

ABRAHAM M. PHELPS PAPERS, 1819, 1852-1910

Collection #

SC 2558

OM 356

BV 294

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Processed by
Charles Latham
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USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 3 folders, 1 oversize folder, 1 bound volume

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1819-1910; Bulk 1852-1882

PROVENANCE: Glenn Black estate, 1966

RESTRICTIONS: None

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

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 66.0027

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Abraham M. Phelps (1798-ca 1885) was born in Hartford, Windsor County, Vermont. In 1820 he left Vermont and made his way west. One leg of the journey was a passage from Buffalo to Cleveland on the first steamer on the Great Lakes, the Walk-in the-Water. By 1823 he had reached the Ohio River, and engaged in the river trade to New Orleans. After marrying Frances Johnson in 1827, he set up a store, first in Evansville (1828) and then in Newburgh (1830). Beside trading to the south along the rivers, he made yearly trips to New York for manufactured goods. He operated the Newburgh Pork House. Through his brother-in-law, Jacob Sargeant, he was involved in the coal business. He was also an extensive landowner. Realizing that land as well as river transport was necessary for Newburgh's growth, Phelps instigated and was an officer and major stockholder in the Central Plank Road Company, which operated a one-lane road to Boonville, and which had a tollkeeper with an iron hook for a hand at its Boonville end. Phelps was joined in his business by his son, R. C. Phelps, in 1854, and by Charles F. Hopkins, husband of his daughter Frances, in 1867.

Successful financially, Phelps was also a philanthropist. In 1837 he built the first church in Newburgh, which was given to the Presbyterians. In 1843 he helped found an academy in Newburgh, and he later subscribed \$20,000 in an effort to get a college to locate there. In 1860 he donated land for the German Zion United Church of Christ.

Sources: William Burleigh (ed.), *A bicentennial look at Newburgh, Indiana* (1976) p. 23, 25, 39, 44, 55, 56, 80, 105-108, 113, 154, 162, 164, 166, 195.

Will Fortune, *Warrick County and its prominent people* (1881) p. 4, 5, 88-95, 159, 178.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection, filling three folders, one oversize folder, and one bound volume, contains legal papers and a ledger. One item is dated 1819; the rest of the collection runs from 1852 to 1910. The collection is arranged chronologically within type.

The collection begins with an 1819 receipt for a "glass toddy" from the estate of James Springer; it is not clear how this relates to the rest of the collection.

Among the legal papers:

- an 1859 deed for land "lying in the Plank Road" from Newburgh to Boonville;
- an 1869 deed to Phelps from the trustees of Delaney Academy;
- an 1879 deed to coal rights.

Dating from Phelps's declining years are:

- an 1878 power of attorney to Charles F. Hopkins, his son-in-law, and
- an 1882 deed of land to Mrs. Hopkins, in return for "one dollar and my affection for her as my daughter."

Items in the collection concerning Charles F. Hopkins include an 1893 abstract of title for the development of Sprinkleburgh in Warrick County; and a 1910 letter from Mrs. Hopkins to her son Will in Seattle, discussing spring planting times, and also the installation of town water service in Newburgh.

FOLDER LISTING

FOLDER

1 1819,1858-1869

2 1878-1882

3 1893-1910, n.d.

BV 294 contains A. M. Phelps's ledger for 1856-1862. Most entries are for the generic term "Merchandise."

OM 356 contains two deeds, dated 1852 and 1877.

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Phelps, Abraham M., 1798-ca. 1885

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Phelps, Abraham M., 1798-ca. 1885

Hopkins, Charles F.

Roads, Plank--Indiana--Warrick County

Deeds--Indiana--Warrick County

Water utilities--Indiana--Newburgh

Power of attortney--Indiana--Newburgh

Account books--Indiana--Newburgh

General stores--Indiana--Newburgh

Newburgh (Ind.)--History--Sources

Sprinkleburgh (Ind.)--History--Sources

END