

## NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## LIBRARY

## Manuscripts

No. 5

Date processed: May, 1978

- I. Title Ray, Nathaniel Chapin (1858 - 1917). Letters, 1878 - 1916.
- II. The papers of  
deposited in the Library on \_\_\_\_\_, by  
In \_\_\_\_\_ converted the deposit to a gift.
- III. Linear feet of shelf space occupied: 9 inches  
Approximate number of items: 192 original letters, plus typescript  
copies of some of the letters and edited
- IV. Restrictions: None versions of the typescripts.
- V. Literary rights of the unpublished writings of  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:

See page 2

## VIII. Analysis:

See page 3

Ray, Nathaniel Chapin (1858 - 1917). Letters, 1878 - 1916

VII Biographical note:

Nathaniel Chapin Ray (1858 - 1917) was born in Westfield, Mass. on May 21, 1858. In 1867 his family moved to West Haven, Ct. Ray graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University in 1877 as a civil engineer and moved to the middle west in the summer of 1878 to pursue a career in railroad construction engineering; His work took him to many parts of the mid-west and eventually he settled in Butte, Montana as an independent consulting engineer where he was associated with a group having mining interests. In 1885 he was married to Adelaide May in West Haven, Ct.

In 1892 Ray moved to San Francisco where he was engaged in mining, was active in politics, was Chief Engineer of the Yosemite Valley Railroad during its construction, and after its completion was consulting engineer to it. He served in the California legislature 1900 - 1902. In 1915 Ray became a senior civil engineer with the Interstate Commerce Commission. He died October 18, 1917.

Over the years, Ray wrote frequently to his sister Anna Chapin Ray ("Fan"), to his mother and to his father. His sister saved many of these letters with the intention of publishing them. For a complete biographical outline of Ray's career, see the biographical sheet in Folder A.

Ray's father was Edward Addison Ray. His duties as treasurer of the New Haven and Northampton Railroad caused him to move with his family to West Haven, Ct. from Westfield, Mass. in 1867. E.A. Ray gave two of the first printed timetables of the New Haven and Northampton Railroad to the Society. See Donor File. He died in 1906.

Ray's sister Anna Chapin Ray ("Fan") was born in Westfield, Mass. in 1865 and was moved with her family to West Haven, Ct. in 1867. She graduated from Smith College in 1885 and became a successful author of books for young people. She never married. She assembled many of her brother's letters with the intention of editing and publishing them, but evidently passed away after making only a small start in this undertaking. For a complete biographical outline of Anna Chapin Ray's career, see the biographical sheet in Folder A.

Ray, Nathaniel Chapin (1858 - 1917). Letters, 1878 - 1916.

VIII Analysis:

The collected letters of Nathaniel Chanin Ray to his family are voluminous for the years 1878 - 1884, particularly for the year 1883, but with a few gaps such as the period Sept. 1881 - Feb. 1882. After 1884 the letters are farther apart. However, in 1891 when Ray was settled in Butte, Montana as a consulting engineer, there were 19 letters. But the letters per year again become fewer until the collection is concluded with letters written in 1916. While one must assume that this collection includes only a part of the correspondence 1878 - 1916, nevertheless it covers particularly well a very interesting part of Ray's career, his early days in the field as a railroad construction engineer, 1878 - 1884.

As a young railroad construction engineer, Ray wrote in broad general terms about some of his construction problems and accomplishments. Many of his letters during this period were written from construction camps on the plains. Later, as a consulting engineer, Ray wrote of his professional problems. The letters of his last years tended to be personal in nature.

The letters are arranged chronologically, except for the material in the last folder (I) which consists of typescript copies of some of her brother's letters made by Anna Chanin Ray, and edited versions of the typescripts.

Content Guide

Ray, Nathaniel Chapin (1858-1917). Letters, 1878-1916.

Box I

Folder A - Biographical material on Nathaniel Chapin Ray  
and his sister, Anna Chapin Ray (2)

Nathaniel Ray's letters to his family:

Folder B - 1878-~~1880~~ <sup>1879, B-1 1880</sup> (39)  
C - 1881-~~1882~~ <sup>1882</sup> (38)  
D - 1883 (25)  
E - 1884-1885 (27)  
F - 1886-1891 (25)  
G - 1892-1914 (20)  
H - 1915-1916 (18)

Box II

Folder I - Typescript copies of some of Nathaniel Ray's letters  
written to his family 1878 - 1916, and edited  
transcripts of some of these copies.