

**Smiley Bancroft (1808-1874)
Papers, 1840-1885
MS Box 53**

Introduction

This collection contains materials relating to Smiley Bancroft (1808-1874), a farmer and justice of the peace, and his family, of Woodbury and East Calais, Vermont. The collection is housed in one archival flip-top box and occupies .5 linear feet.

Biography

Smiley Bancroft (January 5, 1808- July 4, 1874) was the third child of Jonas Bancroft Jr. (b. 1770) and Nancy Bancroft (1779-1850), of Ward (now Auburn), Massachusetts. Smiley married a cousin, Mary Chase Bancroft, April 20, 1831, at Auburn. She was born November 12, 1809 and died August 1, 1878. They are both buried in East Calais. Smiley moved to Vermont sometime after 1841, and lived first in Cabot, then in Woodbury, in 1846, and finally moved to Calais. His brothers and sisters were Betsy (1803-1823), Franklin (1805-1839), Madison (1810-?), Albert (1813-?), John (1815-?), and Nancy (1819-?). The last two mentioned visited with Smiley in 1851, in Woodbury. Smiley and Mary had three children, Mary Elizabeth (December 9, 1838-?); Nancy Mehitable (February 11, 1841, married Alfred Wheelock of Calais, Vermont on May 15, 1859); and Clarissa (July 15, 1843-March 27, 1864). They also brought up a foster child, Charles Fisher (January 28, 1835-April 30, 1862), who took the Bancroft name.

Scope and Contents

The collection is mostly related to Smiley, though the connections are not always clear. There are a few pages of Bancroft genealogical research, a commission for Smiley as a captain in the 18th regiment Vermont militia in 1849, a variety of family letters, many from Auburn, in the 1850s. Because Smiley was a Justice of the Peace for a number of years, and involved also in tax collection, there are a variety of legal documents involving tax lists, deeds, calls to jury duty, attachment of goods and chattels, etc., as well as personal financial affairs of Smiley, including debt notes, deeds, his commissions as Justice of the Peace, and related papers.

There are a number of letters from Smiley's adopted son Charles written during the Civil War. Charles had enlisted from Woodbury, Vermont for three years, on the 28th of August, 1861, and he died in service the 30th of April, 1862. Many papers are related to trying to collect his death benefits from the Treasury Department. Two other Civil War death benefit cases were handled by Smiley, and the correspondence is extensive.

After the war, Smiley's papers include fire insurance records, tax bills, miscellaneous financial matters, matters relating to his being a Justice of the Peace, his duties as a guardian for a minor, and family correspondence. There are four diaries, with

brief entries, for 1867, 1875, 1884 (kept for three months, by a young man, unidentified), and an earlier diary, perhaps from the 1850s containing facts and figures for tax assessing. Lastly, there is a ledger for the 1860s and some of the 1870s, detailing daily activities and expenses.

Related Collections

The VHS library collection contains a related collection, Bancroft family letters, 1845-1866, MSC 209:38. The VHS collection also includes the pamphlet, *Bancroft Family of Calais, Vermont and Vicinity* (929.2 B221L). In it notes that Smiley Bancroft was the diarist of the family, and that in 1945 his diary was owned by Mrs. Kate Wheelock, widow of the late George Wheelock of Calais, grandson of Smiley Bancroft.

Inventory

- MS 53:01 Kendall Bancroft genealogical study, i.o.u. notes of 1840s and 1850s owed to Smiley, deeds, military commission for Smiley, letters from Auburn to Smiley or wife, Justice of the Peace certificates, documents relating to duties as Justice of the Peace.
- 02 Debt documents, deeds, tax lists, of the 1840s-1859 period.
- 03 Commissions as Justice of the Peace, 1857-1859, and assorted papers relating to Smiley's duties as such.
- 04 Letters from Charles to his foster parents while serving in Virginia in the Civil War in the 4th Regiment Vt. Volunteers. Papers relating to his death, disposal of body, and family efforts to claim his pay.
- 05 Correspondence relating to two Civil War pension cases handled by Smiley, perhaps in his capacity as Justice of the Peace.
- 06 Receipts for newspaper subscriptions, appointments as Notary Public, town and federal tax bills, i.o.u.'s and receipts, fire insurance policies, contract dispute with Smiley acting as court-appointed auditor, Masonic Lodge by-laws (Green Mountain Lodge #68 of Cabot, Wyoming Lodge #80 of Plainfield), letters, circular from Oswego Commercial College
- 07 1870s papers, including Notary Public commissions, annual reports for Calais of 1874, 1875, a legal dispute involving the school committee, Smiley acting as a guardian for a minor, as tax collector, and five letters to Smiley's widow from her sister.

- 08 Undated papers, including letters, accounts for school taxes, estate and arbitration accountings, and two deeds.
- 09 Diaries for 1867, 1875, 1884, and one probably in the 1850s. Diaries have brief entries, mostly on the weather, farm chores, some finances.
- 10 Smiley account book, 1861-62, being quite detailed. 1861-1864 a daily summary, one line per day, activities, and a good source for prices, wages, and activities of a farmer. 1867-1874 one line per day, of activities and expenses.

Ethan Bisbee
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bancroft.doc

Items removed from this collection

1. Walton's Vermont Registers for 1826, 1831, 1868, 1872, 1877, 1883, 1887.
(discarded)
2. Fliers for Washington County Good Templar's Union May 23, 1895, East Calais.
Ditto Nov. 16, 1892, at Montpelier (Small B'side / Societies / Independent Order
of Good Templars / 1892, 1895)
3. Constitution of the Washington County Agricultural Society (B'side D / Farmers
Assoc.)
4. Two blank forms, one a quit-claim deed, the other a warranty deed. (B'side D / Land
transfer / n.d. and B'side C / Land transfer / n.d.)
5. Photo of farm, East Calais, Wheelock farm (Wheelock was a son-in-law of Smiley)
(F-TO-Calais)