

Connecticut Historical Society  
museum & library

Lydia Huntley Sigourney Papers

Lydia Huntley Sigourney Papers at the Connecticut Historical Society

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Collection Overview

<b>Repository :</b>	Connecticut Historical Society
<b>Creator :</b>	Sigourney, Lydia Huntley
<b>Title :</b>	Lydia Huntley Sigourney Papers
<b>Dates :</b>	1788-1911
<b>Extent :</b>	0.80 linear foot (2 boxes)
<b>Abstract :</b>	Collection consists of correspondence, literary papers and personal diaries. Also included are some papers of her husband, Charles Sigourney
<b>Location :</b>	Ms Sigol1865
<b>Language:</b>	English

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Biographical Sketch

Lydia Howard Huntley was born in Norwich, Connecticut on September 1, 1791, the only daughter of Ezekiel and Sophia (Wentworth) Huntley. She began her public career as a schoolteacher in Norwich and later, under the patronage of Daniel Wadsworth, she opened a school in Hartford. Among the pupils in her select school for young ladies in Hartford were the daughters of Dr. Mason Fitch Cogswell, one of whom, Alice, a deaf-mute, enlisted her sympathy and a life-long interest in education for the deaf.

With her marriage to Hartford merchant-banker Charles Sigourney (1778-1854) on June 16, 1819, Lydia Sigourney closed her school, but throughout her life she continued to take an active interest in the education of the young. In addition to authoring a number of successful readers and children's instructional volumes, Mrs. Sigourney gave support and encouragement to several nineteenth century educators, including Henry Barnard, Emma Hart Willard and her sister Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps, Catharine Beecher, Mary Lyon, and Elihu Burritt.

Her first book, *Moral Pieces*, was published anonymously in 1815, under the auspices of her patron, Daniel Wadsworth. Followed in 1822 by *Traits of the*

*Aborigines*, a long poem celebrating Native American life for which Charles Sigourney supplied the historical notes, it marked the beginning of a literary career which would produce more than thirty books and hundreds of fugitive pieces in the periodicals, anthologies, and gift books of the day.

Lydia Sigourney's works were ranked on a par with Longfellow and Bryant, and her sales equaled theirs. An indefatigable promoter of her own literary career, she also assisted and encouraged the efforts of John Greenleaf Whittier, Gideon Wells, Anne Stephens, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

In addition to her life-long interest in education, especially of women and the socially disadvantaged, Lydia Sigourney was an advocate for a host of nineteenth century causes. Among those which enlisted her support were the fair treatment of Native and African Americans, temperance, the peace initiatives of Elihu Burritt, foreign missions, and a number of causes sponsored by the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Lydia Sigourney bore five children, two of whom, Mary Huntley Sigourney Russell (1828 - 1899), and Andrew Maximilian Bethune Sigourney (1830 - 1850), survived infancy. Lydia Sigourney died in Hartford on June 10, 1865.

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## Scope and Content

Collection consists of correspondence to and from Lydia Huntley Sigourney, diaries, literary papers (including poems, essays and articles for magazines), personal notes and reminiscences, educational papers, ephemera, record books and financial and legal records. The collection also contains some of Charles Sigourney's papers, in particular correspondence, diaries and literary works.

### Arrangement

Materials are organized into eleven series, and five sub-series, based on form and creator.

**Series I: Correspondence** consists of letters to and from Lydia Sigourney.

*Sub-series A: Letters to Mrs. Ripley Smith* consists of undated letters to Mrs. Mary Ripley Smith

**Series II: Ephemera** consists of fragments of household notes, notation on the Russell family ring, L.H. Sigourney "At Home" card, and prints of initials on Sigourney family silverware.

**Series III: Education** consists of lessons and exercises, school rules, and a card that accompanied a gift to Lydia Sigourney from her pupils.

**Series IV: Financial Papers** consists of Diary of household financial accounts for 1838.

**Series V: Legal Papers** consists of a contract between Lydia Sigourney and Carter Bros. of New York, and a 'list of calumnies etc.' for contradiction.

**Series VI: Literary Papers** consists of poems and articles written by Lydia Sigourney, and correspondence and financial records concerning her literary endeavors.

**Series VII: Personal Management** consists of notes and reflection on her daily life, activities and behavior.

**Series VIII: Portraits** consists of copies of portraits of Dolly Madison and Zachary Taylor.

**Series IX: Record Books** consists of two record books. II.1 details a list of deaths of Norwich, CT., including a list of women, children and African American residents. The book was continued after Sigourney's death. II.2 lists Sigourney's pupils with notes on their marriages, children and death dates.

**Series X: Sigourney Family Papers** consists of genealogical information on Charles Sigourney's ancestors, fragments of a family document, a fragment of the family Bible, and letters and poems from Lydia Sigourney's descendants.

**Series XI: Charles Sigourney Papers** consists of correspondence, diaries and legal and literary papers. Charles Sigourney was born in Boston on July 22, 1778. The son of a Boston merchant, Sigourney was sent to an English school for a short time before beginning work in his father's store at age thirteen. He married Jane Carter in Boston before moving to Hartford to set up in the hardware business. He worked as a hardware merchant and banker for the Phoenix Bank of Hartford. He was also Vice-President for Life of the American Asylum at Hartford for the Education of Deaf and Dumb Persons (later the American School for the Deaf). He was instrumental in establishing Washington (later Trinity) College in Hartford, and was an active member of Christ Church in Hartford. He died at home in Hartford on December 31, 1854.

*Sub-series A: Correspondence* consists of letters to and from Charles Sigourney, including one (copy) from Thomas Jefferson.

*Sub-series B: Diaries* consists of diaries, daily logs and fragments of diaries.

*Sub-series C: Legal Papers* consists of a legal record dated 1852.

*Sub-series D: Literary Papers* consists of a poem by Charles Sigourney entitled "The Belles of Hartford".

Materials in this collection are arranged chronologically in each series to compliment access points from the card catalog. Arrangement within series closely follows that already established.

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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**

### **Corporate Names**

Great Western (Ship).  
Sigourney, Charles, 1778-1854.

### **Subjects**

Ice navigation.  
Women authors.

### **Genre Forms**

Holographs; holographs, signed; printed material.

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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 Marilyn Paul-Lewis under an NHPRC grant (#89-003) in January 1999. Finding Aid and EAD instance compiled by Stephen Yearl in January 1999. Updated to EAD 2002 in December 2010.

### Accruals

The collection is closed.

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### Related Material

An index of catalog cards is available to aid access to this collection. Access is through writer, recipient and date. The card catalog is located in the Research Center reading room.

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### Contents:

#### I. Correspondence

##### Box Folder

1	1	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1818-1820 (2 items)
1	2	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1821-1825 (2 items)
1	3	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1826-1830 (Empty)
1	4	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1831-1835 (4 items)
1	5	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1836-1837 (14 items)
1	6	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1838-1839 (9 items)
1	7	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. Includes a map of ice fields encountered on a voyage from Europe (April 1841). 1840-1841 (11 item)
1	8	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1842-1843 (17 items)
1	9	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1844-1845 (9 items)
1	10	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1846-1847 (11 item)
1	11	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1848-1849 (13 items)
1	12	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1850-1851 (19 items)
1	13	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1852-1853 (5 items)
1	14	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1854-1855 (11 item)
1	15	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1856-1857 (8 items)
1	16	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1858-1859 (12 items)
1	17	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1860-1861 (4 items)
1	18	Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1862-1863 (6 items)

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|---|----|---|
| 1 | 19 | Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 1864-1865 (7 items)                                  |
| 1 | 20 | Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 18--? (10 items)                                     |
| 1 | 21 | Letters to and from Lydia Sigourney. 18--? (11 item)<br>Letters to Mrs. Mary Ripley Smith |

**Box Folder**

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|---|----|--|
| 1 | 22 | Letters to Mary Ripley Smith. Includes 34 letters and 8 envelopes. 1766 (42 items) |
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**II. Ephemera**

**Box Folder**

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|---|----|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 23 | Ephemera. [before 1970] (3 items) |
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**III. Education**

**Box Folder**

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|---|----|--------------------------------|
| 1 | 24 | Education. 1811-1815 (4 items) |
|---|----|--------------------------------|

**IV. Financial Papers**

**Box Folder**

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|---|----|---|
| 1 | 25 | Diary of household financial accounts. 1838 (4 items) |
|---|----|---|

**V. Legal Papers**

**Box Folder**

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|---|----|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 26 | Legal records. [184?] (4 items) |
|---|----|---------------------------------|

**VI. Literary Papers**

Note: Most are manuscript, but some printed copies are included.  
Arrangement is chronological, following previous practice.

**Box Folder**

- |   |    |                                       |
|---|----|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 27 | Literary papers. 1818-1820 ( 3 items) |
| 1 | 28 | Literary papers. 1821-1830 (3 items)  |
| 1 | 29 | Literary papers. 1831-1840 (6 items)  |
| 1 | 30 | Literary papers. 1841-1845 (5 items)  |
| 1 | 31 | Literary papers. 1846-1850 (19 items) |
| 1 | 32 | Literary papers. 1851-1860 (5 items)  |
| 1 | 33 | Literary papers. 1861-1864 (7 items)  |
| 1 | 34 | Literary Papers [18--?] (18 items)    |

**VII. Personal Management**

**Box Folder**

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|---|----|---|
| 1 | 35 | Self examination list (1821) and memoranda of employments (1860). 1821-1860 (2 items) |
|---|----|---|

### **VIII. Portraits**

#### **Box Folder**

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|---|----|---|
| 1 | 36 | Portraits of Dolly Madison and Zachary Taylor. (Copies) [18--?] (2 items) |
|---|----|---|

### **IX. Record Books**

#### **Box Folder**

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|---|---|--|
| 2 | 1 | "Statement of the number of deaths in the First Society of Norwich, commenced January 1, 1807." 1807-1892 (1 item) |
| 2 | 2 | "Catalogue of the members of Mrs. Sigourney's School in Hartford." 1814-1862 (2 items)                             |

### **X. Sigourney Family Papers**

#### **Box Folder**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 3 | Fragment of family Bible; Sigourney family genealogy 1722-[1799?] (7 items) |
| 2 | 4 | Poems, letters and postcards of descendants. [18--?] (2 items)              |

### **XI. Charles Sigourney Papers**

#### Correspondence

#### **Box Folder**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 2 | 5 | Letters to and from Charles Sigourney 1788-1820 (4 items)  |
| 2 | 6 | Letters to and from Charles Sigourney, including correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. 1821-40 (6 items) |
| 2 | 7 | Two drafts of letters to Lydia Sigourney concerning her career as an author. 1827 (2 items)              |
| 2 | 8 | Letters to and from Charles Sigourney 1841-1854 (6 items)  |

#### Diaries

#### **Box Folder**

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 2 | 9  | Diary papers. 1842-1850 (2 items)                        |
| 2 | 10 | Diary papers. [18--?] (4 items)                          |
| 2 | 11 | Diaries and diary fragment [between 1842-1854] (3 items) |

#### Legal Papers

#### **Box Folder**

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|---|----|--|
| 2 | 12 | Diaries and diary fragment 1852 (1 item) |
|---|----|--|
- Literary Papers 1788-1854 4 folders; 16 items

#### **Box Folder**

2 13 "The Belles of Hartford" 1802 (1 item)