

MS-174, Sarah Betts Wheeler Papers

Collection Number: MS-174

Title: Sarah Betts Wheeler Papers

Dates: 1839-1921

Creator: Wheeler, Sarah Betts, 1830-1919

Summary/Abstract: A collection of 19th and early 20th century papers consisting mainly of the family correspondence of the Wheeler and Betts families as they moved around the Midwest. The correspondence is concerned with the health of family members, courtship, farm and crop information, and church matters. National events are mentioned occasionally.

Quantity/Physical Description: 1.5 linear feet

Language(s): English

Repository:

Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092.

Restrictions on Access: There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

Restrictions on Use:

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Preferred Citation:

MS-174, Sarah Betts Wheeler Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Acquisition: The papers of Sarah Betts Wheeler were accessioned into the Wright State University Department of Archives and Special Collections in October 1982. They were donated by Corrine Odiorne Pelzl, Eve Odiorne Sullivan, and Ken Odiorne.

Separated Material: This collection was a part of a larger collection of papers which include the Alice Griffith Carr Papers (MS-135), however, they do not appear to be a part of the Carr family papers.

Other Finding Aid: The finding aid is also available on the Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University Libraries web site at

http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collection_guides/guide_files/ms174.pdf .

Processing Information: Finding aid reformatted in September, 2014.

Processed by: Sandra Mason, Spring 1987

Arrangement:

The collection is arranged into 3 series as follows:

- Series 1: Betts Family Correspondence
- Series 2: Wheeler Family Correspondence
- Series 3: Sarah Betts Wheeler Correspondence

Biographical/Historical Note:

Sarah Abigail Betts Wheeler was the daughter of Samuel and Mahala Betts. It is probable that she was born in the 1830s. She had several brothers and sisters, including Martin Betts, Edwin Betts, and Minerva Betts Tubbs. The Betts family were farmers and seemed to have moved frequently, having farms in Ohio; McHenry County, Illinois; and Iowa in the period before Sarah's marriage. In January 1861, Sarah and her parents moved from McHenry County, Illinois, to Cresco, Iowa. Sarah received her teacher's certificate from Clayton County, Iowa, in March 1864. In Iowa, Sarah met her future husband, Phineas Wheeler. Phineas was also a farmer. He had a brother, Henry, and two sisters, Jane Wheeler Prosser and Sallie Wheeler Salisbury. Phineas and Sarah were married sometime between late 1865 and early 1866. Phineas was involved in several different agricultural occupations, but eventually settled in Erie, Pennsylvania, where he was a city mail carrier. Sarah and Phineas had three children: Jennie, Jessie, and Mabel. Jessie and Mabel attended Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. Sarah also had two grandchildren, Arthur Wheeler Page and Gertrude Page. Understanding the following relationships will be useful to the researcher:

Samuel Betts – Father of Sarah Betts Wheeler
Mahala Betts – Mother of Sarah Betts Wheeler
Martin A. Betts – Brother of Sarah Betts Wheeler
Edwin S. Betts – Brother of Sarah Betts Wheeler
Olive Betts – Wife of Edwin Betts, Sister-in-law to Sarah Betts Wheeler
Polly Betts – Wife of Martin Betts, Sister-in-law to Sarah Betts Wheeler
Matthew P. Betts – Cousin to Samuel Betts
E. Sturward – Cousin to Sarah Betts Wheeler
Minerva Betts Tubbs – Sister to Sarah Betts Wheeler
Cynthia Amanda Wright – Cousin to Sarah Betts Wheeler
Sarah L. Betts (Louesa) – Cousin to Sarah Betts Wheeler
Orys E. Perry and Julia M. Perry – Aunt and Uncle to Sarah Betts Wheeler

Phineas Wheeler – Husband of Sarah Betts Wheeler
H.H. Wheeler (Henry) – Brother of Phineas Wheeler
Sallie Wheeler Salisbury – Sister of Phineas Wheeler
Aaron Salisbury – Husband of Sallie Wheeler, Brother-in-law to Phineas Wheeler
Jane Wheeler Prossner – Sister of Phineas Wheeler

William Wheeler – Brother of Phineas Wheeler
Mary A. Wheeler – Wife of William Wheeler, Sister-in-law to Phineas Wheeler
Jennie Wheeler – Daughter of Phineas and Sarah Betts Wheeler
Jessie Wheeler – Daughter of Phineas and Sarah Betts Wheeler
Mabel Wheeler – Daughter of Phineas Wheeler and Sarah Betts Wheeler
Arthur Wheeler Page – Grandson of Phineas Wheeler and Sarah Betts Wheeler
Gertrude Page – Granddaughter of Phineas Wheeler and Sarah Betts Wheeler

Scope and Content:

The Sarah Betts Wheeler Papers consist mainly of correspondence between Sarah and various members of her family. Unless otherwise noted, the letters are filed by the recipient's name. This collection presents several difficulties for the researcher. First, the salutations are commonly by relationship rather than by name, for example, "Dear Brother and Sister." Another difficulty is the letters were partially processed and the covers were removed several years before the final processing. As a result, the accuracy of the information such as names, dates, and places which have been penciled onto the letters is not verifiable. A third area of concern is the fact that there are two persons named Sarah Betts within the correspondence. A comparison of the handwriting has revealed that Sarah Abigail Betts and Sarah L. Betts were cousins, and that Sarah L. Betts most often signed her letters as "Louesa". Finally, it is not certain when Sarah Betts married Phineas Wheeler. There are two letters, one dated 1856, the other dated 1862, which refer to Phineas and Sarah as husband and wife. It is most probable that these two letters were misdated. Letters throughout the year 1864 show the developing courtship of Phineas and Sarah. In addition, Sarah's teacher's certificate from March 1864 was in her maiden name.

The early correspondence in this collection is concerned mainly with the health of family members and friends, farm and crop information, and church news. It is not possible to infer from the letters which church the Betts and the Wheelers belonged to, but it is certain they were not Presbyterians or Baptists, and Sarah's sister Minerva was a Campbellite. As the nineteenth century progresses, the letters show increasing awareness of national events.

Series I, the Betts Family Correspondence, is the smallest of the three series and consists largely of correspondence to Edwin and Olive Betts. Of particular interest are the Quit Claim Deed and Bill of Sale by Samuel Betts to his son Martin in February 1859. Series I covers the years 1859-1912.

Series II, the Wheeler Family Correspondence, consists of letters written to Phineas Wheeler between 1863 and 1907, and to Phineas and Sarah Wheeler between 1856 and 1904. Phineas was a member of Company L, Fifteenth Illinois Cavalry, and there is a letter advising him of a reunion, as well as listing former comrades. Also in the Wheeler correspondence is a series of letters written to Phineas and Sarah from E.L. Frazier, Evangelist.

The heart of the Sarah Betts Wheeler Papers is the correspondence to Sarah written between 1839 and 1919. Throughout the period she maintained contact with all her relatives. In her youth she corresponded regularly with her cousin Louesa. Later, she and Phineas carried on a lengthy courtship by letter. Finally she kept in constant contact with her daughters and

grandchildren. Her letters represent a “typical” rural white woman in the nineteenth century. She grew up on a farm, became a rural school teacher, was concerned with religion, moved to a city shortly after the Civil War, and sent her daughters to college.

Subject Terms:

Persons/Families

Wheeler, Sarah Betts, 1830-1919.
 Wheeler, Phineas.
 Wheeler family.
 Betts family.
 Betts, Sarah Louesa.

Subjects (General)

Country life – 19th century.

Material Types

Correspondence.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Betts family Correspondence

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Martin Betts	1859
	2	Edwin and Olive Betts	1847-1970
	3	Olive and Evangie Betts	1903-1913
	4	Henry M. Betts	1921
	5	Correspondence from Evangie Betts to ?	1912

Series 2: Wheeler Family Correspondence

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	6	Phineas Wheeler	1863-1864
	7	Phineas Wheeler	1865
	8	Phineas Wheeler	1866
	9	Phineas Wheeler	1867
	10	Phineas Wheeler	1868
	11	Phineas Wheeler	1869
	12	Phineas Wheeler	1870
	13	Phineas Wheeler	1871
	14	Phineas Wheeler	1874-1879
	15	Phineas Wheeler	1881
	16	Phineas Wheeler	1880-1899
	17	Phineas Wheeler	1907
	18	Phineas Wheeler	undated

1	19	Phineas and Sarah Wheeler	1856 (?)
	20	Phineas and Sarah Wheeler	1865-1869
	21	Phineas and Sarah Wheeler	1870-1878
	22	Phineas and Sarah Wheeler	1890-1894
	23	Phineas and Sarah Wheeler	1896-1899
	24	Phineas and Sarah Wheeler	1904
	25	Phineas and Sarah Wheeler	undated
	26	Wheeler daughters	1895-1922
	27	Correspondence from Phineas and Sarah Wheeler to Henry Boyle	1899

Series 3: Sarah Betts Wheeler Correspondence

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
2	1	Sarah A. Betts	1839-1857
	2	Sarah A. Betts	1858
	3	Sarah A. Betts	1860-1861
	4	Sarah A. Betts	1862-1863
	5	Sarah A. Betts	1864
	6	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1862 (?)
	7	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1865-1866
	8	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1867-1868
	9	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1869
	10	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1870
	11	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1871
	12	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1872
	13	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1873
	14	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1874
	15	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1875
	16	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1876
	17	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1877
	18	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1878-1879
	19	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1880-1889
	20	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1890
	21	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1891
	22	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1892
3	1	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1893
	2	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1894
	3	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1895
	4	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1896
	5	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1897
	6	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1898
	7	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1899
	8	Sarah Betts Wheeler	Jan.-Aug. 1900
	9	Sarah Betts Wheeler	Sep.-Dec. 1900
	10	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1901

3	11	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1902-1909
	12	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1910-1912
	13	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1913-1916
	14	Sarah Betts Wheeler	1917-1919
	15	Sarah Betts Wheeler	undated (circa 1800's)
	16	Sarah Betts Wheeler	undated
	17	Sarah Betts Wheeler	undated