5, Doc 95

#### Introduction

The Fairbanks Papers are the records of E. and T. Fairbanks and Company of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and the correspondence of Erastus Fairbanks, one of the founders of the company and two-term Vermont governor. There are a few papers of the other founders, Thaddeus and Joseph Fairbanks, and Erastus's son Horace, and papers of the Vermont International Telegraph Co.

The papers were donated in two groups by Cornelia T. Fairbanks, ca. 1954, and 1959; a few of the papers may also have been donated by Arthur F. Stone, ca. 1944. They are house in six boxes and occupy 6 linear feet of shelf space. This finding guide was prepared as part of a project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

### **Biographical Sketch**

E. and T. Fairbanks and Company was operated by the three sons of Joseph and Phoebe Paddock Fairbanks: Erastus (1792-1864), Thaddeus (1796-1886), and Joseph P. (1806-1855). The eldest son, Erastus, was the first of the family to move to Vermont, leaving his Brimfield, Massachusetts, birthplace in 1811; the rest of the family followed in 1815. While Erastus operated a store in Barnet, Vermont, his father and brother, Thaddeus, built and operated a gristmill and sawmill, and built carriages in St. Johnsbury. In 1823 Thaddeus built an iron foundry and Erastus joined him to establish E. and T. Fairbanks, to manufacture stoves and plows. Thaddeus, an inventor and mechanic, perfected and patented a design for a platform scale in 1830 and three years later Erastus, Thaddeus, and their youngest brother, Joseph, formed E. and T. Fairbanks and Company to manufacture and sell the scales. Erastus and Joseph managed the business while Thaddeus provided the mechanical expertise. Because of the size of the scales and the relative remoteness of St. Johnsbury, the Fairbanks contracted with agents and mechanics who were given defined territories to sell, assemble, and repair the scales. The company was successful and the scales became renowned nationally and internationally. E. and T. Fairbanks and Company continued in business until 1916 when it was purchased by Fairbanks, Morse and Company of Cincinnati and Chicago (originally an agent of E. and T. Fairbanks and Company). Ownership has changed several times but scales continue to be made in St. Johnsbury (as of 1996).

While serving as president of E. and T. Fairbanks and Company, Erastus was also active in civic affairs and politics. A member of the Congregational Church in St. Johnsbury, he was president of the Vermont Domestic Missionary Society, and a member of the American Board of Foreign Missions, and was active in the temperance movement. He was elected to the legislature in 1836 and was chosen presidential elector in 1844 and 1848 for the Whig party. He was elected governor in 1852 and again in 1860.

As one of six men to be granted a charter for the Connecticut and Passumpsic Railroad in 1835, Erastus supported the railroad project through its third charter and was named president when the company finally organized in 1846. He held that position until 1854.

Erastus Fairbanks married Lois Crossman of Peacham, Vermont, in 1815 and they had nine children: Jane, 1816-1852 (m. Ephraim Jewett); George, 1819-1843; Horace, 1820-1888; Charles, 1821-1898; Julia, 1824-1884 (m. John H. Paddock); Franklin, 1828-1895; Sarah, 1831-1858; Emily, 1833-1859 (m. Charles Stone); Ellen (m. Constans Goodel).

Thaddeus Fairbanks was born in Brimfield, Massachusetts, in 1796 and moved to St. Johnsbury, Vermont, in 1815. He was an inventor with many patents including a cast iron stove and plow. In 1830 he and Erastus became interested in the raising and processing of hemp, and Thaddeus patented a hemp dresser (and was for a time manager of the St. Johnsbury Hemp Company). His most successful invention was the platform scale in 1830. He married Lucy Peck Barker in 1820 and they had a son, Henry (b. 1830), and daughter, Charlotte (m. George Webber). Thaddeus Fairbanks died in 1886.

Joseph Fairbanks was born in 1806. He studied law and from 1828 to 1833 had a law practice in Vermont before joining his brothers in the platform scale business. He was elected to the legislature in 1845 and fought for improvements in education, temperance, and spoke out against slavery and against the Mexican War. Together with his brothers he founded St. Johnsbury Academy. He married Almira Taylor in 1845 and had two children: Edward Taylor (b. 1836), and William Paddock (1840-1895).

#### **Scope and Content**

The Fairbanks Papers are made up of records of E. and T. Fairbanks and Company, 1832-1876, a stove and scale manufacturer in St. Johnsbury, Vermont; and correspondence of Erastus Fairbanks, 1815-1861, and his brothers Thaddeus and Joseph, 1834-1876, and son Horace, 1848-1873. There are also some papers of the Vermont International Telegraph Co., 1877-1889. The papers are divided into two sections as they were received by the Vermont Historical Society at different times. The contents of each section is similar although the first has more business records and the second more correspondence of Erastus Fairbanks.

The E. and T. Fairbanks and Company records in both sections include correspondence, 1832-1875, with agents who sold Fairbanks' products including many letters ordering stock and reporting sales and inventory. Some of the letters have specifications for scales that customers wanted designed. There are also letters of complaint and letters of endorsement. In addition to the correspondence there are financial records, 1835-1876, such as bills, receipts and accounts; and legal papers, 1833-1866, made up of agreements, deeds, and contracts.

The correspondence of Erastus Fairbanks is about the scale business, railroading, politics, and Fairbanks' interest in the temperance movement, and the Congregational Church in St. Johnsbury.

Many of the letters to Erastus Fairbanks are addressed to him as president of the Connecticut and Passumpsic (C and P) Railroad, a position he held from 1846 to 1854. A prolific correspondent was Miller Fox who was involved in the construction of the road. There is also correspondence about other railroads in Vermont and throughout the country and Canada.

Fairbanks was very active politically and many of his letters concern the Whig Party of which he was a member. He corresponded with other politicians of the era including Justin Morrill (1810-1898), George Marsh (1801-1882), and William Slade (1786-1859). In 1854 and 1855 there is mention of the Know Nothing Party and Free Soil Party (Doc 95:75, 76,77), and there is an undated initiation ceremony of the Independent Order of Know Somethings (Doc 95:89). An issue of importance to Fairbanks was temperance and there are letters throughout about temperance conventions, liquor laws, and a temperance newspaper. He was also strongly anti-slavery and in 1848 there are papers about the American Colonization Society (Doc 95:85), and in 1857 about the Vermont Colonization Society (Doc 5:32). Fairbanks was elected to the Vermont legislature in 1836, and was elected governor in 1852 and 1860 and there are letters written to him in his official capacity. There is a series of memos, letters, and telegrams, ca. 1861, concerning Vermont regiments and the Civil War (Doc 5:36, 37, 38 and Doc 95:45, 81, 82).

As a leader in the Second Congregational Church in St. Johnsbury, Fairbanks' correspondence reflects his involvement in church matters such as hiring a minister in 1839 (Doc 95:53), and missionary work.

There are a few family letters including an 1815 letter from Lois Crossman, who was to become Erastus's wife (Doc 95:47). Erastus also corresponded with his brothers and sons while traveling but the letters are more business than personal.

In both sections of the collection there is one folder each of papers of Thaddeus Fairbanks, 1834-1839, Joseph Fairbanks, 1840-1850, and Horace Fairbanks, 1848-1873. Thaddeus's papers include an 1834 description of improvements on platforms scales written for patent application, an 1848 letter about a scale design, an 1849 letter from William Stewart inquiring about buying rights to one of Fairbanks patents, a rejection from the patent office for a patent for improvements in weigh lock apparatus, 1849, and a letter from Horace Fairbanks, 1876, concerning working on Sunday. There is also an 1848 letter written in Spanish. Joseph's papers includes several letters written by him from Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1847, Boston, 1846 and 1849, New Orleans, 1848, and Albany, 1850, which generally describe where he is and discuss business he is conducting in each city, and give instruction for business he has left behind. Several letters addressed to Joseph concern politics and business and there is a resolution written by Joseph against the Mexican War, 1845. Horace's papers include letters by him to a

Mr. Hosmer about business, 1849, and to Mr. Walker about a missionary society, 1873, a letter to him in 1848 about buying a horse, and an 1848 letter written in response to his application to mine.

### **Organization**

The papers are divided in two groups as they were received by the Vermont Historical Society. The two groups are similarly arranged with a series of E. and T. Fairbanks and Co. records, subdivided into correspondence, legal, and financial; and a second series of Fairbanks family papers subdivided by Thaddeus Fairbanks, Joseph Fairbanks, and Erastus Fairbanks.

- I. Part 1
  - A. E. and T. Fairbanks and Co.
    - 1. Correspondence
    - 2. Legal Papers
    - 3. Financial Papers
  - B. Vermont International Telegraph Co.
  - C. Fairbanks family
    - 1. Thaddeus Fairbanks
    - 2. Joseph Fairbanks
    - 3. Horace Fairbanks
    - 4. Erastus Fairbanks
  - D. Miscellaneous
- II. Part 2
  - A. E. and T. Fairbanks and Co.
    - 1. Correspondence
    - 2. Legal Papers
    - 3. Financial papers
  - B. Vermont International Telegraph Co.
  - C. Fairbanks family
    - 1. Thaddeus Fairbanks
    - 2. Joseph Fairbanks
    - 3. Horace Fairbanks
    - 4. Erastus Fairbanks
  - D. Miscellaneous

Before this collection was processed in 1996, each of the papers was assigned a consecutive number as it was found in the box. The papers have now been rearranged and the numbers are no longer in order. Researchers who used the collection in the past may have references to the page numbers; an index showing the current location of the numbered sheets in appended to this finding guide.

#### **Related Collections**

For a description of the E. and T. Fairbanks scale business see Allen Rice Yale Jr.'s "Ingenious and Enterprising Mechanics: A Case Study of Industrialization in Rural Vermont, 1815-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1995. For related collections in the Vermont Historical Society collection look in the Brigham index under the name Fairbanks. Of particular note is a collection of papers acquired from Judge Philip Fairbanks that includes papers of his father, Joseph (1881-1964); grandfather, William P. (1840-1895); and great-grandfather, Joseph P. (1806-1855). Access to the collection is restricted; contact the VHS Librarian for information.

### Inventory

### I. Part 1

A. E. and T. Fairbanks and Co.

1. Correspondence

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Doc 1:1	n.d.
2	1832
3	1833
4	1834
5	1836
6	1838
7	1839 A-B
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9	, <b>D-</b> E
10	, F
11	, G-H
12	, I-J
13	, K-L
14	, M-O
15	, P-R
16	, S
17	, T
18	, U-Z
19	1840 A-B
20	, C-D
21	, E
22	, F
23	, G-H
24	, I-M
25	, N-P
26	, Q-S
27	, T-Z
28	1841 A-C
29	, D-F
30	, G-J
31	, K-O
32	, P-R

33	, Sa-Sk
34	, Sl-V
35	, W-Z
36	1842
37	1844 A-F
38	, G-L
39	, M-Z
40	1845 A-C
41	, <b>D-</b> E
42	, F-G
43	, H-L
44	, M-P
45	, Q-S
46	, T-Z
47	1846 A-C
48	, D-F
49	, G-L
50	, M-S
51	, T-Z
52	1847
53	1848 A-B
54	, C
55	, D-E
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	, K-L
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	1849 A-E
9	1849 A-E , F-L
9 10	1849 A-E , F-L , M-Z
9 10 11	1849 A-E , F-L , M-Z 1850
9 10 11 12	1849 A-E , F-L , M-Z 1850 1851 A-C
9 10 11 12 13	1849 A-E , F-L , M-Z 1850 1851 A-C , D-L
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9 10 11 12 13 14 15	1849 A-E, F-L, M-Z 1850 1851 A-C, D-L, M-Z 1852
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9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	1849 A-E, F-L, M-Z 1850 1851 A-C, D-L, M-Z 1852 1853 1854 1855 1856 1857

24	1875
25	Papers re: advertising
26	, building scales
27	, circulars, ca. 1847-1856
Ms Size C	Advertisement for Tappan, McBurney, and Cheever, n.d.
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28	n.d.
29	1833-1838
30	1840
31	1849
32	1850
33	1851
34	1852
35	1853
36	1854
37	1855
38	1856
39	1857
40	1865
41	1866
3. Financial Pa	pers
42	n.d.
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45	1838
46	1839 accounts current
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52	, miscellaneous accounts
53	1839 bills and receipts
54	,
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58	, notes
59	, bills of lading
60	1840 accounts current
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63	, bills and receipts
64	1841 accounts current
65	, miscellaneous accounts
66	, bills and receipts

67	,
68	,
69	notes
70	1842 miscellaneous accounts
71	1844 miscellaneous accounts
72	1845 accounts current
73	, bills and receipts
74	1846 miscellaneous accounts
75	, bills and receipts
76	, ones, notes
77	1847 accounts current
78	, miscellaneous accounts
78 79	bills and receipts
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Doc 3:1	1848 accounts current
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11 12	1850 miscellaneous accounts
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34	1854 accounts, scales
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41	1855 accounts, scales
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Doc 4:1	1857 miscellaneous accounts
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5	, bills and receipts
6	, ones and receipts
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9	1858 accounts, scales
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11	, bills and receipts
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15	1859 accounts, scales
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18	, miscellaneous accounts
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23	, notes
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25	1860 miscellaneous accounts

	26	, bills and receipts
	27	, notes
	28	1861 bills and receipts
	29	1865 bills and receipts
	30	1866 miscellaneous accounts
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	32	1868 bills and receipts
	33	1869 bills and receipts
	34	1870-1873 bills and receipts
	35	1874 miscellaneous accounts
	36	1875 miscellaneous accounts
	37	, bills and receipts
	38	1876 bills and receipts
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	39	1877-1878
	40	1885
	41	1886
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	44	1887
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	49	1889
C.	Fairbanks fami	
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	2. Fairbanks,	
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	3. Fairbanks, l	
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	4. Fairbanks, l	
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	54	undated
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	56	1840
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	, T-Z
11	1849 A-E
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14	, N-R
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17	, D-G
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23	1852 A-F
24	, G-J
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28	$\frac{1054}{1054}$ , M-Z
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31	1856
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38	Civil War
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- 40 Caledonia County Mutual Fire Insurance organization paper, n.d.
- St. Johnsbury papers: certification of police officers by village trustees, 1857

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                     _____, for scale works or foundry(?), 1848
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88	Interrogations concerning building of a railroad
89	Initiation ceremony for Know Somethings, n.d.
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91	Railroad Papers, 1857 and n.d.
92	C. M. Stone papers, including letter to J. S. Morrill, 1863; deed,
	1861; copy of address to Vermont Press Association, 1886
93	Miscellaneous Bills and receipts
94	Agreement to build road in Fairbanks village, 1842
95	Resolution upon Erastus Fairbanks' death, 1864
96	Miscellaneous
97	, printed