



Guide to the Coley Family Papers RG 15

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Westport Museum for History & Culture

25 Avery Place

Westport, CT 06880

Business Number: (203) 222-1424

archives@westporthistory.org

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

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Summary Information

Repository:	Westport Museum for History & Culture
Creator:	Coley family
Title:	Coley Family Papers
ID:	RG 15
ID [aspace_uri]:	/repositories/36/resources/1448
Date [inclusive]:	1782-1989
Physical Description:	2 Linear Feet 3 boxes and 1 oversize box
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	The Coley Family Papers document a family that was prominent in Westport's history.

Preferred Citation

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

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Biographical / Historical

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.

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Scope and Contents

A detailed finding aid is available at the repository.

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.

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Arrangement

Series 1: Correspondence

Series 2: Writings

Series 3: Biographical Documentation and Memorabilia

Series 4: Financial and Legal Documentation

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of the Coley family.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Westport (Conn.)--History.
- Coley, James E., Rev.

Collection Inventory

Correspondence		
Title/Description	Instances	
To "Friend Coley" from D. Whitehead, Whitewater, Wisconsin, 1906 March	Box 1	Folder 1
To Horace B. Coley, "Dear Father" from Alice Coley (Mrs. William Coley), 1910 December 26	Box 1	Folder 1
To Horace B. Coley, "Dear Father" from son William, 1912 August	Box 1	Folder 1

To Horace B. Coley, "Dear Father" from son William, undated	Box 1	Folder 1
Helen Coley Nauts to/from Dorothea Malm regarding Coley family history, 1987	Box 1	Folder 2

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Writings		
Title/Description	Instances	
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	Box 1	Folder 3-6
Bound copy of photocopy of "Historical Notes and Reminiscences of Old Saugatuck..."	Box OV-1	
Typed transcript of "Historical Notes and Reminiscences of Old Saugatuck...", Parts 1 and 2	Box 1	Folder 7,8
Index, incomplete index, and notes related to Rev. James Edward Coley's manuscript	Box 2	Folder 1-3
Small notebook inscribed by James E. Coley containing minutes of first Westport town meeting (1835) and other notes	Box 2	Folder 4
Horace B. Coley diary transcripts (1855, 1856) and photocopy of 5 pages from 1901 diary	Box 2	Folder 5
"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	Box 2	Folder 6
Typescript biography of William Bradley Coley by his daughter Helen Coley Nauts: "Education" pp. 1-81a, including regarding his time at Yale, diary excerpts from 1882	Box 2	Folder 7
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)	Box 2	Folder 8
Articles by Helen Coley Nauts, including: "Hyperthermic Oncology: Historic Aspects and Future Trends"; "Immunotherapy of Cancer - - The Pioneer Work of Coley"; "Bibliography of Reports Concerning the Clinical or Experimental Use of Coley Toxins 1893-1987" , 1984-1987	Box 2	Folder 9
Article about William B. Coley by Ralph J. Fletcher, Jr: "Medical Help From Within", 1986	Box 2	Folder 9

"The Coley Farm" – probably written by Edward Coley Birge; "The Coley Family" by Edward Coley Birge – from Westporter Herald, 1935, circa 1957	Box 2	Folder 10
Re "Reminiscent Westport" column edited by John S. Jones: letter to the editor from James E. Coley, 1903	Box 2	Folder 11
5 pages of notes in handwriting of James E. Coley, including sketch and notes re. house near Shercrow, undated	Box 2	Folder 12

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Biographical Documentation and Memorabilia

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

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Financial and Legal Documentation

Title/Description	Instances	
Handwritten transcript of 1782 document regarding David Coley and the sloop Peggy	Box 3	Folder 9
Facsimile of first deed to Wheeler House – Ebenezer Coley to his son Michael (1795)	Box 3	Folder 9
Agreement between Ebenezer Coley and Wooster Beach for lease of house and stable, 1900	Box 3	Folder 9
Miscellaneous bills and receipts of David Coley, 1836-1842	Box 3	Folder 10
Teaching certification for Horace Coley	Box 3	Folder 10

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