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Samuel Wells Collection

1840-1843

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In November 1840, the prominent New York mercantile firm, Josiah Macy and Son, contracted with Samuel Wells to act as an agent in leasing land in Hatfield, Mass., to mine barite. Wells, a resident of nearby Northampton, consulted with the renowned geologist Edward Hitchcock of Amherst College to locate the appropriate mining site, and then, over the next two years, he negotiated the leases and prepared for the start-up of mining. Ultimately, the presence of the lead ore galena rendered the barite unfit for use as a whitening agent.

The three dozen letters written to Samuel Wells, mostly by his employer Josiah Macy and Son, document the brief and ill-fated effort to start up a barite mine in Hatfield, Mass. Although some of the letters deal with the barite itself, most concern negotiations over locating the proper mine site and obtaining mineral rights and land leases.

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Background on Barite mining in Hatfield, Mass.

Barite was recorded as occurring in small veins in Hatfield, Mass., as early as 1810, one of a handful of locations in the Connecticut River Valley where the mineral co-occurs with hydrothermal deposits with lead ores in economic quantity. Prior to the Civil War, the barium sulfate compound was used in sugar refining, as a white pigment for textiles and paints, and a pigment and weighted filler for paper.

In November 1840, the prominent New York mercantile firm, Josiah Macy and Son, engaged Samuel Wells of Northampton to act as an agent to secure leases to land in Hatfield for the purpose of mining barite. Wells sought the assistance of the renowned geologist Edward Hitchcock of Amherst College to assist in determining the best mining site, which they located about two miles west of the village on three adjoining parcels of land owned by laborer Thomas Frary, farmer John D. Moron, and the estate of Charles Smith. With Wells leading the way, Morton agreed to lease mining rights for \$400, and Frary apparently consented, however negotiations with the Smith estate were more protracted, finally concluding in January 1842.

Mining apparently commenced in Hatfield during the summer 1842, however assays proved troublesome, with the lead ore galena intermixed with the barite in a way that made it difficult to purify. The sulfurous red tinge from the galena made the barite unsuited for whitening. Macy and Son transferred their interest in the mine to a group based in New Haven, and although some mining was apparently attempted later in the decade, the enterprise never prospered.

Scope of collection

The three dozen letters written to Samuel Wells, mostly by his employer Josiah Macy and Son, document the brief and ill-fated effort to start up a barite mine in Hatfield, Mass. Although some of the letters deal with the barite itself, most concern negotiations over locating the proper mine site and obtaining mineral rights and land leases.

Inventory

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)

1842 May 6

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Northampton, Mass.)

1842 May 24

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)

1842 June 3

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)

1842 June 8

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)

1842 June 25

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)

1842 Aug. 22

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)

1842 Sept. 8

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)

1842 Sept. 16

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Salem, Mass.)

1842 Oct. 6

Folder 1

Chase, G. C. (Josiah Macy and Son): Letter to Samuel Wells (Salem, Mass.)

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Folder 1

Fenn, Daniel B.: Letter to Samuel Wells (Stockbridge, Mass.)

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Fenn, Daniel B.: Letter to Samuel Wells (Stockbridge, Mass.)
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Folder 2
Hitchcock, Edward: Letter to Samuel Wells (Amherst, Mass.)
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Hitchcock, Edward: Letter to Samuel Wells (Amherst, Mass.)
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Folder 3
Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (Northampton, Mass.)
1840 Nov. 3
Folder 4
Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (New York, N.Y.)
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1841 Aug. 16
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Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (New York, N.Y.)
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1842 Jan. 7
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Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (New York, N.Y.)
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Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (New York, N.Y.)
1842 Mar. 10
Folder 6
Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (New York, N.Y.)
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Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (New York, N.Y.)
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Josiah Macy and Son: Letter to Samuel Wells (Salem, Mass.)
1843 Feb. 25
Folder 6

Morton, John B.: Letter to Samuel Wells (Whately, Mass.)
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Peabody, Francis: Letter to Samuel Wells (Boston, Mass.)
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Strong, Charles F.: Letter to Samuel Wells (Northampton, Mass.)
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Wells, Samuel: Letter to Josiah Macy and Son (Northampton, Mass.)
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Wells, Samuel: Invoice for expenses incurred
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Folder 11

Wells, Samuel: Invoice for expenses incurred
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Invoices for labor performed
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Stebbins, Daniel: Agreement to lease land for lead mine (South Hadley, Mass.)
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Fenn, Daniel B.: Agreement with Josiah Macy and William Macy for lease of lead mine
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Dwight, Edward et al. : Agreement with Josiah Macy and William Macy for lease of lead mine
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Dwight, Elihu et al.: Agreement with Josiah Macy and William Macy for lease of lead mine
1842 Mar. 1
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Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Charles Apfelbaum, 1989.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Aug. 2017.

Bibliography

Gorham, John, "Analysis of Sulphate of Barytes, From Hatfield, Massachusetts" [Boston, August, 1810] in *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, v. 3, 1 (1810): 237-240.

Language:

English

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Search terms

Subjects

Barite mines and mining--Massachusetts--Hatfield
Chase, G. C.
Hatfield (Mass.)--History
Hitchcock, Edward, 1793-1864
Lead mines and mining--Massachusetts--Hatfield

Contributors

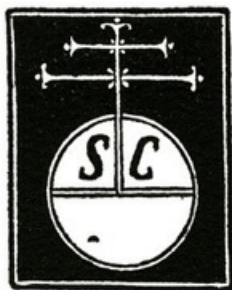
Wells, Samuel [[main entry](#)]
Josiah Macy & Son

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