



George P. Jennings Family Papers RG 11

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Westport Museum for History & Culture

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Summary Information

Repository:	Westport Museum for History & Culture
Creator:	Jennings, George Penfield
Title:	George P. Jennings Family Papers
ID:	RG 11
ID [aspace_uri]:	/repositories/36/resources/1200
Date [inclusive]:	1777-1972
Physical Description:	5 Linear Feet 10 boxes, 1 oversize box
Physical Location:	Westport Museum for History and Culture Archives Room
Language of the Material:	English.
Abstract:	This collection primarily documents the life and work of George Penfield Jennings and his immediate family, particularly his father William J. Jennings and his daughter Bessie C. Jennings. Additional records related to Jennings ancestors and relatives can be found in Record Group 8, Miscellaneous Personal Papers.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], , [Box no]., George P. Jennings Family Papers, Westport Museum for History and Culture

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Biography

The Jennings family in Westport was descended from Joshua Jennings (1620-1675), an early settler of Hartford who came to Fairfield in 1656. Extensive genealogical information is available in Series 5 of this collection. William James Jennings (1820-1894) was the son of Thomas Jennings and Josina Jennings. He married Maria Augusta Hill (1824-1901) in 1845. They lived in Westport and later in Rosendale, Wisconsin. Their son George Penfield Jennings was born in Westport in 1855. They also had a daughter Cornelia Jennings Thompson (1849-1907).

George Penfield Jennings (1855-1933) lived with his parents as a boy and young man on a farm near Rosendale, Wisconsin. He returned to Connecticut in the 1870s and for over 25 years ran a private express messenger/agent service between Green's Farms and New York City. In an advertisement for his services, Jennings noted the following tasks: "the paying and collecting of bills, the purchasing or ordering of any kind of goods, ladies' shopping, procuring samples and attending to any important commission entrusted to me..."

George married Ida Louise Taylor (1864-1901) in 1894 and had three daughters: Bessie Cornelia Jennings (1895-1972), Mary Hill Jennings (1897-1990), and Ida Louise Jennings (1901-1936). After the death of his first wife, George married Mary Ann Stuart (1853-1938) in 1902. Later in life, George primarily farmed for a living. He was a deacon at the Green's Farms Congregational Church for many years. He also held many other offices in the community, including selectman, member of the Board of Relief, and first president of the Green's Farms Fire Company. During the last four years of his life George was confined to his house by illness but used the time to write a history of his native town, Green's Farms, Connecticut, The Old West Parish of Fairfield, which was published by The Congregational Society of Greens Farms in 1933. His daughter Bessie helped him write the book.

Bessie Cornelia Jennings was born in Green's Farms on June 15, 1895. She attended local schools and graduated from Middlebury College. She worked as an assistant to the president of Yankton College in South Dakota and as financial secretary for the Eastern District of the YMCA in Brooklyn. In 1929 she began teaching history, government, and civics at Roger Ludlowe High School in Fairfield, retiring in 1958. Bessie helped her father in the preparation of his book that was published in 1933 and was instrumental in developing the "Jennings Trail" in Westport. Second-graders were introduced to the history of the town in field trips that included the Beachside Avenue site of the five founding Bankside Farmers; the Machamux boulder; the old Greens Farms Church meeting house; the Compo Cove tide mill; the Minute Man monument, and the Compo cannons, among other sites. Bessie was a member of several civic organizations and a lifelong member of the Green's Farms Congregational Church. She died at her ancestral home on Elmstead Lane on October 4, 1972.

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Scope and Content of Collection

A detailed finding aid for the collection is available at the repository.

This collection provides insight into the history of the Jennings family and the town of Westport through correspondence, writings and notes, legal and estate documentation, financial records and collected material.

Correspondence and writings relate both to the daily life of the family and the larger history of the community. Substantial detailed information about Westport is available in the correspondence related to George P. Jennings published history of the town. Writings of

George P. Jennings date from as early as 1871 when he was a 16-year-old high school student. Bessie C. Jennings followed in her father's footsteps, beginning even while at Staples High School to write articles about the community, which were published in the Bridgeport Morning Telegraph. Additional material related to Bessie Jennings can be found in RG 12, Named Research Collections in the Adams/Jennings collection of Westport history.

While firmly rooted in Westport, the family also owned a farm in Rosendale, Wisconsin, which was managed by an agent after George returned to Connecticut. Detailed records of transactions related to the farm and to George's business as a messenger/agent provide valuable information about the economy and commerce. In 1897 George advertised that he had spent the past eight years in daily service between Westport and New York City as a "Messenger, Order, Commission and Purchasing Agent."

While the majority of the legal, estate, and financial records in Series 3 and Series 4 relate to George P. Jennings or his father William J. Jennings, there are also documents related to more distant relatives and associates.

Series 5 includes genealogical information about the Jennings of Westport as well as biographical documentation and memorabilia of George P. Jennings and Bessie C. Jennings.

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Arrangement

The material is arranged in five series: Series 1: Correspondence; Series 2: Writings and Notes; Series 3: Legal and Estate Documentation; Series 4: Financial Records; Series 5: Biographical Documentation and Memorabilia

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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25 Avery Place

Westport, CT 06880

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URL: <https://westporthistory.org/>

Restrictions

Collection open for research

Acquisition Information

The material was donated by the Jennings Family.

Publication Rights

For copyright status, please contact the Westport Museum for History and Culture.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Westport (Conn.)--History.
- Jennings family

General

Collection guide written by:

Westport Museum for History and Culture staff

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Collection Inventory

Correspondence

William James Jennings

Title/Description	Instances	
From cousin T. Cooper Hill, Rosendale, WI – list of personal property taken , 1883 March 29	Box 1	Folder 1
From daughter Cornelia Jennings Thompson, 1887 January 18, 20	Box 1	Folder 1

George Penfield Jennings

Personal and family correspondence

Title/Description	Instances	
From L. S. Griswold in Spencertown, NY, 1883	Box 1	Folder 2
From mother Augusta in Rosendale, WI, 1896	Box 1	Folder 2
From sister Cornelia in Rosendale, WI , [1896]	Box 1	Folder 2
Scope and Contents		
Cornelia and her husband George had a farm in Rosendale.		
From Edwin Hoyt, 1901 January 24	Box 1	Folder 3
From sister Cornelia in Ripon, WI, 1902 August 7	Box 1	Folder 3
From cousin Ethel Wakeman , 1904 March 4	Box 1	Folder 3
Scope and Contents		
Letter describes college girls working in Christian Settlement houses, including in Poughkeepsie.		
From Edward C. Birge, 1904 April 7	Box 1	Folder 3
From Ebenezer Hill, 1904 September 24	Box 1	Folder 3
Wedding invitation from Gen. and Mrs. William Mason, 1904 December	Box 1	Folder 3
From uncle George Hill in Rosendale, WI, 1905 January 24	Box 1	Folder 4
From [Judge] Joseph Adams in Pasadena, CA , 1909	Box 1	Folder 4
Scope and Contents		
Letterhead is Southland Nurseries, F. H. Disbrow Proprietor; Mary and Frank Disbrow were sister and brother-in-law of Joseph Adams.		
From cousin Louis Wakeman in Portland, OR , 1918 December 20	Box 1	Folder 4
Scope and Contents		
Comments on Nashua, a manufacturing town of which "inhabitants are largely foreign element"; talks of devastating flu epidemic in Greens Farms, including isolation to reduce contact and new cases.		
From cousin Paul J. Thompson in Rome, 1918 December 27	Box 1	Folder 4

Scope and Contents

Thompson was on active duty with the American Expeditionary Force; discusses American servicemen, entertainment, Rome.

From Paul J. Thompson, 1932 August 15	Box 1	Folder 5
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To Mary Hill, 1933	Box 1	Folder 5
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Correspondence related to GPJ's book - gathering of information and with publishers

Scope and Contents

Includes requests for information, photos, maps incl. re. Gallop Gap Creek, boats, mills, and other Greens Farms history.

Title/Description	Instances	
Related to book - includes letter from GPJ with 17 questions about Greens Farms history and reply of Mr. Parsell, 1931	Box 1	Folder 6
Related to book , 1932-1933	Box 1	Folder 6-11
Scope and Contents		
Including from F.T. Bedford who underwrote cost of book Includes letter from Harrie.t re. seafaring uncle Henry P. Burr and son Alfred – his was first trading vessel to enter a Japanese port after Japan opened for trade 1933 May, undated		
Correspondence with Edward C. Birge regarding book, 1931-1933	Box 1	Folder 12

Business correspondence

Title/Description	Instances	
From agent of Northern Pacific Railroad- regarding land in Minnesota, 1873	Box 1	Folder 13
From Grummond's Mackinac Line, 1895 March 6	Box 1	Folder 13
From John Smith, manager of farm in Rosendale, WI – incl. re. sending poultry and butter packed in snow to GPJ, 1895 October 5	Box 1	Folder 13
From A. Wakeman regarding shipping, 1897 November 22	Box 1	Folder 3
From Embalmer's Supply Co. re. shipping, 1898 May 5, June 8	Box 1	Folder 14
From John Smith, manager of farm in Rosendale, WI, 1900 November 7, December 22; 1901 April 2	Box 1	Folder 14

Correspondence and attached accounts related to Jennings farm in Rosendale, WI, 1904-1906	Box 1	Folder 15-17
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Scope and Contents

From Carl Zetow, manager, and cousin T. Cooper Hill – reports and inventories re. farm; insurance and bank correspondence.

Postcards, greeting cards, envelopes**Title/Description****Instances**

Business-related postcards , 1902-1909	Box 1	Folder 18-19
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Scope and Contents

Primarily from C.H. Kemper to GPJ reporting shipments of bales of leather (See C.H. Kemper tanning company records in RG 5), cards addressed to GJP, Nodell and Howard, 156 Greene St., NYC.

Miscellaneous postcards, including to E.B. Adams at Friendly Aid House (children's aid association founded 1892 – now Goddard Riverside Community Center)	Box 2	Folder 1
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Empty envelopes and greeting cards - some from Dorothy R. Adams (see also Adams Family Papers)	Box 2	Folder 2
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Ida Louise Taylor Jennings**Title/Description****Instances**

From Mrs. Fred T. Bedford re. trip in England, 1878 August 27	Box 2	Folder 3
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Bessie C. Jennings**Title/Description****Instances**

Invitation to marriage of Earle Chetwood Adams / postcard from Mary Adams Disbrow, 1940	Box 2	Folder 4
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Letters re. Westport history and GPJ book, including letter from Charles Lindbergh, 1934-1947, undated	Box 2	Folder 5
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Writings and Notes**By William J. Jennings****Title/Description****Instances**

Essay on onion culture in "The Onion Book: A Practical Guide to the Profitable Culture of the Crop", 1887	Box 2	Folder 6
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By George Penfield Jennings		
Title/Description	Instances	
Writings for the Green's Farms Recorder - articles and letters to the editor written when GPJ was in his teens for an informal publication he helped to found and edit, 1871-1873	Box 2	Folder 7-10
Scope and Contents		
Topics include "Accomplishments", "Alex the Great", "Humbugs", "Public Libraries", "Croquet" (critical of girls playing croquet); "Philip of Macedon", etc.		
Opening talk at Farmer's Convention (12 pp, essay attributed to GPJ), 1883 February 22	Box 2	Folder 11
Essay: "Seeds" , 1893	Box 2	Folder 12
Paper read before Green's Farms Farmers Club, on transportation, 1894	Box 2	Folder 13
"25 Years and More" (attributed to GPJ), 1912	Box 2	Folder 14
Miscellaneous essays (possibly by GPJ) including "Writer's Life and Work on the Farm"; "Wheat Growing in Connecticut", undated	Box 2	Folder 15
Miscellaneous essays primarily related to agriculture (possibly by GPJ), undated	Box 2	Folder 16
Miscellaneous essays, including regarding Methodist Church of Westport, Road Making, steamboats on Saugatuck River, fire on steamboat Lexington, 1840, undated	Box 2	Folder 17
Notes by GPJ	Box 3	Folder 1
Miscellaneous essays primarily related to GPJ's history of Green's Farms, 1931-1932, undated	Box 3	Folder 2-4
Scope and Contents		
Notes and typescripts, including "Indian Legend of Macamux"; "The Five Farmers Follow the Cattle ot Bankside"; "Topograph of the Old West Parish of Fairfield"; "Gallup's Gap Creek"; "The Great Swamp Fight with the Pequots"; "Some Personal Doings of Over Seventy Years"; "Man of the Sea", etc.		
Drafts of dedication of book, undated	Box 3	Folder 5
Galley print format of book; photos and map, index, undated	Box 3	Folder 6
Book publicity and orders	Box 3	Folder 7
By Louise Jennings (daughter of GPJ)		

Title/Description	Instances	
History thesis: "The Settlement of Connecticut and its Growth..." , circa 1922-1926	Box 3	Folder 8
By Bessie C. Jennings (daughter of GPJ)		
Title/Description	Instances	
Memory books: Volumes I and 2 , 1912-1913	Box 3	Folder 9
<p>Scope and Contents</p> <p>Volume I: Written while at Staples High School, Senior year – includes lists of faculty, detailed description of wedding of Julia S. Adams to Dr. Carroll David; account of scene of trainwreck at Saugatuck, etc.</p> <p>Volume 2: School rules, lists of students, daily details, souvenir programs enclosed</p>		
2 composition books containing printed articles written by BCJ when she was a senior at Staples High School , 1913 May – November	Box 3	Folder 10
<p>Scope and Contents</p> <p>"Green's Farms Notes" – daily column in Bridgeport Morning Telegraph. Bessie began college in September and her sisters Mary and Louise continued the column.</p> <p>Columns cover local church, school, and community events, social occasions and conventions, births and deaths, etc.; useful for providing a detailed day by day picture of life in Green's Farms. See notes in folder for details</p>		
2 composition books containing printed articles written by BCJ during the summers of 1914 and 1915 See notes in folder for details	Box 3	Folder 11
Outlines for Jennings Trail itinerary and Westport history, handwritten account of the blizzard of 1934, typed essays - "Adams Academy", "The Well and the Revolutionary War"	Box 3	Folder 11a
Writings of others		
Title/Description	Instances	
Related to the schooner Ella Jane, captained by C. T. Allen, undated	Box 3	Folder 12
<p>Scope and Contents</p> <p>History of the schooner and 4 letters to GPJ from Captain Charles Thorpe Allen that provide detail</p>		

about ships and packet boats sailing out of Westport.
Allen's great-grandfather owned most of the land at
Compo; includes story re. Battle of Compo Beach.

Historical address delivered at the 40th anniversary of the Green's Farms Farmers Club by Hon. John Henry Jennings, 1901	Box 3	Folder 13
Article in The Fairfield News – "Vivid Scenes of Years Ago Recalled by Hezekiah R. Elwood" – addresses at the Luncheon Club, circa 1935	Box 3	Folder 14
Article in The Fairfield News – "Fairfield Home of Onions and Shipping" , 1936	Box 3	Folder 15
Article in Bridgeport Daily Standard – address delivered by Rev. Frank S. Child re. Congregational Church of Greenwich, undated	Box 3	Folder 15

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Legal and Estate Documentation

Title/Description	Instances	
Deeds , 1864-1917	Box 4	Folder 1
Scope and Contents		
Including: Henry B. Wakeman from William J. Jennings; Andrew W. Jennings from Henry B. Jennings; Celestia J. Jennings from Franklin Whitehead; Franklin Whitehead from Edwin B. Jennings; Andrus B. Godfrey from Grace E. Jennings; Thomas Shaughnessy from Walter Jennings; Charles E. Bulkley from John (H.?) Jennings; Charles Benetz from Annie M. Jennings; George S. Jennings from Valtine and Emma Ballard; George S. Jennings from estate of Sarah L. Jennings		
John B. Jennings documents , 1834-1863	Box 4	Folder 2
Scope and Contents		
Including: 1834: Lawsuit files by Anna B. Davis against JBJ re. stolen and killed rooster; 1861: Application for hearing to appoint JBJ conservator for his brother Talcott Jennings; 1863: re. estate of JBJ		
William J. Jennings documents: 1856: Insurance policy; 1886 Cemetery plot deed	Box 4	Folder 3
Regarding estate of Henry B. Wakeman, undated	Box 4	Folder 4
Notice of town meeting and ballots – George P. Jennings a Republican candidate for Grand Juror, 1909	Box 4	Folder 5

George P. Jennings insurance policy – Standard Fire Insurance Co., 1913	Box 4	Folder 6
Correspondence and documents related to the estate of George P. Jennings	Box 4	Folder 7-20
Scope and Contents		
Including: Correspondence of Bessie C. Jennings and Louise J. Penny to Probate Court; Accounts, reports, canceled checks, shares of stock, insurance, property taxes, estate income and expenses, mortgage payments to estate, etc.		
Department of Agriculture certificate appointing W.J. Jennings as Special Agent to visit Agricultural Fair in Danbury, 1891	Box 8	Folder 1

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Financial Records

Loose records

William J. Jennings

Title/Description	Instances	
Receipts – including 3 receipts from Ripon College for Cornelia Jennings, 1865-1869	Box 4	Folder 21
Receipts and accounts, 1882-1901	Box 4	Folder 23
Receipts, 1870-1877	Box 4	Folder 21

Various Jennings

Title/Description	Instances	
Receipts, including of Rutha Jennings, Henry B. Jennings, 1841-1898	Box 4	Folder 24

George P. Jennings

Title/Description	Instances	
Receipts, 1876-1896	Box 4	Folder 25
Canceled checks signed by GPJ, 1897-1911	Box 4	Folder 26
Records related to GPJ's role as Treasurer, Green's Farms Church Society, Consociated Presbyterian Society and Hill Fund, 1891-1913	Box 4	Folder 27

Bound volumes

Title/Description	Instances	
Large ledger with accounts for woodworking business – George P. Jennings taking over business of Hill and Jennings, 1883-1884	Box 5	Folder 1
Cash book – GPJ - including lists of customers and costs, 1883-1886	Box 5	Folder 2
8 small account books – see notes in box; primarily belonging to William J. Jennings, the volumes include accounts, notes, lists of rainfall , 1847-1893	Box 5	Folder 3
12 small account books – see notes in box; including of Ida L. Jennings, George P. Jennings, and unidentified, accounts and notes, including re. estate of Samuel Sherwood , 1777-1891	Box 6	Folder 1
Small account books 1-6 ending date 1874	Box 8	Folder 2
Ledger - GPJ, 1880	Box 8	Folder 3
William J. Jennings daybook - record of accounts, weather, events, 1882-1890	Box 8	Folder 4
William J. Jennings in account with J.M. Bauer, laborer on farm, 1883-1884	Box 8	Folder 5
William J. Jennings administrator in account with estate of R. G. Skiff, 1883-1884	Box 8	Folder 6
Record of employees time worked, Greens Farms Creamery, 1896-1898	Box 9	Folder 1
Accounts of butter sold, Greens Farms Creamery, 1898-1899	Box 9	Folder 2-3
Check registers - payments related to Greens Farms Congregational Church, 1902-1905	Box 10	

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Biographical Documentation and Memorabilia

General

Title/Description	Instances	
"The Jennings Family of Green's Farms and Southport – a Genealogical Study by E.C. Birge and Joseph Adams" - published in the Fairfield News, 1936 July	Box 6	Folder 2
List of descendants of John Jennings, undated	Box 6	Folder 3
Handwritten genealogy notes and supporting documents – mentioning Peter Jennings, Isaac Jennings, Penny and Taylor families, Jennings obituaries (Sereno G., Austin, Erwin), undated	Box 6	Folder 4

George P. Jennings Family Papers RG 11

Handwritten genealogy notes, beginning with Josiah and Mercy Chandler – records of death dates , undated	Box 6	Folder 5
Miscellaneous genealogical notes and articles, including Jennings genealogy as found in family Bible belonging to belonging to William J. Jennings, notes compiled by Bessie C. Jennings, "The Jennings Family and Its Name", undated	Box 6	Folder 6
Booklet: "The Descendants of Grandfather Hill", undated	Box 6	Folder 7
Minutes of Greens Farms Cooperative Creamery Association, 1890-1897	Box 9	Folder 4

George P. Jennings

Title/Description	Instances	
Business cards for GPJ "Messenger, Order, Commission, Purchasing Agent"; advertisement for GPJ "Daily NY Messenger"; obituary published in The Congregationalist, article re. GPJ portrait presented to Green's Farms Engine Co. No. 5, 1897, 1933, 1939, undated	Box 6	Folder 8
Various memorabilia, including related to his civic activities, certificate of appreciation from Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1895-1897, undated	Box 6	Folder 9
Certificates appointing GPJ as Notary Public from State of CT, 1893-1915	Box OV-1	

Bessie C. Jennings

Title/Description	Instances	
Newspaper articles about BCJ and her town history tours, 1933, 1963-1965	Box 6	Folder 10
Obituary and eulogy, information about her death and funeral, 1972	Box 6	Folder 11
Various memorabilia including ABCFM certificate, study hall student seating chart, Patriots Day Memorial service program, 1932, 1958, undated	Box 6	Folder 12
Loose newspaper articles collected by BCJ	Box 7	Folder 1
Scrapbook compiled by BCJ – see notes in box; includes newspaper articles, programs, correspondence, including re. Jennings genealogy and celebration of Westport Centenary	Box 7	Folder 2
Ledger repurposed as a scrapbook – in possession of BCJ but with early entries – see notes in box, 1898-1933	Box 7	Folder 3
Two child's paintings - from Mary Lou to "Aunt Bessie", 1971	Box OV-1	

Miscellaneous clippings enclosed in atlas

Box OV-1

Coronation section of Christian Science Monitor, 1936

Box OV-1

Photographs

Title/Description	Instances	
Of George P. Jennings (undated); of Bessie C. Jennings (1970)	Box 7	Folder 4
Miscellaneous photographs, including of clearing snow after blizzard of 1888, sailing boat race (1932)	Box 7	Folder 5

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