Bixby Memorial Free Library
Special Collections

Title: The Strong Family Collection

Dates:1792-1964

Creator: The Strong Family

Provenance: The Strong Family

Language: English

Quantity: 2 Bankers boxes and 1 oversized box

Accession #:

Object ID #: 2013.002

Condition: Fragile

Location (room): History Room

Unit: Cart A

Shelf/Drawer: Shelf 1 & Shelf 2

Description:
Three boxes containing extensive legal, financial, and correspondence records of Samuel Strong and family dating back to the 18th century. **NOTE:** Parts of this collection have been treated for mold. Please wear a facial covering while handling.

Significance:
Samuel Strong is a notable figure in both Vergennes and Vermont history, having been in his lifetime a businessman, local politician and assistant judge, and military leader. During the War of 1812 Strong led a militia contingent that was instrumental in the American defense at the Battle of Plattsburgh, and was later commended for his role by both the Vermont General Assembly and the New York State Legislature.

Historical Note:
Samuel Strong (July 17, 1762 - December 5, 1832) was born in Salisbury, Connecticut, to John and Agnes Strong. In 1766, the Strong family relocated to Addison, Vermont, where Samuel and his siblings were raised and educated. As a young adult, Strong worked as a farmer and sheriff in Addison before moving to nearby Vergennes, Vermont, in 1796 with his wife Mercy (Bloomer) Strong (1763-1852.) They had five children who survived to adulthood: Mary, Clarissa, Susan, Samuel Paddock, and Electa.

Strong gained recognition in Vergennes as a businessman, local politician and assistant judge, and military leader. By 1804, he had been promoted to major general in the Vermont Militia, established multiple business ventures, including a factory operating one of the first mechanical wool carding machines in New England, and represented Vergennes in the Vermont House of Representatives. In 1810, he resigned from the Militia and was elected mayor of Vergennes in 1811, where he served until rejoining the Militia as a volunteer during the War of 1812. In September 1814, Strong led a militia contingent that was instrumental in the American defense at the Battle of Plattsburgh, and was later commended for his role by both the Vermont General Assembly and the New York State Legislature.

After the war, Strong returned to Vergennes, serving for several more years as assistant judge, taking part in the construction of multiple transportation improvements including turnpikes and a ferry, and acting as the first president of the Vergennes Bank from 1827 until his death in December 1832. After Strong's

death, his son Samuel Paddock Strong inherited his business ventures and later became President of the Bank of Vergennes and Director of the Rutland and Burlington Railroad. Electa Strong married William H. Smith, whose family was an integral part of the Vergennes community during the nineteenth century. Their son, John Devotion Smith, went on to become a member of the Legislature in Panton, postmaster and later Mayor of Vergennes, and served as judge of probate for the district of New Haven. John Devotion Smith was also known in the community as an abolitionist, and helped establish Vergennes's Anti-Slavery Reading Room.

General Samuel Strong is buried at the Vergennes Burying Ground, along with Mercy and their daughter Susan. Samuel Paddock Strong, his wife Eliza, Electa Strong Smith, and John Devotion Smith are buried at Prospect Cemetery in Vergennes. Three Strong family houses still stand in the area: the John Strong Mansion in Addison, which is maintained as a museum by the Daughters of the American Revolution; the General Samuel Strong House in Vergennes; and Samuel Paddock Strong's 1834 Federalist-style house outside of Vergennes, which has been converted into the Strong House Inn. The General Samuel Strong House was incorporated into the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and the John Strong Mansion was incorporated in 1980.

Scope & Content:
The Strong Collection contains personal and commercial records created by General Samuel Strong, Samuel Paddock Strong, and their family members, dated from 1790 to 1865, as well as supplementary materials from the twentieth century documenting the preservation of the Strong Family's properties in Vergennes and Addison. Original records include labor books documenting workers' names and compensation at Strong's mills, legal documents created and/or signed by General Samuel Strong during his time as a legislator in Vergennes, ledgers and account books kept by Samuel Paddock Strong after he inherited the family businesses, correspondence, and papers involving the family's properties.

The collection also contains materials related to the post office in Vergennes, likely from John Devotion Smith. The majority of these records are entirely handwritten, either on loose paper or in bound volumes. Some papers are accompanied by typewritten transcriptions by a previous researcher (name and date unknown.) The collection also contains a small number of printed or partially-printed materials, including some printed legal writs circa 1792-1823, a post office monthly register, a newspaper, a scrapbook containing numerous newspaper clippings dated circa 1839-1865, and an insurance policy signed by Electa Strong Smith for the General Samuel Strong house, dated 1846. In addition to materials created by the Strong Family, the collection includes articles and newspaper clippings from the 1960s documenting the John Strong House's preservation and use as a museum by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In 2017, four items from this collection were chosen for a conservation project in collaboration with the Daughters of the American Revolution. These include a deed from Henry Spaulding to Ephraim Curtis, 1795, with envelope; a large hand-drawn map showing "plots" for Susan B. Strong, Samuel Paddock Strong, Mercy Strong, and the Woodbridge and Smith families; a 4-page handwritten folio, c. 1844; and a promissory note from Samuel Strong to Asa Strong for $66.67 annually, witnessed by Susan Strong, 1815. These records have been arranged separately from similar items that were not treated in order to maintain their condition. They can be found in Series I: Daughters of the American Revolution Conservation Project, 2017.

An inventory document from 1977 suggests that this collection may have at one point also contained a number of family genealogies. These documents were not present with the rest of the collection at the time of processing, and have not been found. Most likely, these documents were removed from the

collection and housed with other genealogical materials during one of the Historical Collections' several reorganizations between 1980 and 2010. The inventory does not list several items that are now considered part of the collection, including John Devotion Smith's post office materials. It seems that these materials were added to the collection after the inventory was taken. Because these materials were understood to be part of the collection at the beginning of processing and have clear connections to the rest of the Strong family's materials, they have been kept with the collection.

There are some access restrictions to this series due to the condition of materials. Researchers are advised that portions of this collection have been treated for mold. Facial coverings are required when handling these materials. For more information regarding the treatment that these materials have undergone and best practices regarding handling these materials, please contact the Library Director or consult https://www.archives.gov/preservation/holdings-maintenance/mold.html .

Researchers interested in General Samuel Strong's role as legislator in the Vergennes community should consult Series II: Legal, 1892-1823.

Researchers interested in the Vergennes Carding Machine should consult Series III: Financial Records, 1793-c. 1886, Subseries 2: Commercial Finance Records, c. 1800-c. 1864, and Subseries 4: Ledgers, c. 1810-1843.

Researchers interested in the John Strong Mansion should consult Series IX: Daughters of the American Revolution John Strong Mansion Articles, c. 1958-c. 1964.

Key Search Terms:

General Samuel Strong
John Strong
Asa Strong
Luke Strong
Mercy Bloomer Strong
Samuel Paddock Strong
Electa Strong Smith
William Hunter Smith
John Devotion Smith
Vergennes Congregational Church, c. 1864
Vergennes Common Council, 1792-1824
Vergennes Carding Machine
Vergennes Post Office
History of Vergennes, Vermont
History of Addison, Vermont
Daughters of the American Revolution

Inventory:

Series I: Daughters of the American Revolution Conservation Project, 2017
This series contains four documents relating to the Strong family's personal correspondence, financials, and land. These documents underwent significant conservation work in 2017 as the result of a joint project between the Bixby Memorial Free Library and the Daughters of the American Revolution. They

have been arranged separately from similar documents throughout the collection both to maintain their condition and because they were removed from their original order to undergo repairs.

Series II: Legal Records, 1792-1824

This series documents General Samuel Strong's role as a legislator and judge in Vergennes. It consists of four subseries, accounting for both legal documents signed by Strong and legal documents pertaining to Strong's properties, including his brother Luke Strong's estate documents and land deeds for personal and commercial use. Where possible, these records have been kept in original order; where original order was not discernable, they have been arranged by type and chronologically.

Subseries 1: Common Council Acts, 1792-1824

This subseries contains approximately twelve files of handwritten Acts by the Vergennes Common Council, largely relating to land surveys, from 1792-1824. Many of these document the expansion of the town of Vergennes, particularly the building of roads. General Samuel Strong signed many of these documents as surveyor, and participated in the creation of others as part of the Common Council. Some of these files also contain typewritten transcriptions of these documents, likely created by a researcher before 1980.

Subseries 2: Writs, Bulk 1792-1808

This subseries contains approximately 26 legal writs created and/or signed by General Samuel Strong during his time as an assistant judge in Vergennes. The majority of these records are either entirely handwritten or printed with handwritten sections. They document court cases among community members and include writs of habeus corpus, court summons, and other documentation of legal proceedings.

Subseries 3: Luke Strong Estate, c. 1805-1808

This subseries documents the extent of the estate of Luke Strong and legal documentation of its transfer to Samuel Strong after Luke Strong's death. It includes one handwritten deed document, one letter from D. Matthews to Samuel Strong regarding the deed, and one handwritten inventory of the estate, dated between c. 1805 and 1808. These materials have been kept in original order.

Subseries 4: Deeds to Samuel Strong, 1793-1821

This subseries contains multiple deeds for land bought by General Samuel Strong for both personal and commercial purposes between 1793 and 1821. These materials have been arranged chronologically.

Subseries 5: Samuel Morgan Estate, n.d.

This subseries contains several pages removed from a damaged letter book documenting the extent and value of the estate of Samuel Morgan's estate, most likely dated from the early 19th century. The pages are accompanied by a calling card bearing Mr. Morgan's signature.

Series III: Financial Records, 1793- c. 1886
This series contains the personal and commercial records kept by the Strong family, including General Samuel Strong and Samuel Paddock Strong, between 1793 and 1886. It documents both household spending and accounts for the Strongs' multiple business ventures, particularly their mills. Researchers interested in the Vergennes Carding Machine, which was among the first of its kind in the state, should consult Subseries 2: Commercial Finance Records, c. 1800- c. 1864. Where possible, these records have been kept in original order; where this was not possible, they have been arranged by type and chronologically.

Subseries 1: Receipts, 1793-1804
This subseries contains handwritten receipts of payments to General Samuel Strong from various family and community members, including Luke Strong and Asa Strong. These receipts are accompanied by an envelope with handwritten contextual information from a previous researcher. They are dated between 1793 and 1804 and likely document both personal and commercial purchases. Where possible, original order has been preserved; where no original order was discernable, materials have been arranged chronologically.

Subseries 2: Commercial Finance Records, c. 1800- c. 1864
This subseries contains financial records from multiple businesses owned and operated by General Samuel Strong and Samuel Paddock Strong between 1800 and 1864, most notably General Strong's wool carding factory, which utilized one of the first mechanized carding processes in New England. This subseries contains expense records for the carding machine, as well as records of laborers' hours and pay and running lists of purchases, and one bound log book. These materials have been arranged chronologically.

Subseries 3: Account Books, `1802-1865
This subseries contains one large bound account book labeled Samuel Strong's Account Book, which is signed by both General Samuel Strong and Samuel Paddock Strong. Recorded dates in this book range from c. 1802- c. 1830. It is unclear whether these recorded accounts are personal, commercial, or a combination of the two. The subseries also contains three smaller, unsigned bound account books dated May 1832-October 1859, 1860-1864, and January 1864-April 1865. The book dated 1860-1864 was also used as a grade book for multiple classes of children. The subseries also contains a number of handwritten notes and small pieces of correspondence that were between the pages of this book at the time of processing. Some of these pieces of correspondence were addressed to, or signed by, H.F. Leavitt, a prominent educator and reverend in Vergennes. Leavitt led the congregation that Samuel Paddock Strong and his wife were part of and may have had business dealings with the Strongs, leading to these records' inclusion in this collection.

Significant names in these records include H.F. Leavitt and Mrs. Leavitt, F.C. Strong, William R. Bixby, Haven, W.G. Sprague, and M.C. Foote. The account book dated January 1864-April 1865, which contained Leavitt correspondence, also referenced "the Mill," as well as a reference to the "Southern Rebellion" in an entry from November 2, 1864.

Subseries 4: Ledgers, c. 1810-1843
This subseries contains four large ledgers documenting expenses, likely for the Strong family businesses, from c. 1810 to 1843. One of these ledgers is intact and retains its binding; the rest are unbound. The subseries also contains several individual pages of ledgers that have been reassembled after significant crumbling due to water damage, and are stored separately. Some of

these ledgers are signed by Samuel Paddock Strong, and the remainder are written in the same style and handwriting. No original order was discernible; these records have been arranged chronologically.

Significant names in these ledgers include W.R. Bixby, F.C. Haven, and Asa Strong. Additional points of research interest include references to expenses for the Vergennes Carding Machine.

Note: due to significant preservation concerns, including fragility, water damage, and mold, this subseries is closed to in-person research until further preservation steps can be taken. For more information or to receive a scan of these materials for research, please contact the Library Director.

Series: IV Correspondence, 1814-1890
This series contains handwritten correspondence among Strong family members and friends from 1814 to 1890, as well as pages from an undated letter book kept by a Strong relative. These records include multiple letters to Mercy (also spelled Marcy) Strong, wife of General Samuel Strong, and a letter from John Taylor to General Samuel Strong accompanying the gift of a sword from New York State for Strong's service in the War of 1812. Some of these records are accompanied by typewritten transcriptions. These materials have been arranged chronologically, with undated materials arranged last.

Subseries 1: Strong Family Letters, 1814-1890
This subseries contains approximately ten pieces of correspondence between Strong family members, friends, and business partners, dated between 1814 and 1890, bulk 1814-1820. They discuss family gatherings, relatives' health, and accomplishments. The subseries contains a letter from John Taylor to General Samuel Strong accompanying the sword gifted to Strong by New York State for exemplary service during the War of 1812.

Subseries 2: Letter Book pages, n.d.
This subseries contains several reassembled letter book pages which had previously been crumbled or otherwise damaged. These pages are undated but discuss the history of Vermont, travels to Montreal, and politics.

Note: due to their fragile condition, these materials require specific and supervised handling. For more information, please contact the Library Director.

Series V: John Strong Mansion Fire Insurance Document, 1846
This series contains a fire insurance policy for the John Strong Mansion, dated 1846. It is signed by Electa (Strong) Smith.

Series VI: Samuel Paddock Strong Commemoration, 1864
This series contains one pamphlet from the commemorative discourse held at the Vergennes Congregational Church in memory of Samuel Paddock Strong in February 1864. The discourse was printed and published in Burlington in the same year.

Series VII: Post Office Materials, 1866-1867

This series contains one copy of the United States Mail Post Office Assistant newspaper dated October 1866 and a set of three monthly registers for the Vergennes Post Office, detailing the arrival and departure times of three post deliveries (Route 413 from Burlington to Vergennes, Route 475 from Vergennes to Chimney Point, and Route 472 from Addison to Vergennes) during August 1867. Most likely, these materials were created and/or contributed by John Devotion Smith,who served as postmaster in Vergennes from 1866 to 1869. These materials have been arranged chronologically.

Series VIII: Scrapbook from 18th-Century Logbook, c. 1839-1865
This series contains one bound volume. It appears to be a labor book (c. 1814-1823) containing handwritten records of laborers' names and attendance, which was repurposed as a scrapbook after 1840. The book contains many newspaper clippings relating to politics, marriage, and national events, printed copies of poems and recipes, and handwritten annotations and drawings, many of which are glued over the earlier labor entries. The scrapbook contains multiple signatures, including "Samuel."

Series IX: Daughters of the American Revolution John Strong Mansion Articles, c. 1958-c. 1964
This series contains several magazine articles documenting the Daughters of the American Revolution's preservation of the John Strong Mansion in Addison, dated c. 1958- c. 1964. There are two copies of an article with a handwritten note indicating that it was written approximately 1935 and edited in 1958, as well as two sets of newspaper clippings detailing the D.A.R.'s work with the mansion, which is now open to the public as a museum. Original order has been preserved in this series.

Surveyed by: Anna Hurd, Merle Edwards-Orr, and Jamie Edwards-Orr **Date:** 2022-2023