

Connecticut Historical Society  
museum & library

Chapin family papers

A Guide to the collection at the Connecticut Historical Society

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Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
<b>Creator :</b>	Chapin Family
<b>Title :</b>	Chapin Family Papers
<b>Dates :</b>	1815-1934
<b>Extent :</b>	1.25 linear feet (2.5 boxes)
<b>Location:</b>	Ms 64937
<b>Language:</b>	English

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Biographical Sketch

Hermon Chapin (1799-1866) began producing wooden planes in 1828, and added rulers in 1835. His manufactory was located in Pine Meadow, a district of New Hartford, Connecticut. Hermon married May 28, 1828, Catherine Merrill. In 1854, their son Edward (1833-1896) became superintendent of his father's firm. In 1860, Edward and his brothers George W. (1837-1884) and Philip E. (b. 1838) formed H. Chapin & Sons. Six years later, at their father's death, Philip withdrew from the firm as Edward and George assumed ownership. The firm then became known as H. Chapin's Sons. In 1866, George sold his interest in the firm to Edward who continued the firm as H. Chapin's Son until his death in 1897. Philip formed his own company, Chapin Machine Co., also located in Pine Meadow, a firm that made sewing machines.

At Edward's death in 1897, his sons Hermon and Frank formed H. Chapin's Son & Co., a joint stock company with Rufus E. Holmes as President, which in 1901 merged with the Stephens Co to become Chapin-Stephens Co. The firm underwent several other reorganizations before it was dissolved in 1929.

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## Arrangement Note

The materials have been arranged in chronological order, from Hermon Chapin, the father, to the various iterations of H. Chapin's Son and Chapin-Stephens Co, to Philip Chapin's Chapin Machine Company. These are followed by papers of tangential families, namely Bunnell, Stephens and Lines, then unidentified expense accounts and two unrelated documents, including a letter from James R. Hawley.

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## Scope and Content

The collection, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Frank M. Chapin, was described in the accession record as being material from the Chapin Machine Company. In processing the collection it was evident that it included personal papers of the Chapin family and records of several Chapin companies.

Hermon Chapin is represented in the collection by a school certificate, 1821, an inventory of his property in 1857, and his estate papers, 1866. His wife Catherine's papers consist of an account book, 1866-1871, a stock agreement, 1873, and an inventory of her personal property at her death in 1873.

Materials related to H. Chapin's Son include bills, receipts and notices from the Farmington River Water Company, 1868-1876; assignments of patent rights, 1868-1878; legal agreements transferring water rights and land titles, 1825-1878; and correspondence and records related to a U.S. Circuit Court case regarding skate wheels, between Chapin and the Henly Company, 1884-1890. Evidently Chapin's company sought protection for its products by joining two industry associations. The records of the Plane Manufacturers Association include by-laws, correspondence, and an agreement, 1878-1880. Articles of association, by-laws and correspondence, 1865-1885, exist from Chapin's membership in the Association of American Rule Manufacturers.

Of interest are agreements, financial statements and votes taken by Frank Chapin and his company when it bought out the Stephens Company, a process that started in 1900 and ended in 1902. Advertising, letterheads, catalogs and product labels for H. Chapin's Son, Stephens Company and Chapin-Stevens Company give the researcher a look at the public face of the companies. Patent materials, a certificate and bills illustrated the relationship between Chapin and Ze-Litt Handles, 1862-1914, invented by Zeno Littman of Manhattan.

Separating the private from the public among the Chapin's is nearly impossible, so this group of material also includes Edward M. Chapin's will, 1888, and an inventory of what appears to be the business in 1897. Frank

Chapin, the last family member associated with the company, is represented by correspondence from 1934. One letter is with Pinkerton about security.

Philip E. Chapin and his affiliation with Chapin Machine Company also make distinctions between public and private life difficult. His papers include personal and business correspondence, 1868-1873, and agreement and correspondence with the Eldridge Company about sewing machines, 1870, and additional correspondence about sewing and knitting machines, 1870-1876. Philip's diaries, which do not contain full entries, date from 1868, 1870 and 1871. Bills and expense accounts, again a mix of personal and business, date 1870-1878.

The final materials in the collection are only tangentially related to the Chapins or have no identification at all. There are records from a case versus Robert Smith et al. about a dam on the Farmington River, 1884; deeds, summonses, receipts and probate records from the Bunnell, Stevens and Lines families, 1815-1859; and the papers of H. Wales Lines including letters from Oliver H. Platt, telegrams, a newspaper article about Lines's political activities, and an Odd Fellows certificate, 1873-1926. There are a set of memoranda/account books that have not been attributed to any family members, 1859-1865, and a letter from James R. Hawley to a Mr. Robinson, 1879, and an agreement involving the New Haven & Northampton Company, 1876.

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## Restrictions

### Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions on access to the collection.

### Use Restrictions

Use of the material requires compliance with the Connecticut Historical Society's Research Center regulations.

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## Subject Headings

### Personal Names

Chapin, Catherine Merrill.  
Chapin, Edward Merrill, 1833-1896.  
Chapin, Hermon, 1799-1866.  
Chapin, Philip Eugene, b. 1838.

### **Corporate Names**

Chapin Machine Company.  
Chapin-Stephens Company.  
H. Chapin & Sons.

### **Subjects**

Patent assignments -- Connecticut -- New Hartford.  
Planes (Hand tools) -- Connecticut -- New Hartford.  
Rulers (Instruments) -- Connecticut -- New Hartford.  
Sewing-machine industry -- Connecticut -- New Hartford.

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## **Administrative Information**

### **Preferred Citation**

Item, Collection Title, Collection number (Box #, Folder #). Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

### **Processing Details**

Collection was processed by Barbara Austen in 2007.

EAD Finding Aid created August 2012.

### **Accruals**

The collection is closed.

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## Contents:

### Papers

#### Box Folder

1	1	Hermon Chapin papers, 1821-1866
1	2	Catherine Merrill Chapin papers, 1866-1873
1	3	Farmington River Water Co. records, 1868-1876
1	4-5	Assignment of patent rights, 1867-1878
1	6	Water rights and deeds, 1825-1878
1	7	Chapin vs. Henly, 1884-1890
1	8	Plane Manufacturers Association records, 1878-1880
1	9	Association of American Rule Manufacturers records, 1865-1885
1	10	Stephens Company buy-out, 1900-1902
1	11	Catalogs, 1874-1924
1	12	Letterhead
1	13	Product labels
1	14	Memoranda, undated
1	15	Ze-Litt Handles records, 1862-1914
1	16	Edward M. Chapin will and estate inventory, 1888, 1897

#### Box Folder

2	1	Frank M. Chapin correspondence, 1934
2	2	Philip E. Chapin correspondence, 1868-1873
2	3	Chapin Machine Co. agreement, 1870
2	4-8	Chapin Machine Co. correspondence, 1870-1876
2	9	Philip E. Chapin diaries, 1868, 1870
2	10	Philip E. Chapin diary, 1871
2	11	Philip E. Chapin bills, 1873-1876
2	12-13	Philip E. Chapin expense accounts, 1873-1878

#### Box Folder

3	1	Case vs. Robert Smith et al., 1884
3	2	Bunnell, Stevens and Lines families papers, 1815-1859
3	3	H. Wales Lines papers, 1873-1926
3	4-6	Unidentified expense account books, 1850-1865
3	7	New Haven & Northampton Co. agreement, 1876; James R. Hawley letter, 1879