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Howe Family Papers

1730-1955 (*Bulk:* 1820-1940)

7 boxes (4.5 linear ft.)

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Personal, business and legal papers of the Howe family of Enfield and Dana, Massachusetts including correspondence between family members, genealogies, account books and printed materials. Account books record transactions of various family members whose occupations included general storekeeper, minister, printer, postmaster, telephone exchange and gas-station owner, and document the transactions of community businesses and individuals, some of whom were women involved in the beginnings of the local palm leaf hat and mat industry.

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Background on Creator:

Donald Howe was a descendent of the John and Solomon Howe, the best known printers in the Quabbin region during the nineteenth century. Based in the relatively remote towns of Greenwich and Enfield, the Howes built a vibrant practice, printing almanacs, songs and occasional poems, pamphlets and small books for a popular audience.

A graduate of the Cushing Academy and one-time student at Bates College, Donald Howe was treasurer of Ware Coupling Co., and owner of the Quabbin Book House and Radio Station WARE. In 1951, he wrote *Quabbin, The Lost Valley*, one of the first personal accounts of the evacuation and inundation of the towns Greenwich, Enfield, Dana, and Prescott, as the Swift River Valley was dammed up to create the Quabbin Reservoir to provide Boston with water.

Family history

Generation A

John? Howe of Sudbury?, MA.

Generation B

Solomon Howe

b.: Sept. 14, 1750, North Brookfield, Mass.

m.: Mary (Polly) Holmes of New Braintree, daughter of Adam and Hannah Holmes (1753-1833)

8 children: Jedidiah, Silas Warren, Nancy, Solomon Jr., Jonah, Abigail, Hannah, John Milton

m.: (2) Catherine Grant (d. Nov. 18, 1835, New Salem, Mass.)

Solomon was a 1777 graduate of Dartmouth, a Baptist minister, printer and farmer in various towns like Brookfield, Enfield, New Salem. A hymn book he wrote, wholly or partially, is held at the American Antiquarian Society. The Dartmouth Alumni Sketches (1867) describes Solomon Howe, "His life was eccentric and desultory."

Generation C

Milton Howe

b.: Brookfield, Mass., Dec. 20, 1783 or 1785

m.: Rhoda Babbett of Ware, May 1815 (d. 13 Sept 1837)

m.: (2) Fanny (d. 16 Feb. 1845, Enfield)

6 children: John Holmes, Myra M., Frances M., Henry Clay Milton, Solomon Bolivar Jackson, Fenelon Warren

John Milton Howe was a printer, farmer and storekeeper in Enfield. He printed Howe's Genuine Almanac 1804-1826, reportedly doing the astronomical calculations himself (see Special Collections for several editions). Note: Enfield was part of Greenwich until legally incorporated in 1816. John M. Howe was an Enfield Town Collector.

Generation D

Henry Clay Milton Howe

b. Jan 10, 1823, Enfield

m. 1848 Theodocia Ann Johnson of Dana, (b. April 20, 1824, d. Sept. 18, 1898) daughter of Nathaniel Johnson and Martha Joslyn

4 children: Edwin H., Henry J., William F., Theodocia Lillian (Lillie)

H.C.M. Howe was a Methodist, a Democrat, a surveyor, assessor, storekeeper, and postmaster in Enfield.

Solomon Bolivar Jackson Howe, "Bolivar", brother of H.C.M. Howe, attended Amherst Academy (?), was a schoolteacher in

Delaware, then a bookkeeper in Philadelphia during the Civil War and after. He expressed radical politics in letters home to Enfield.

m.: (1) Francena; (2) Mary M. (d. 1869)

Fenelon Warren Howe, brother of H.C.M. and Bolivar, moved to California during the gold rush, wrote home from Placerville 1856, Castroville 1872. Apparently went bankrupt.

Generation E

Edwin H. Howe (b. March 9, 1859, Enfield)

m.: Annie A. Williams of Hyde Park, Franklin, Mass. (d. Feb. 10, 1943, Ware)

3 children: Henry C., Donald Williams, Milton Freeman

Edwin H. graduated from the Eastman School of Business, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. in 1882. He ran the store and was Enfield postmaster for 25 years beginning in 1889, started a telephone exchange, was on the school board, and was a town clerk.

William F. Howe, brother of Edwin H. (b. Nov. 17, 1855)

m.: Harriet Hubbard

William F. was also storekeeper and postmaster at times in Enfield.

Generation F

Edwin C. Howe, "Ned" (b. Aug. 6, 1898, Enfield)

m.: Ruth Ward

Edwin C. was the last postmaster of Enfield before the Quabbin was built.

Donald Williams Howe (b. Mar. 18, 1892)

m.: (1) Josephine R. Bradford, 1914

4 children: Donald Jr., Elizabeth Bradford (m. Roger Nye Lincoln), Malcolm, Nancy (m. Howard Buckner)

m.: (2) Antonia Blyskal 1948 (d. after 1960)

Scope of collection

The Howe Family papers, collected by family members over two centuries, are important not only for biographical or genealogical purposes, but also are useful for reconstructing the social history of Enfield and the Swift River Valley in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Especially when used in conjunction with other collections in the Special Collections and Archives Department and with public records, they reveal much about the society and culture of the area from 1800 to the 1930s when the Quabbin Reservoir flooded the valley.

The collection is organized into the following series, including Correspondence, 1840-1940, Legal Documents, 1809-1892, Howe Genealogy, 195?, Account Books, 1730-1920, and Printed Memorabilia and Clippings, 1884-1955.

The most interesting correspondence in the collection is that of Henry Clay Milton Howe and his wife Theodocia Johnson Howe, letters from 1840-1877. These letters reflect the lives of some of the more well off residents of rural Enfield. Theodocia's letter from her sister Charlotte tells of the 1840 revivals in New Salem, for example. Other letters are from her Johnson relatives who are rising entrepreneurs and state representatives in nearby Dana (folder 2). H.C.M. Howe stayed in Enfield having inherited the family store and farm, but his brothers wrote home to him from the gold fields of California (folder 3) and from Philadelphia. The Philadelphia brother wrote to his small-town capitalist brother about radical criticism of the Civil War, and about the death of Abraham Lincoln (folder 4).

The taking of Enfield and Howe family land is documented in letters and clippings about the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir of interest to researchers of that era (folders 11 and 31).

The deeds and other legal documents are from 1809 when the Howes first bought land in Enfield and began their farming and storekeeping there. These documents help to show the status of the Howes in the community.

The set of bound account books that the Howes kept from 1730-1920, (with large gaps) shows the growth of rural society from a barter economy to a very commercial one, with the accompanying change in the Howe family males' occupations from storekeeper, to minister-printer, to printer-storekeeper, to storekeeper-postmaster, to storekeeper-postmaster-telephone exchange owner to storekeeper-postmaster-gas station owner. Incidentally the account books show the professionalization of bookkeeping methods in the nineteenth century. The early books were used to record sales, but also deaths, even poems. Later books are more specific in use. The 1796 book is not an account-book, but relatedly, the childhood arithmetic exercise book of John Milton Howe who kept the 1821 book for his store in Enfield. The first page of the exercise book admonishes, "Arithmetic . . . the knowledge of which is so necessary that scarcely any thing in life, and nothing in trade can be done without it."

The account books record credits and debits with many of the other people in the small community and outside of it. Careful reading of the accounts can unfold a rich lode of information. For example, Samuel Fowler Dickinson of Amherst was buying hundreds of board feet of lumber in 1821, at exactly the time he was helping to get Amherst College built (folder 24). John Howe was taking braid in trade early in the 1820's from women in the community who were the beginning of the palm leaf hat and mat industry (folder 24). Mrs. Hannum's bill was paid for by the town of Greenwich, and was being picked up by an S. Peebles--rum, flour, tea, and mackeral . . . a woman on welfare? (folder 24).

The accounts of the estate of John Milton Howe, who died in 1845 but whose estate was not settled until the 1850s, show that Howe had accumulated quite a large amount of money which was being lent out to various individuals and businesses and even to the town (folders 25 and 26). Later accounts show the growing complexity of life in Enfield. In use with other documents from Enfield and the Quabbin region, MS 19 should prove to be an invaluable source for a wide variety of researchers.

Arrangement

This collection is organized into five series:

Series 1. Correspondence, 1840-1940

Series 2. Legal Documents, 1809-1892

Series 3. Howe Genealogy, 195?

Series 4. Account Books, 1730-1920

Series 5. Printed Memorabilia and Clippings, 1884-1955

Inventory

Series 1. Correspondence

Letters and essays of Theodocia Ann Johnson prior to her 1848 marriage to Henry Clay Milton Howe.

1840-1848

Box 1: 1

Letters to H.C.M. Howe and Theodocia (Johnson) Howe Enfield from her Johnson relatives prominent in Dana.

1852-1877

Box 1: 2

Letters to H.C.M. Howe from his brother, Fenelon Warren Howe, of California.

1856, 1872

Box 1: 3

Letters to H.C.M. Howe and Theodocia Howe from his brother Solomon Bolivar Howe and wife (2) Mary.

1864-1870

Box 1: 4

Other correspondence, H.C.M. Howe and family

1852-1893

Box 1: 5

Miscellaneous Howes Correspondence

1830-1897

Box 1: 6

Papers of Edwin H. Howe (1859-1943)

1927-1940

Box 1: 7

Letters, postcards to Donald W. Howe (1892-196?)

1912, 1913

Box 1: 8

Correspondence of Donald W. Howe on land-taking from family for Quabbin Reservoir

1938-1940

Box 1: 9

Series 2. Legal Documents

1809-1892

Deeds, indentures, power of attorney, receipts Solomon (1750-1833) and John Milton Howe (1783-1845)

1809-1845

Box 2: 10

Deeds, Wills - Howe Family

1862-1892

Box 2: 11

Deeds, maps, pew deeds, Nathaniel Chickering.

1813-1848

Box 2: 12

Series 3. Howe Genealogy

195?

Genealogy, 1871 Howe Family Gathering

?-1871

Box 2: 13

Genealogy collected by Annie (Williams) Howe

?-1934

Box 2: 14

Clippings about Howe Family weddings

1928-195?

Box 2: 15

Series 4. Account Books

1730-1920

Sudbury, MA. Accounts of John Howe.

c. 1730

Box 2: 16

Marlboro, MA. Arithmetic Exercises of John Howe. The last pages have Howe and Williams births and deaths

1796

Box 2: 17

Accounts of the late John M. Howe. Pages in back are Howe and Williams Family birth and death records.

1845-1851

Box 2: 18

Accounts of the late John M. Howe. Pages in back are day labor time sheets.

1851

Box 2: 19

Loan receipt book of Nathaniel Johnson of Dana father of Mrs. H.C.M.

1848-1850

Box 2: 20

Accounts of John Milton Howe, Enfield, MA. store

1821-1823

Box 3: 21

Edwin H. Howe, Enfield, MA., Accounts.

1889-1900

Box 4: 22

Edwin H. Howe, Enfield, MA., Accounts.

1890-1903

Box 4: 23

Edwin H. Howe, Enfield, MA., Accounts.

1904-1907

Box 5: 24

Edwin H. Howe, Enfield, MA., Accounts.

1908-1920

Box 5: 25

Series 5. Printed Materials and Clippings

1884-1955

Memorabilia of Edwin H. Howe and Annie (Williams) Howe.

1884-1914

Box 6: 26
Clippings: Quabbin area, Post Office Closings
1937-1939
Box 6: 27
Clippings: Miscellaneous
1920-194?
Box 6: 28
Clippings: Reviews of Quabbin the Lost Valley, by Donald W. Howe.
1951-1955
Box 6: 29
Memorabilia of Donald W. Howe (1892-196?)
1911-1939
Box 6: 30
Epitaphs collected by Donald W. Howe
n.d.
Box 6: 31
Scrapbook of Annie Williams Howe
1930s
Box 6: 32

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Donald W. Howe of Ware, Mass., 1960.

Related Material

Solomon Howe's Hymn Book, ca.1790, is housed at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester.

The Jones Library, Amherst, Mass., includes two useful items for reference:

Nason, Elias, *The Howe Family Gathering (Thursday, August 31, 1871 at Framingham)*, 1871.

Richards, Charles. Enfield Deaths, 1842-1899, and Enfield Marriage and Births, 1820-1890.

Bibliography

Biographical Review: The Leading Citizens of Hampshire County, Boston, 1896.

Chapman George T., *Sketches of Alumni of Dartmouth College 1771-Present*, 1867.

Greenwich Vital Records

Hampshire County Registry of Probate 1845 Will and Inventory, John M. Howe, Box 74 #48.

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds

Howe, Donald W., *Quabbin, The Lost Valley*, 1951.

Howe, John Milton (or Silas Warren Howe), *Howe's Genuine Almanac*, 1804-1821. In SCUA.

Hudson, Charles, *History of the Town of Marlborough, 1657-1861*. 1862

Processing Information

Processed by Ruth Owen Jones, 1985.

Language:

English

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Search terms

Subjects

Bookkeeping--History--Sources.
Enfield (Mass.)--Biography.
Enfield (Mass.)--Economic conditions--Sources.
Enfield (Mass.)--Genealogy.
Enfield (Mass.)--History--Sources.
Enfield (Mass.)--Social conditions--Sources.
Enfield (Mass.)--Social life and customs--Sources.
Howe, Donald W. (Donald Wiliam), 1982-1977.
Howe, Edwin H., 1859-1943.
Howe, Henry Clay Milton, b. 1823--Correspondence.
Howe, John M.
Howe, John, 1783-1845.
Howe, Theodocia Johnson, 1824-1898--Correspondence.
Moneylenders--Massachusetts--Enfield--History--Sources.
Quabbin Reservoir Region (Mass.)--History--Sources.
Swift River Valley (Mass.)--History--Sources.
Swift River Valley (Mass.)--Social conditions--Sources.
Swift River Valley (Mass.)--Social life and customs--Sources.

Contributors

Howe Family [main entry]
Howe, John M.
Howe, John, 1783-1845.
Howe, Henry Clay Milton, b. 1823.
Howe, Theodocia Johnson, 1824-1898.
Howe, Edwin H., 1859-1943.
Howe, Donald W. (Donald William), 1892-1977.

Genres and formats

Account books.
Business records.
Deeds.
Genealogies.
Indentures.
Scrapbooks.
Wills.

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Family
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