

## Guide to the Coley Family Papers

### Collection Overview:

**REPOSITORY:** Westport Museum for History and Culture, 25 Avery Place, Westport, CT

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 15

**TITLE:** Coley Family Papers

**DATES:** 1782-1989

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2 linear feet (3 boxes, 1 oversize box)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The Coley Family Papers document a family that was prominent in Westport's history.

### HISTORICAL NOTE:

The Coley family settled in northern Westport in the area now called Coleytown more than 200 years ago and farmed the land, growing grapes, flax, corn, onions and other crops. David Dimon Coley established the Coley homestead in what is now Weston in 1834 and five generations of the Coley family stayed in the homestead. The Coleys had a wharf on the Saugatuck River from which they transported produce by boat to New York and Boston. Their gristmill, built circa 1760, became a cotton mill by 1840. Coleytown Road was the center of a small village that included a green, schoolhouse, shoemaker, blacksmith, yarn manufacturer, horse stables, 5 Coley homesteads, and possibly other shops.

James Edward Coley (1832-1916) was an Episcopal priest who graduated from Trinity College and Berkeley Divinity School. He was ordained as a priest in 1859 and served churches in New London, New Haven, Wilton, and Hamden before returning to live in Westport. In his retirement Coley compiled a large memoir/scrapbook about his family's history.

William Bradley Coley (1862-1936) was a prominent bone surgeon and cancer researcher best known for his early contributions to the study of cancer immunotherapy. He made a discovery that laid groundwork for the modern medical field of immunology. He was born in Saugatuck, the son of Horace Bradley Coley (1829-1913), and graduated from Yale University and Harvard Medical School.

### SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The core of this collection is a 700+ page volume titled "Historical Notes and Reminiscences of Old Saugatuck, Westport and Vicinity, with notices of old Houses and old Families," which was compiled by Rev. James Edward Coley. The original of this handwritten work with illustrations was presented to the Connecticut State Library in 1936 but this collection contains both photocopies of the original and typed transcriptions, with an index.

The collection also contains an original notebook of James E. Coley, transcripts of a diary by Horace B. Coley and other writings by Coley family members that trace the history of the family. Articles by Helen Coley Nauts document and publicize the pioneering medical work of her father, William Bradley Coley.

### ARRANGEMENT:

The collection is arranged in four series:

1. Correspondence
2. Writings
3. Biographical Documentation and Memorabilia
4. Financial and Legal Documentation

### Series 1: Correspondence

| Box | Folder |   | Date             |
|-----|--------|---|------------------|
| 1   | 1      | To "Friend Coley" from D. Whitehead, Whitewater, Wisconsin              | 1906 March       |
| 1   | 1      | To Horace B. Coley, "Dear Father" from Alice Coley (Mrs. William Coley) | 1910 December 26 |
| 1   | 1      | To Horace B. Coley, "Dear Father" from son William                      | 1912 August      |
| 1   | 1      | To Horace B. Coley, "Dear Father" from son William                      | n.d.             |
| 1   | 2      | Helen Coley Nauts to/from Dorothea Malm regarding Coley family history  | 1987             |

### Series 2: Writings

| Box | Folder |  | Date      |
|-----|--------|--|-----------|
| 1   | 3-6    | Photocopy of "Historical Notes and Reminiscences of Old Saugatuck, Westport and Vicinity, with notices of old Houses and old Families" by Rev. James Edward Coley, pp. 1-708                       |           |
| OV1 |        | Bound copy of photocopy of "Historical Notes and Reminiscences of Old Saugatuck..."  |           |
| 1   | 7, 8   | Typed transcript of "Historical Notes and Reminiscences of Old Saugatuck...", Parts 1 and 2  |           |
| 2   | 1-3    | Index, incomplete index, and notes related to Rev. James Edward Coley's manuscript   |           |
| 2   | 4      | Original small notebook inscribed by James E. Coley containing minutes of first Westport town meeting (1835) and other notes   |           |
| 2   | 5      | Horace B. Coley diary transcripts (1855, 1856) and photocopy of 5 pages from 1901 diary  |           |
| 2   | 6      | "It Happened in Westport – Stories of Old Westport for New Westporters" by Marjory Coley Oates, based on the memoir of her grandfather, James Edward Coley   |           |
| 2   | 7      | Typescript biography of William Bradley Coley by his daughter Helen Coley Nauts: "Education" pp. 1-81a, including regarding his time at Yale, diary excerpts 1882                                  |           |
| 2   | 8      | Typescript biography of William Bradley Coley by his daughter Helen Coley Nauts: "Chapter 4" "Teaching" pp. 1-65, includes excerpts from journal of trip to Oregon (1884), typescript diary (1888) |           |
| 2   | 9      | Articles by Helen Coley Nauts, including:<br>"Hyperthermic Oncology: Historic Aspects and Future Trends"<br>"Immunotherapy of Cancer -- The Pioneer Work of Coley"                                 | 1984-1987 |

|   |    |   |                  |
|---|----|---|------------------|
|   |    | "Bibliography of Reports Concerning the Clinical or Experimental Use of Coley Toxins 1893-1987"                                       |                  |
| 2 | 9  | Article about William B. Coley by Ralph J. Fletcher, Jr:<br>"Medical Help From Within"  | 1986             |
| 2 | 10 | "The Coley Farm" – probably written by Edward Coley Birge<br>"The Coley Family" by Edward Coley Birge – from <i>Westporter Herald</i> | 1935, circa 1957 |
| 2 | 11 | Re "Reminiscent Westport" column edited by John S. Jones:<br>letter to the editor from James E. Coley                                 | 1903             |
| 2 | 12 | 5 pages of notes in handwriting of James E. Coley, including sketch and notes re. house near Shercrow                                 |                  |

### Series 3: Biographical Documentation and Memorabilia

| Box | Folder |  | Date      |
|-----|--------|--|-----------|
| 2   | 13     | Genealogical notes   |           |
| 2   | 14     | "Ancestry of Helen Lancaster Coley" by Henry Wiggin  | 1942      |
| 2   | 15     | Tribute to Coley family with historical material gathered by the Coley Club of Coleytown Junior High School  | 1982      |
| 3   | 1      | Genealogical notes re. John Hyde Coley, Aaron Burr Coley, Nancy Coley, Ebenezer Coley, etc.  |           |
| 3   | 2      | Obituaries of Henry Burr Coley (1925), Marjory Coley Gates (1979), Kathleen Coley (1985)   | 1956      |
| 3   | 2      | Articles about David Coley, Ted Coley, Helen Coley Nauts   | 1983-1987 |
| 3   | 3      | Historic structure report for Ebenezer Coley House, Westport   | 1989      |
| 3   | 4      | "Bedford Bugle" (1942), "Stapleite" yearbook (1958), "Soundings" of Staples High School (1998)   |           |
| 3   | 5      | Autograph book donated by Nancy Coley – autographs from 1886   |           |
| 3   | 6      | Regarding Mary Bennet tankard from 1777  |           |
| 3   | 7      | Collected material: "Civil Defense Supplement to American Red Cross First Aid Textbook" (1951) – with notes enclosed<br>Brochure about sundials (n.d.)<br>Issue of <i>The Westporter</i> (1880 May 15) |           |
| 3   | 8      | Photographs: gravestones of Coley family members, Coley House in 1979  |           |
| OV1 |        | Photograph of Westport Acappella Choir that sang at 1939 World's Fair – Kathleen Coley, member   |           |

### Series 4: Financial and Legal Documentation

| Box | Folder |  | Date |
|-----|--------|--|------|
| 3   | 9      | Handwritten transcript of 1782 document regarding David Coley and the sloop <i>Peggy</i> |      |
| 3   | 9      | Facsimile of first deed to Wheeler House – Ebenezer Coley to his son Michael (1795)      |      |

|   |    |  |           |
|---|----|--|-----------|
| 3 | 9  | Agreement between Ebenezer Coley and Wooster Beach for lease of house and stable | 1900      |
| 3 | 10 | Miscellaneous bills and receipts of David Coley                                  | 1836-1842 |
| 3 | 10 | Teaching certification for Horace Coley  | n.d.      |