White Family Papers  
(1794-1936)  
MSA 109-111

Scope & Content

The collection consists of the miscellaneous papers of five generations of the White family, long-time residents of Shelburne, Vermont, and captains of Lake Champlain steamers. Nathan White (1763-1828) was one of the original settlers of Shelburne Point; his son Lavater (dates unknown), grandson Robert J. (1829-1912), and his great-grandson, Frank G. (1856-?) were all Lake Champlain steamer captains. They were descendants of one of the earliest settlers of Massachusetts, Thomas White, who arrived in Weymouth, Massachusetts, ca. 1635.

The largest number of papers in the collection are among the oldest (MSA 109, Folders 2 to 12). These include letters belonging to the family of Nathan and his wife Elizabeth Sproat (1764-1813) as well as letters written by Elizabeth’s brother, Samuel, to his nephew, Robert (1810-1850). Nathan White’s legal papers include those relating to his guardianship of Lucinda and Sally Sproat and the administration of his estate.

The collection is truly miscellaneous. Letters in succeeding generations are much less numerous than those in the first. The many legal documents include deeds, wills, and estate inventories. In addition, there are photographs, account books, receipts, marriage records, and newspaper clippings, both obituaries and articles about Lake Champlain steamers. Of interest is Frank G. White’s log book for the *Ticonderoga* for the years 1916-1919 (MSA 110, Folder 7).

Many of the family photographs (MSA 111) are unidentified; however, there are portraits of: Robert J. White and his wife, Louisa, his grandsons, and the interior of his home (?); and, Frank White, his wife, Estella, and his son, Robert (ca. 1912).

In addition to the White family, the collection includes papers belonging to the families of the women the White men married. Surnames which appear in the collection include: Sproat, Collamer, Tabor, Pierson, Blinn, Lambert, LaFountain and Crannell. Although there are gaps in the genealogical information and many dates are missing, the papers have been arranged chronologically as far as possible by generation.

The papers were the gift of *Vermont Life* and they occupy one linear feet of space (Ms. Acc. No. 92.14).

Genealogy

Nathan White (February 15, 1763-January 26, 1828), son of Captain Benjamin White (1716-1774) and his second wife, Hannah Shaw, was born in Middleboro, Massachusetts. He married (February 25, 1787) Elizabeth Sproat (November 3, 1764-January 19, 1813), the daughter of Zebedee Sproat. Elizabeth’s oldest brother was
Samuel (March 10, 1772-September 23, 1847). Nathan moved his family to Burlington, Vermont, in 1791 and to Shelburne, Vermont, in 1799 where he bought the north end of Shelburne Point. White’s Island, also known as Hog’s Island, remained in possession of the family until 1901. Nathan and Elizabeth Sproat White had three sons: Robert, Andrew, and Lavater S.

Lavater “was a master builder of many of the larger steamers in the days of wooden hulls.” He married Polly J. Tabor; their children were: James M., Henry B., Robert J. (December 23, 1829-1912), and Polly T.

Robert J. White married Louisa Blinn (?-1902) in October 1854; he was a farmer and orchardist as well as a steamer captain for the Lake Champlain Transportation Company. Robert and Louisa White’s children were: Henry S., Frank George (1856?-?) and Channing T.

Frank G. White followed the family tradition and became captain of the steamer, Ticonderoga. He married Estella LaFountain, daughter of Charles and Maria Lambert LaFountain, on June 3, 1896; their son Robert Lambert was born July 2, 1905. After Frank White’s death, Estella married Edward W. Crannell who died September 21, 1931.

Little is known about Robert Lambert White (1905-?) from the collection. In 1935, he was living in Burlington, Vermont, and was executor of his mother’s (Estella White Crannell) estate (MSA 110, Folders 11-12).

The Whites were a prominent family in the history of Shelburne. Photocopies of the following secondary information are located in MSA 109, Folder 0:
- Carlisle, Lilian B., Look around St. George and Shelburne, Vt. (VHS 974.31 Sa23c).
- White, Thomas, Ancestral Chronological Record of the William White Family from 1607-8-1895. (VHS 929.2 W585w).

Organization

The papers are organized in nine series:

I. Genealogy
II. First Generation: Nathan White (1763-1828), 1793-1831
III. Second Generation: Robert White, Andrew White, and Lavater S. White, 1810-1904
IV. Third Generation: Robert James White (1829-1912), 1865-1920
V. Fourth Generation: Frank George White (1856-?), 1878-1935
I. Genealogy

The genealogy folder (MSA 109, Folder 1) includes miscellaneous information about all five generations of the family. The earliest documents are: a handwritten list (1844) of the names and dates of Zebedee Sproat’s children and a copy (1893) of Nathan White’s record of Revolutionary War service from the War Archives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Robert J. White’s interest in genealogy is reflected in his handwritten White family genealogy (1906?) which has been transcribed by Vermont Historical Society staff. Neither Robert J. White’s correspondence (1852) nor a 1921 news clipping indicate the exact lineage to connect Nathan White with Peregrine White, the child born aboard the Mayflower. [Later research has shown that Robert was not a descendant of Peregrine White but of Thomas White of Weymouth, Massachusetts. See Folder 0.]

Other newspaper clippings include obituaries of: Robert J. White, various members of the LaFountain families, and Edward W. Crannell. The most recent item is a baptismal record (Methodist) for Robert Lambert White dated April 13, 1910.

II. First Generation, Nathan White (1763-1828), 1793-1831

Letters in the collection include those to Nathan and his wife Elizabeth (1794-1811) from his brother Ebenezer, from her brother Samuel, and from her step-mother, Johanna (MSA 109, Folder 2). Samuel Sproat’s letters from Windsor, Vermont, to his nephew, Robert White, which begin in 1818 and continue until his death in 1850, concern family matters (MSA 109, Folder 11).

Nathan White was appointed guardian for Lucinda and Sally (Sarah) Sproat, his wife Elizabeth’s sisters, on the death of their father Zebedee, November 19, 1810. The guardianship papers (1812-1842) occupy MSA 109, Folders 3 to 6.

The papers of Robert and Andrew White as executors of Nathan’s estate include inventories and records of expenses, as well as vouchers for claims against the estate. The arrangement of the guardianship and estate papers by Robert J. White has been retained.

Miscellaneous White-Sproat papers in MSA 109, Folder 12 include: Samuel Sproat’s appointment to power of attorney for Nathan White (June 10, 1799); a letter
from Samuel Sproat (1813) to his sister Caty (?) Adams in Burlington, Vermont; and an unsigned, undated poem in memory of Nathan White.

III. Second Generation, Robert White, Andrew White, and Lavater S. White, 1810-1904

Miscellaneous papers of Andrew White include a few receipts (1825-1827), several deeds (1833), two letters he wrote to his brother (?) from Ohio (1850 and 1853), and a sermon preached at his funeral, March 10, 1858, in Cleveland, Ohio (MSA 109, Folders 13-14).

Lavater White papers include two deeds (1842), and an account book (1821-1832) (Folders 15-16). Several business letters addressed to both Lavater and Robert White and a mortgage (1837) bearing both names are in Folder 17.

Lavater married Polly J. Tabor and it is through her family the Whites are related to the Piersons of Shelburne, Vermont. Smith F. Pierson’s legal papers, mostly deeds (1829-1871) are in Folder 18. Miscellaneous Pierson family papers (1834-1904) in Folder 19 include: Usual Pierson’s transfer of pension (September 1834); Hiram Pierson’s deeds (1829-1842); and the executor's report of the estate of James S. Pierson, May 8, 1905.

Ira Collamer married Mary H. White, daughter of Robert White. The Collamer papers include a deed (1848) and an inventory of the estate of Ira Collamer (January 30, 1892) (Folder 20).

IV. Third Generation, Robert James White (1829-1912), 1865-1920

Robert James White served in the Vermont House in 1866-1867 and was a member of the Senate in 1894. Three newspaper clippings (November 1894) which describe the role that Frank D. White (Rutland) played in defeating a controversial bill are located in MSA 110, Folder 3. It is unclear from the papers if Frank D. White is a relative. Robert J. White’s legal papers include a deed (1868) and a certificate attesting to his election as a Justice of the Peace (1892) (Folder 1). Robert J. White’s handwritten manuscript for a Burlington Free Press article on Lake Champlain Steamers (1906) and a copy of the published article are located in Folder 2.

Miscellaneous materials about Lake Champlain steamers from this period include: post-card views of the Ticonderoga, a time-table between New York and Montreal (no date) and a newspaper clipping (ca. 1902) about the last trip of the steamer Vermont (MSA 110, Folder 4).
V. Fourth Generation, Frank George White (1856-?), 1878-1935

Miscellaneous papers (MSA 110, Folder 5) mark milestones in Frank G. White’s life: a Vermont Academy (December 17, 1878) term report; a certificate of his marriage to Estella LaFountain (November 23, 1896); a contract (1898) with Spear Brothers of Burlington “to execute and finish complete a double tenement house to be erected on the northwest corner of Buell Street and Orchard Terrace” (the receipts are in MSA 110, Folder 8); a copy of his will (1909); his certificate as a Master of Inland Steam Vessels (1917); and papers relating to his administration of his father’s estate (1912 and 1920).

Frank G. White’s logbook as Master of the steamer Ticonderoga is in MSA 110, Folder 7. It covers the period April 1916 to November 1919; entries are brief.

Miscellaneous pamphlets (Folder 6) include: Manilla Rope (C. W. Hunt Company, N. Y., 1891); a 1909 Lake Champlain Transportation and Lake George Steamboat Companies time table (White was captain of the Horicon on Lake George); a program dedicating “the Monument commemorating the Battle of Lake Geroge, 1755-1903” (date?); and Battle of Lake George, Sept. 8, 1755 by Morris Patterson Ferris (Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New York, 1903).

Papers which relate to Estella LaFountain White Crannell are: a will and estate documents (1905-1908) of Charles E. Lambert (MSA 110, Folder 10); and a number of business papers (1924-1935) assembled by her son, Robert L. White as administrator of her estate in 1935 (Folder 11).

VI. Fifth Generation, Robert Lambert White (1905-?), 1905-1936

Miscellaneous materials of Robert Lambert White include: a baby book; several letters he wrote to his mother (1913 and 1914); a 1919 Burlington Junior High School graduation program; and a letter (1931) from his mother (Folder 12).

VII. Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous materials include a number of unidentified and undated materials (MSA 110, Folders 14 and 15) which may or may not pertain to the White family. An unidentified 1862-1863 account book (Folder 16) may have belonged to Estella LaFountain's family.

Several miscellaneous items with the White name include: an undated clothing bill for Polly White and a profile and photograph of Captain George A. White, (brother of Robert James White) from the American Shipbuilder (date?) (Folder 13).
George Rushlow of Burlington, Vermont, served on the *Ticonderoga* as first officer with Frank G. White; his certificates (1873, 1877, and 1881) as a licensed “Master and Pilot 1st class on steam vessels” are located in Folder 14.

VIII. George W. Allen, 1863-1871

The papers of Captain Allen consist of several letters (1874 and 1877) to him of a personal nature; miscellaneous receipts where he was Captain of the Bark *Mars*; and a legal affidavit on his behalf signed by the U. S. consul in Paita, Peru, when he was first officer of the ship *Hesper* (1863). What relationship Allen had with the White family is unknown and whether he has any Vermont connection is undetermined (MSA 110, Folder 17).

IX. Photographs (ca. 1890 - ca. 1930)

Many of the photographs in the collection are unidentified. There are, however, identified photographs of family members: Robert J. White in his sitting room (ca. 1890); Robert J. White with his grandsons, Robert Lambert White and Henry (?) as young boys (undated); and portraits of Robert J. White and Louisa Blinn White (undated). In addition Captain Frank G. White, his wife Estella and son Robert are shown on shipboard. (ca. 1912) (MSA 111, Folder 1).

The collection includes photographs of Crannell Cottage, (location unknown) both exterior and interior (ca. 1890) as well as several later undated snapshots (Folder 2). Other unidentified houses and buildings are located in Folder 8.

Folders 3 and 4 include photographs of the steamships *Vermont*, *Sagamore*, *Horicon*, and *Ticonderoga*. A 1912 snapshot of the latter with the inscription: “Essex, N.Y., why the boat runs late steamer *Ticonderoga* held 30 minutes for parties to remove wind shield from auto so we could get it between decks” is located in Folder 3.

An undated stereopticon view of the Winooski Block, Winooski Falls, Vermont, is located in Folder 6.

**Inventory**

I. Genealogy

| MSA 109 Folder 1 | Genealogical notes |

II. First Generation: Nathan White (1763-1828), 1793-1831

| 2 | Letters, 1794-1811 |
| 3 | Guardianship papers, 1812-1826 |
| 4 | , 1825-1826 |
| 5 | , 1826-1842 |
| 6 | , vouchers against, 1812-1816 |
| 7 | Estate, administration, 1816-1831 |
III. Second Generation: Robert White, Andrew White, and Lavater S. White, 1810-1904
   13 Andrew White, miscellaneous, 1825-1853
   14 _____, funeral, 1858
   15 Lavater S. White, Deeds, 1842
   16 _____, Account book, 1821-1832
   17 Robert and Lavater S. White, miscellaneous, 1837
   18 Smith F. Pierson, miscellaneous legal papers, 1829-1871
   19 Pierson family, miscellaneous, 1834-1905
   20 Ira A. Collamer estate, 1848-1892

IV. Third Generation: Robert James White (1829-1912), 1865-1920
   MSA 110 Folder 1 Miscellaneous, 1862-1912
   2 Manuscripts, 1865-1906
   3 Vermont Senate, 1894
   4 Lake Champlain steamers, 1885-

V. Fourth Generation: Frank George White (1856-?), 1878-1935
   5 Miscellaneous papers, 1878-1920
   6 Miscellaneous pamphlets, 1891-1909
   7 Log book, Ticonderoga, 1916-1919
   8 Receipts, 1895-1900
   9 Miscellaneous White/LaFountain, 1877-1896
   10 Charles Lambert estate, 1905-1908
   11 Estella LaFountain White Crannell estate, 1924-1935

VI. Fifth Generation: Robert Lambert White (1905-?), 1905-1936
   12 Miscellaneous papers, 1905-1936

VII. Miscellaneous
   13 White family, undated
   14 George Rushlow, 1873-81
   15 Unidentified and undated
   16 _____

VIII. George W. Allen, 1863-1871
   17 Miscellaneous papers

IX. Photographs (ca. 1890 - ca. 1930)
MSA 111 Folder 1  White family members (ca. 1890 - ca. 1912)
2  Crannell Cottage
3  Ticonderoga (steamship)
4  Vermont, Sagamore and Horicon (steamships)
5  Ferries, unidentified
6  Winooski, Vermont (stereopticon view, undated)
7  Unidentified buildings
8  New York State, miscellaneous
9  Family members (?), unidentified and undated

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