

Connecticut Historical Society
museum & library

Daniel Bontecou papers

A Guide to the collection at the Connecticut Historical Society

Collection Overview

Repository:	Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
Creator :	Bontecou, Daniel, 1779-1857
Title :	Daniel Bontecou business and personal papers
Dates :	1797-1859
Extent :	2.25 linear feet (4 1/2 boxes)
Location:	Ms 74041
Language:	English

Biographical Sketch

Daniel Bontecou (1779-1857) was born in New Haven, Connecticut. His father Dr. Daniel Bontecou (1739-1778), son of Timothy and Mary (Goodrich) Bontecou of Wethersfield, Connecticut, was a surgeon who graduated from Yale College in 1757 and died prior to Daniel's birth. Daniel's grandfather Timothy was the son of Pierre and Marguerite (Collinot) Bontecou, Huguenot refugees from LaRochelle, France, who settled in New Haven in 1735. Daniel's mother Rebecca (1733-1802), who was widowed prior to marrying his father in 1775, was the daughter of Joseph and Sarah (Southmayd) Starr of Middletown. In 1787, following the death of Daniel's father, his mother married Captain Ephraim Pease of Enfield, Connecticut and moved the family there.

Daniel was married to Sybil (Pease) Potter, the daughter of Rev. Elam and Sybil (Pease) Potter of Enfield and the granddaughter of Daniel's stepfather Capt Pease, from 1798 until her death in 1810. They had children Catherine Rhodes (1798-1832), Daniel (1804-1852), Martha Potter (1806-1855), Sybil Pease (1808-1851) and Mary (1810-1846). In 1816 Daniel married Harriet Bliss (1782-1853), daughter of Hon. Moses and Abigail (Metcalf) Bliss of Springfield, Massachusetts. They had children William (died young), Harriet (1818-1872), and William Ely (1823-? after 1885).

Daniel established himself as a merchant in Enfield. He was active in the Connecticut militia and held the rank of Sergeant in the 31st Regiment. He moved to Springfield in 1806 and was a partner in a dry goods and general

merchandise business with Col. Solomon Warriner from 1806 to 1817. After the Warriner & Bontecou partnership dissolved, Daniel continued in business alone. He represented Springfield in the General Court in 1820. Although the exact date is unknown, Daniel later established a business partnership with Jonathan W. Hunt (the business correspondence includes a letter written by Daniel in 1825 introducing Mr. Hunt as a "partner of mine".) Bontecou & Hunt continued until 1835 when Daniel sold his interest and retired. In 1830 Bontecou & Hunt were agents for the steamboat Vermont, running from Hartford, Connecticut to Bellows Falls, Vermont. Daniel was elected deacon in the First Congregational Church March 5, 1833 and continued in office until May 2, 1845 when he transferred to South Church. Daniel was an incorporator and trustee of The Springfield Institution for Savings in 1827 and an incorporator of The Springfield Five-cent Savings Bank in 1854.

Scope and Content

The collection was received without discernible organization. Papers were folded, tied in packets and stored in boxes. At one time, the collection was partially processed, and several folders containing business investments, estate papers and a typed biography were found in one of the boxes. Papers related to a forge in Enfield and an aqueduct in Springfield were found processed in folders. Several empty leather wallets and billfolds were removed from the collection and offered to the museum.

The collection is arranged chronologically into seven series: **Business Records, Investment Records, Personal Papers, Estate and Other Legal Papers, Springfield Fire Insurance Company Records, Revolutionary War Pension Documents, and Assorted Materials.**

Series I: Business Records The bulk of the collection consists of Daniel Bontecou's mercantile business papers as an individual and in various partnerships and business relationships including Field & Bontecou, Warriner & Bontecou, and Bontecou & Hunt. Represented in the Business Records series are orders, bills, paid receipts, accounts, inventories, promissory notes, and insurance policies. An account book spanning the 1840s contains descriptive entries possibly related to rentals and leasing of land for farming.

Series II: Investment Records Within the Investment Records series are documents connected to a forge in Enfield and an aqueduct in Springfield. Accounts, business letters and correspondence between Peter R. Field and Daniel Bontecou containing references to Colebrook, New Hampshire land sales suggest that Daniel may have invested in land there. In addition, there are documents dated 1778-1800 related to business records of Field & Bontecou and a document titled "Account Due to the late firm of Field & Bontecou."

Included in the investment papers are documents related to Bontecou & Thayer. This was a failed Springfield drug store business established by Daniel's son William Ely Bontecou and his wife Caroline's brother Benjamin Bowditch Thayer. Although apparently not a partner, Daniel may have provided backing or financial support for the business.

Series III: Personal Papers His personal papers contain documentation of two military appointments: Corporal 31st Regiment of Militia in the State of Connecticut in 1800 and Sergeant of the 5th Company of the 31st Regiment of Militia in the State of Connecticut 1802.

The personal correspondence includes three letters addressed to Daniel from his sister Rebecca's husband Rev. Menzies Rayner. Rev. Rayner was Rector of Christ Church in Hartford for ten years beginning in 1801, St. Paul's Church in Huntington, Connecticut for 17 years beginning in 1811 and the Universalist Church and Society in Harford for four years beginning in 1828.

Series IV: Estate and Other Legal Papers The estate papers present in the collection include an inventory of Daniel's estate, a revoked will, receipts, and probate papers. Other legal papers related to Powers of Attorney and estate papers of Benjamin and Margaret Wardwell and Mary B. Machett are included in the collection.

Series V: Springfield Fire Insurance Company Records Records related to the Springfield Fire Insurance Company include correspondence from agent Josiah D. Whitney of Northampton, Mass. to George Bliss Jr. in Springfield, Massachusetts. The presence of these documents may be due to his marriage to Harriet Bliss.

Series VI: Revolutionary War Pension Documents Four Massachusetts Agency Revolutionary Pensioners documents are included in the collection, including two signed by Daniel Bontecou.

Series VII: Assorted Materials Research papers and notes collected during processing are available in the collection file. The Assorted series contains documents which cannot be shown to be related to the rest of collection.

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.

Subject Headings

Personal Names

Bontecou, William Ely, ca. 1823 - ca. 1885
Rayner, Menzies, 1770-1850

Corporate Names

Springfield Fire Insurance Company (Springfield, Mass.)

Subjects

Decedents' estates -- Massachusetts -- Springfield.
Merchants -- Connecticut -- Enfield
Merchants -- Massachusetts -- Springfield

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

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

Processing Details

Collection was processed by Debra Barberi and Barbara Austen in 2007.

EAD Finding Aid created July 2012.

Accruals

The collection is closed.

Contents:

I. Business Records

Box Folder

- 1 1-13 Account Statements, 1802-1857
- 1 14 Account Statements, Undated
- 1 15-19 Account Books, 1799-1857

Box Folder

- 2 1-22 Bills and Receipts, 1797-1857
- 2 23 Bills and Receipts, Undated

Box Folder

- 3 1-9 Orders for Goods Charged, 1802-1806
- 3 10 Orders for Goods Charged, Undated
- 3 11 Sales, 1843-1855
- 3 12 Sales, Undated
- 3 13 Notes Payable or Due, 1803-1854, Undated
- 3 14-18 Promissory Notes Paid, 1802-1853
- 3 19 Promissory Notes Paid, Undated
- 3 20-22 Bank Books, 1837-1854
- 3 23 Inventories, 1808, Unknown
- 3 24 Correspondence, 1790-1856
- 3 25-26 Insurance Policies and Receipts, 1827-1858

II. Investment Records

Box Folder

- 4 1-3 Land Speculation, Colebrook, New Hampshire, 1801-1811
- 4 4 Land Speculation, Accounts and Settlements, 1798-1811
- 4 5 Forge Construction Receipts, 1803-1805
- 4 6 Aqueduct Agreements and Records, 1814-1838
- 4 7 Western Railroad Stock Receipts, 1837-1842
- 4 8 Real Estate, Deeds and Rentals, 1797-1854
- 4 9 Bontecou & Thayer Business Papers, 1848-1852

III. Personal Papers

Box Folder

- 4 10 Correspondence, 1799-1857, Undated
- 4 11 Family Papers, 1780-1821
- 4 12 Military Appointments, 1800-1802

IV. Estate and Other Legal Papers

Box Folder

4	13	Estate Inventory, 1858
4	14-15	Estate Record Books, 1858-1859
4	16	Revoked Will, Probate Papers, 1848-1859
4	17-20	Estate Papers, 1857-1859
4	21	Power of Attorney, Executor and Guardianship, 1827-1841
4	22	Benjamin Wardwell Estate Papers, 1773-1825
4	23	Margaret Wardwell Estate Papers, 1837
4	24	Mary B. Machett Estate Papers, 1845-1859
4	25	Other Legal Papers, 1808-1856

V. Springfield Fire Insurance Company

Box Folder

5	1-2	Correspondence Josiah D. Whitney to George Bliss, Jr., 1823-1824
5	3-5	Insurance Applications, Renewals, Surveys, 1827-1831
5	6	Insurance Applications, Renewals, Surveys, Undated
5	7	Policies and Receipts, 1829-1842
5	8	Blank Policy and Forms, Undated

VI. Revolutionary War Pension Documents

Box Folder

5	9	Revolutionary War Pension Documents, 1815-1827
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VII. Assorted Materials

Box Folder

5	10	Sermon, Undated
5	11	Other