

NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LIBRARY

Manuscripts
No. 105

Date processed: February, 1980

- I. Title Town, Ithiel (1784-1844) Collection 1810-1873
- II. The papers of Ithiel Town and his son-in-law, William T. Peters deposited in the Library on _____, by _____
In _____ converted the deposit to a gift.
- III. Linear feet of shelf space occupied: one-half foot
Approximate number of items: 130 plus 7 architectural drawings and
2 bound volumes
- IV. Restrictions:
- V. Literary rights of the unpublished writings of _____ in these papers, and in other collections of papers in the custody of the New Haven Colony Historical Society Library, have been dedicated to the New Haven Colony Historical Society.
- VI. Press release was issued on _____
- VII. Biographical note: Ithiel Town was born in Thompson, Ct. in 1784, son of Archelaus and Martha Johnson Town. As a youth he worked as a house carpenter and studied architecture in Boston in a school conducted by Asher Benjamin. His first important work was Center Church in New Haven, followed by Trinity Church, also on the New Haven Green. Among his later works were: the State House in New Haven, the Customs House in New York City, and Christ Church in Hartford, as well as capitol buildings in Indiana and North Carolina. The Greek Revival asylum still standing on the grounds of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York is also attributed to Town.

In 1820 Town was granted a patent for a truss bridge and became the best known bridge builder in the country. In 1829 he formed a partnership with Alexander J. Davis with offices in New York. He always, however, maintained a home in New Haven in which he gathered what was for many years the "finest collection of books relating to architecture and the fine arts assembled in the United States."

Town was a charter member of the National Academy of Design, having been appointed by S.F.B. Morse, with whom he traveled in Europe. In 1838 Town designed the obverse of a medal to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of New Haven (See Hezekiah Augur collection). He died in New Haven in 1844 and is buried in the Grove Street cemetery. (For complete biography and references see the Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 18, pp. 610-611)

Town had one daughter, Etha, who was born in Boston in 1807 and died in Cheshire in 1871. She was educated in Boston and at Mrs. Garfield's Seminary in New Haven where she graduated in 1826.

In 1826 Etha Town married William Thompson Peters (1805-1885). Mr. Peters received a B.A. degree from Yale in 1825 and his M.D. degree in 1830. He founded "Apothecaries Hall," a drugstore in New Haven and later moved to Cheshire where he was prominent in state and local politics. (For more information, see Yale Obituaries 1880-1890, pp. 285-86)

VIII: Analysis: The collection consists of one box of manuscript material plus 7 architectural drawings housed separately. Most of the papers fall between 1810 and 1873, with a few 20th century newspaper articles filed with the collection. The documents include: correspondence from well known New Haven figures; letters from Town to his daughter; architectural papers concerning Trinity Church and the State House and Town's bridges, including plans and patents; photographs and personal papers including an inventory of his library.

The papers of W.T. Peters complete the collection. Among them are correspondence, family records and a Bible.

The correspondence is filed alphabetically by writer. Town's letters and the other documents are filed chronologically. The number at right in brackets indicates the number of items in a folder.

A microfilm (No. 82) has been made of Folder G.

ITHIEL TOWN COLLECTION 1810-1873

MSS #105

TABLE OF CONTENTSBOX I

- Folder A - Correspondence - copies ,5
 Simeon Baldwin to Town (See Folder B for original)
 John Trumbull to Town (See Folder C)
 Town to Etha, Feb. 14, 1825 (See Folder F)
- B - Correspondence - Incoming (A-I) [9]
 Hezekiah Augur, New Haven, April 11, 1826
 Simeon Baldwin, New Haven, April 12, 1823
 E.C. DeLavan (?), Albany, Dec. 10, 1831
 J.M. Devanhone (?), Camden Town, Dec. 13, 1830
 A. Dickens, Washington, May 21, 1833
 Samuel A. Foote, Cheshire, Nov. 11, 1833
 J. Forshall, British Museum, Feb. 13, 1844
 C. F. Hoffman, n.p., n.d.
 Ralph I. Ingersoll, New Haven, May 4, 1829
- C - Correspondence - Incoming (J-T) (11)
 George Jones, London, June 27, 1835
 (See Dict. of Nat'l Biography, v. 10, p. 990)
 H. Percival, New Haven, April 25, 1842
 Charles N. Shepard, New Haven, July 11, 1843
 Lydia H. Sigourney, Hartford, Sept. 12, 1838
 Nathan Smith, Washington, April 23, 1834
 Samuel Swartwart, New York, Feb. 1, 1833
 John Tipton, Washington, Dec. 14, 1834
 (U.S.Senator, Indiana)
 Martha Tourtellot, Dudley, Mass., Jan. 11, 1841
 John Trumbull (artist), New Haven, May 15, 1840
 Capt. Turnbull, Washington, Nov. 3, 1832
- D - Correspondence - Incoming (W) [8]
 Eli Whitney, New Haven, Dec. 26, 1820
 with postscript signed by Jeremiah Day,
 Benjamin Silliman, Simeon Baldwin, Alexander
 M. Fisher
 Charles A. Wickliffe (Governor, Kentucky),
 Washington, Jan. 24, 1831
 D.C. May 25, 1832
 Edward Winslow, Fayetteville, Ky., Jan. 3, 1844
 Jan. 9, 1844
 March 27, 1844
 April 5, 1844
 Benjamin Wright, Georgetown, Oct. 14, 1830

Box I - continued

- Folder E - Ithiel Town - ALS to daughter, Etha Town (10)
(Peters) 1822-1824
from New York, Philadelphia, Fayetteville, NC
all personal
- F - Town - letters to daughter, 1825-1826 (9)
from Camden, S.C., Augusta, Charleston,
Washington, New Haven, New York - personal
- G - Town - letters to daughter, and her husband [10]
1828-1830
from Washington, New Haven, AEngland, & France
personal (Microfilm 82 of this folder)
- H - Town - letters to daughter, 1843 [2]
from London, personal
- I - Correspondence concerning Town [3]
James Hillhouse to S.F.B. Morse, Oct. 19, 1826
re Mrs. Whelpley's house on Hillhouse Ave.
(See E.M. Brown , New Haven: An Architectural
Guide, for more information on house) p. 140
Nathan Chauncey to Henry Roberts, London,
Oct. 13, 1821
Christopher Morgan, Aurora, NY to William Peters,
Nov. 19, 1834
- J - Architectural Papers - Trinity Church, New Haven (4)
Contract between Town and Trinity Church to
build church, July, 1814 (7 pp.) signed by
Town and building committee
Testimonial from church wardens & vestrymen re
Town's work on church, April, 1817, signed
by Jonathan Ingersoll, Jr., et al.
Testimonial signed by David Daggett re Town's
work, April, 1817
- K - Architectural Papers - State House 1828-1831 [5]
- Orders to pay Town for work on State House
April, 1828; Nov., 1831
- Complaints re erection of State House
- by committee of Conn. State Legislature, 1831
- by committee of State House in New Haven, 1831
- Arbitration award, 1831 (14 pp.) signed by
James Brewster, Eli Ives, Eli Whitney Blake,
arbitrators
- L - Architectural Papers - Bridges 1810-1835 (12)
Broadside - Findlay & Templeman's Chain Bridge
Jan., 1810
Town's separate answer to Bill of Complaint of
James Seawell re Clarendon Bridge, Fayetteville,
NC, (printed pamphlet, 19 pp.)

Box I - Folder L - continuedPlans of Town's Truss Bridge

1820 patent

1835 patent

n.d. Lattice Truss (from American R.R. Bridges,
American Society of Civil Engineers)Typescript - excerpts from Town's booklet describing
his patented type of bridge, 1821Folder M - Architectural Papers - Bridges (photocopies)

(5)

Letters Patent for bridge, Jan. 28, 1820, (3 pp.)

Letters Paton (sic) for improvement of bridge
April 3, 1835 (2 pp.)Folder N - Deeds, Accounts, 1817

[3]

Warranty deed, Town to Eli Whitney and Eleazer Foster
for land in New Haven, Oct., 1817 (recorded in New
Haven Town Records, v. 66, p. 289)

Bill, Elizur Goodrich to Town, n.d. (signed by Town)

Agreement with Dr. Joseph Darling, accounting, n.d.
(3 pp.)Folder O - Personal Papers - Residence and Library

(5)

Engraving of exterior view & floor plans of house
(2 cc. n.d.)Scrapbook from library - prints & copperplates of
American Revolutionary War figures (13 pp.)Inventory of Town's estate and library, 1844 (10 pp.)
(see letter from Lydia Sigourney, Folder C)Folder P - Personal Papers

(5)

Invitation from Professor Morse to witness operation
of telegraph, Jan., 1838- from E.C. Herrick to attend meeting concerning
medal, April, 1839- Benjamin Silliman, sec., to attend meeting
of Committee to Improve Burial Ground, 1840Ode on death of General Washington, Feb. 21, 1800
(mss. not in Town's writing)

Prayer of thanks on his 50th birthday, Oct. 3, 1834

Box I - continuedFolder Q - Photographs

(17)

"probably I. Town & his wife, his daughter Etha and her husband, William T. Peters, and their two sons"

7 photographs - three of covered bridge in Penn. -
Town's truss bridge and covering letter from George K. Wills

half-tone of drawing of front elevation of Eagle Bank

photo of truss bridge, n.d.
photo Sheffield Residence
Hillhouse ave. n.d.

Folder R - Miscellaneous Papers

[3]

drawing by John Trumbull - on verso: Mr. & Mrs. Scott
accept Mr. & Mrs. Trumbull's invitation

drawing (cartoon) found in scrapbook (Folder O)
New York, Jan., 1820

Mss. "To Ithiel Town --- as a Memento of Sincere Friend,
Archibald Trail", Oct., 1843

Folder S - Miscellaneous Papers re Town

(17)

xerox of invitation from S. Morse (Folder P)
article and photo of Town by George D. Seymour
newspaper article, New Haven Register, Feb. 9, 1941 re
Town's bridge
xeroxes - Hillhouse to Morse (Folder I)

Folder T - William Peters (son-in-law) Papers

(17)

Correspondence - ALS from:

John T. Peters, Hartford, Jan., 1827
Edward Lee Winslow, Fayetteville, July, 1844
*Freeman Dodd, New York, Dec., 1847
*M.B. Marckwald (?), New York, Aug., 1851
*re Town's estate

Invitations to Yale functions

Junior Ball, 1833; Junior Exhibition, 1842; Junior
Class Musical, Presentation of the wooden spoon 1869
Certificate of election as Judge of Probate for Cheshire,
July, 1871; July, 1873

Miscellaneous

Family Records, Marriage of W.T. Peters & Etha Town,
births of children
Sketch - from notebook, "C.W. Peters",
Sketch - Mrs. Wm. T. Peters
page from notebook, Yale autographs
Town mss. sketches of flowers, poetry
Connecticut Herald, Oct., 1825, Etha Town receives diploma
from New Haven Female Seminary
Dec., 1826, announcement of her marriage

Folder U - William T. Peters - Autograph Book, 1825
signed by Yale classmates

[1]

Box I - continued

- Folder V - W.T. Peters, Bible [1]
(gift of Carroll G. Alton Means, 1945)
- W - W.T. Peters & Seth Calhoun, Deposit Book [1]
New Haven Savings Bank 1857-1858

- Oversize Item 1
Architectural drawings - Trinity Church, New Haven
- Oversize Item 2
Architectural drawings - State House, New Haven
- Oversize Item 3
Architectural drawings - Customs House, New York
- Astor's Hotel
- Chapel Street Congregational Church, New Haven
- Oversize Item 4
Architectural drawings - Eagle Bank, New Haven
- Oversize Item 5
[Removed from Folder D]
Letter from Judge Wright

These oversized items are also included in the architectural drawing
and are housed in drawer #15.

**These oversized items are also included in A.D. #11
and are housed in drawer #15.**