

Guide to the David Daggett Papers

MS 162



compiled by Steven Hensen

March 1972

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 162

CREATOR: Daggett, David, 1764-1851

TITLE: David Daggett papers

DATES: 1781-1851

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 7 linear feet (14 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence (primarily letters received) and other papers of David Daggett, Connecticut lawyer, jurist, politician, teacher, and author. The papers relate primarily to Daggett's legal and political activities and to Federalist Party politics. Important correspondents include Simeon Baldwin, Abraham Bishop, Isaac Bronson, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Charles Denison, Elizur Goodrich, Gideon Granger, Roger Griswold, Rufus King, William Leffingwell, Josiah Meigs, Timothy Pickering, Benjamin Rush, John Cotton Smith, Daniel Webster, William Wirt, and Oliver Wolcott.

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Preferred Citation

David Daggett Papers (MS 162). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Existence and Location of Copies

Additional information not yet available in the online version of the finding aid exists in the repository. Contact Manuscripts and Archives for assistance.

Biographical / Historical

David Daggett, Connecticut lawyer, politician, jurist, teacher, and author was born in Attleborough, Massachusetts on December 31, 1764, the sixth of nine children of Thomas and Sibulah (Stanley) Daggett.

After graduating from Yale in 1783, he supported himself by teaching in the Hopkins Grammar School, during which time he studied law under Charles Chauncey. In January 1786, he was admitted to the Connecticut bar. In October of 1791, he was elected to the Connecticut General Assembly from New Haven where he served continuously (the last three years as Speaker) until 1797, when he was elected to the Council. Daggett's tenure in the Council was marked, as was in fact his entire subsequent career, by those political principles which made him one of the prominent figures in the Federalist Party.

He retained his seat in the Council until his resignation in 1804. In 1805, he was again elected to the Assembly, serving until 1809, at which time he again became a member of the Council.

In June of 1811, he was appointed State's Attorney for New Haven County and in 1812 was a Presidential elector.

In May of 1813, Daggett was elected to the United States Senate as a Federalist where he pursued much the same course as the other New England Federalists as a defender of states' rights.

At the close of his senatorial term in 1819, he returned to New Haven and his law practice. In 1824, he was appointed an associate instructor in the Yale Law School and in 1826 as Kent Professor of Law, a post he held until 1848.

He also served as Associate Justice of the Superior Court of Connecticut from 1826 to 1832, when he was made Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of Errors, a position he held until 1834, when he reached the mandatory retirement age of seventy. He was also Mayor of the City of New Haven from 1828 to 1830.

On September 10, 1786, he married Wealthy Ann Munson, daughter of Dr. Eneas Munson of New Haven. Following her death on July 9, 1839, he married, May 4, 1840, Mary Lines, daughter of Capt. Major and Susanna (Mansfield) Lines.

David Daggett died on April 12, 1851, in his eighty-seventh year.

Scope and Contents

Series I, CORRESPONDENCE, consists primarily of letters received by Daggett, 1781-1848, many of which are of great interest because of the information they contain on politics and the practice of law.

There are substantial numbers of letters written to Daggett by his clients and other citizens consulting him on legal matters.

Daggett's political correspondence is extremely rich and revealing. He was a very active and powerful figure in the Connecticut Federalist Party and in Connecticut politics in general; and also, to the extent that his party and activities affected national affairs, a man of some prominence on the national political scene (cf. John Wood, *Suppressed History of the Administration of John Adams*, (1802), pp. 259-261 in J.H. Sherburne's 1968 edition).

Many letters of prominent Connecticut and national political figures are to be found throughout the correspondence. These letters are concerned with many of the important public issues of the time. Daggett's correspondents included Simeon Baldwin, Abraham Bishop, Isaac Bronson, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Charles Denison, Elizur Goodrich, Gideon Granger, Roger Griswold, Rufus King, William Leffingwell, Josiah Meigs, Samuel F.B. Morse, Timothy Pickering, Benjamin Rush, Joseph Story, John Trumbull, Daniel Webster, Noah Webster, Eli Whitney, William Wirt, and Oliver Wolcott. For a complete list of correspondence, see the container list.

Special mention should be made of the approximately 150 letters that Daggett received from his old classmate and close friend at Yale, John Cotton Smith, a powerful politician and prominent public figure in his own right. Smith's letters, which span the years 1785-1844, are rich in trenchant comment and opinion on the political and social activities of early nineteenth-century United States.

Another important segment of the Daggett's correspondence is the approximately 120 letters that he wrote to his two daughters, Wealthy Ann (Daggett) Jenkins and Susan Edwards (Daggett) Dwight, and to his son, Leonard Augustus Daggett. This is the only substantial group of letters written by Daggett that the collection contains. These letters afford the best insights into Daggett's personality contained in the collection. They also contain additional information on political affairs and on his own career. There is also a substantial correspondence between Daggett and his personal attorney, William Bristol.

The correspondence has been arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent. Within the files under each name, letters have been arranged chronologically.

Series II, WRITINGS, consists of holograph drafts of essays, articles, pamphlets, lectures, and notes of these lectures taken by others. The items within the series have been arranged by type and a title listing will be found in the register.

Series III, SPECIAL FILES, consists of legal documents, business papers and account and day books, and a few clippings.

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Arranged in three series: I. Correspondence. II. Writings. III. Special Files.

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b. 8, f. 251	Porter, Jonathan Edwards (1768-1821)	1817
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b. 9, f. 272	Seymour, Horatio (1778-1857)	1806
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Law
Lawyers

Geographic Names

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New Haven (Conn.)
United States -- History -- 1783-1865
United States -- Politics and government

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Federal Party (U.S.)
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