

Collection #
SC 1789

GEORGE W. LOUNSBURY LETTERS, 1854–1866

[Collection Information](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Folder listing](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Updated 14 May 2004

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 7 folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1854-1866

PROVENANCE: Purchased from Mr. Verlyn Quear, Anderson, Indiana, 15 July 1981

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish materials in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1980.0712

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Lounsbury letters are a series of family letters centering around George and Elmina Lounsbury. George and Elmina (Spearbeck) Lounsbury were married in 1857 and built their home on a farm near Flint, Jackson Township, Steuben County, Indiana. Both were born in New York, George in 1837 and Elmina in 1838. Their families migrated into Ohio in or near Richland County. George's father, Nehemiah Lounsbury, moved into Jackson Township in 1845. George's mother died there in 1850 and Nehemiah in 1871. His sister Phoebe married Daniel Sams first and then Darius Sams, his brother, in 1853 and they lived near the Lounsburys. The 1860 Federal Census for Indiana indicates that George Lounsbury's household included Martha E. (Elmina), age 22, Franklin, age 1, Julia, 1 month, and Elmina's brother Henry Spearbeck, age 20, who lived with them until his marriage to Emma Cook in 1861.

The letters to the Lounsburys are from various family members throughout the midwest. The letters extend over a period from 1856 to 1865. The majority of them were written during the Civil War period, although the war itself is seldom mentioned. The letters discuss family news, prices of land, farm crops, and household goods. Individually, the letters have no outstanding features but collectively they reflect a continuity of life and family and the importance of community news.

The largest group of letters was written by Dennis and Drusilla (Spearbeck) Dean to the Lounsburys beginning with the Dean's arrival in Silver Creek, Iowa. The letters contain a continuing account of frontier life and its changes. Family news is combined with descriptions of the Iowa country, accounts of neighbors and travelers going to Pike's Peak in search of gold, and the wagon trains that move constantly down the road near their home. Dennis farmed and operated a mill. During the Civil War period, he made one mention of the Missourians and the secessionists that moved into the area. Other correspondence dealing with the war was written soon after the death of Drusilla and Elmina's brother George. One letter is from Dennis and a later letter from an official of the court in Grand Rapids pertaining to the distribution of George's bounty and pay. The Deans hoped to go to Nebraska and take advantage of the Homestead Act and urged George and Elmina to join them.

The second major group of letters were written by George W. Spearbeck when he was serving in the 8th Michigan Regiment during the Civil War. He was stationed at Port Royal, Beaufort, South Carolina. The letters discuss small skirmishes, battles in general terms, and daily camp life. He complained about shortages of mail, stamps, and pay and commented about the usual sicknesses related to poor diet. There is also one letter from George B. Hardy who served in the 112th Illinois Regiment with his father who was the teamster.

They were stationed at Cairo, Illinois.

The family correspondence collection includes letters from George Spearbeck from the Grand Rapids area of Michigan; Mary A. Spearbeck, relationship unknown, from the Grand Rapids area of Michigan; Henry and Emma Spearbeck of Grand Rapids, Michigan and Waterville, Wisconsin; and J. R. (Jake) and Hessie Lounsbury and their daughter, Hessie, of Waterville, Wisconsin.

Other family correspondents include cousins Celina Johnson of Grand Rapids, Michigan; Daniel Williams, and his sons, George and Caleb, of Coventryville, Michigan; Sarah Callaghan, George Lounsbury's sister, living at Woodhull, Illinois; Harriet Lounsbury, relationship unknown, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Elmina's cousin, Eliza Mitchell at Mundy Creek, Ohio; Darius and Phoebe Sams of Jackson Township, Steuben County, Indiana; and Susan A. Baker, a friend, in Jackson Township.

Reference material related to the collection:

1. *History of Steuben County, Indiana - 1885*
Biographical sketch of David Sams, p. 717.
2. 1860 Federal Census of Indiana, Steuben County,
Jackson Township, Flint, p. 152.

The correspondence is arranged chronologically 1857-1865 with 17 letters from Dennis & Drusilla Dean, 1857-1866; 13 letters from George W. Spearbeck, 1861-1862, 2 letters from George W. Williams, 1862, 1 undated letter from George B. Hardy, and 29 other letters from family throughout the Midwest, 1854-1865.

FOLDER LISTING

Folder

1. Collection Guide

Correspondence, 1854-1857

2. Correspondence, 1858-November 1861

3. Correspondence, December 1861-April 1862

4. Correspondence, May 1862-July 1863

5. Correspondence, August 1863-March 1864

6. Correspondence, April 1864-1866

7. Correspondence, undated.

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://157.91.92.2/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 1789).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.