

**William Henry Seward
Collection, 1828-1936 (bulk, 1828-1873)**

SC21153

QUANTITY: 2 boxes (0.50 cubic ft.)
ACCESS: Open to research
ACQUISITION: See Provenance Note
PROCESSED BY: Fred Bassett, Senior Librarian, Manuscripts and Special Collections, May 1995; revised June 2010

Biographical Note:

William Henry Seward was born in Florida, Orange County, New York, on May 16, 1801. He was the son of Samuel S. Seward and Mary (Jennings) Seward. He graduated from Union College in 1820, studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1822. In 1823, he moved to Auburn, New York, where he entered Judge Elijah Miller's law office. He married Frances Adeline Miller, Judge Miller's daughter, in 1824. Seward was interested in politics early in his career and became actively involved in the Anti-Masonic movement after 1828. With the backing of Thurlow Weed, the Whig newspaper editor, he was elected to the New York State Senate in 1830 where he served for four years. He was nominated by the Whigs for governor in 1834, but was defeated by William L. Marcy. From 1834 to 1838 he practiced law and served as an agent for the Holland Land Company, settling claims of settlers in Chautauqua County.

In 1838 Seward was again nominated by the Whigs and this time was successful in his bid to be elected governor of New York State. He was re-elected to a second two-year term in 1840. The Seward administration was noted for making a number of internal improvements, public support of Catholic schools, resolving anti-rent disputes, and providing fugitive slaves the right of trial by jury and other means of due process. As governor, Seward acquired a reputation for being a strong advocate for free soil and abolition positions. From 1842 to 1848 he again practiced law, first in the court of chancery and later in patent cases. He also defended cases involving fugitive slave laws.

Seward resumed his political career in 1849 when he was elected to the United States Senate. There he aligned himself with the most ardent anti-slavery senators. After 1855, the Whig party merged with the Republican Party, and Seward became a leading Republican. He was passed over as the party's presidential nominee in 1856 and, in 1860, although he was the front runner, Abraham Lincoln was given the nomination. Despite his disappointment, Seward conducted a lengthy speaking tour through the West in support of the Republican ticket.

Soon after Lincoln was inaugurated in 1861, Seward was appointed Secretary of State, a position he held until 1869, serving under both President Lincoln and President Andrew Johnson. As Secretary of State Seward was a central force in the administration. The major issues he dealt with during the Civil War years were the possibility of European intervention, the outfitting of Confederate cruisers in British ports, the Trent affair and the French invasion of Mexico. He also played a major role in assisting Lincoln in writing the Emancipation Proclamation. Territorial

expansion was a great interest of Seward, and in 1867 he negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia.

Seward was seriously wounded in the Lincoln assassination conspiracy, and after 1865 his health was not good. After he retired from public life, he journeyed around the world from July 1869 to September 1871. He then returned to the practice of law in Auburn, New York, until his death on October 10, 1872.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection is comprised primarily of letters written by William Henry Seward that relate to both his personal and public life. In particular, these letters relate to his service as governor of New York State from 1839 to 1843 and as a member of the United States Senate from 1849 to 1861. Many letters concern matters of politics and patronage as well as issues of the mid-nineteenth century, including slavery, territorial expansion, and the founding of the Republican Party. Also included are several letters related to Seward's law practice and business ventures.

The collection also includes an assortment of official documents that bear the signature of Seward, such as the pardon of Rufus Robertson, while serving as Governor of New York, in 1842, and a travel visa for Theodore Canisius as U.S. Consul at Vienna, 1861, while serving as Secretary of State.

Ancillary material in the collection includes a research paper compiled by Herbert N. Mapes, ca.1936, on the history of the birthplace of William Henry Seward and the Samuel Seward Institute in the Town of Florida, Orange County, New York. This is accompanied by several photographs of the Seward homestead and institute building.

Provenance Note:

This collection was created by collating many items that were previously accessioned and cataloged separately. Details regarding the acquisition information on a particular item can be found in the accession file and record books, which are available upon request.

Related Collections and Resources:

This repository also has several other collections that contain letters and papers related to William H. Seward, including the papers of his father, Samuel S. Seward (SC14995), which contains many personal letters from his son from 1817 to 1847. Other major sources of William H. Seward letters are the [Edwin D. Morgan Papers](#) (SC11818), [Albert Haller Tracy Papers](#) (SC15305), and the Robert C. Wetmore Papers (SC17905). Most of the letters in these collections relate chiefly to matters of New York State politics and government. Unpublished finding aids are available for all of these collections.

Container/Document list:

Box	Folder	Description
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Box	Folder	Description
		Letters by William H. Seward, 1828-1868
1	1	A.L.S.: Auburn, N.Y., to James Berden, New York, January 20, 1828; 3(4) p. 25 cm. (15290)
1	2	A.D.S.: [Auburn, N.Y.], to Julius Rhoades, [Auburn, N.Y.], December 1, 1829; 1(4) p. 26 cm. (3513)
1	3	L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to [Azariah] C. Flagg, Comptroller, [Albany, N.Y.], January 10, 1834; 1(4) p. 24 cm. (7657)
1	4	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Seneca Wood, January 25, 1836; 1(4) p. 26 cm. (1257)
1	5	A.L.S.: New York, to Nicholas Biddle, New York, September 27, 1837; 1(4) p. 25 cm. (15866)
1	6	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to Bates Cooke, Comptroller, February 13, 1839; 1 p. 25 cm. (15563)
1	7	A.L.S.: Executive Department, Albany, [N.Y.], to [Samuel Freeman], Sheriff of Saratoga, November 7, 1839; 1 p. 28 cm. (15564)
1	8	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to George Dawson, June 3, [184-?]; 1 p. 28 cm. (10362-11)
1	9	L.S., Albany, [N.Y.], to Louis Tinella, New York, March 25, 1840; 2 p. 26 cm. (14854)
1	10	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to P.G. Webster, Fort Plain, [N.Y.], June 18, 1840; 1 p. 28 cm. (2352)
1	11	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Benjamin D. Silliman, June 27, 1840; 1 p. 26 cm. (15867)
1	12	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to Lewis Gaylord Clark, September 8, 1840; 2(4) p. 28 cm. (14349)
1	13	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to James Watson Webb, November 26, 1840; 2(4) p. 28 cm. (15865)
1	14	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to [Nathaniel] Jocelyn, New Haven, Conn., March 2, 1841; 1(4) p. 28 cm. (1571)
1	15	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to Archibald McIntyre, Albany, [N.Y.], [January 11, 1841]; postmark, Albany, January 12; 1(4) p. 28 cm. (6480)
1	16	A.L.S.: Executive Department, Albany, [N.Y.], to John A. Collin. Comptroller, Albany, [N.Y.] May 17, 1841; 1(4) p. 26 cm. (7662)
1	17	A.L.S.: New York, to John A. Collin, Comptroller, Albany, [N.Y.], August 1, 1841; 1(4) p. 28 cm. (7661)
1	18	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to [?], August 4, 1841; 1 p. 20 cm. (7658)
1	19	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to John C. Spencer, Washington, [D.C.], October 14, 1841; 1(4) p. 29 cm. (3526)
1	20	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to George Vance, Jr., February 20, 1842; 1 p. 28 cm. (12705)
1	21	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to [?], February 24, 1842; 2(4) p. 28 cm. (7563)
1	22	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to Nathaniel Jocelyn, New Haven, Conn., April 25, 1842; 1(4) p. 29 cm. (1572)
1	23	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to William L. Marcy, Albany, [N.Y.], May 7, 1842; 1(4) p. 26 cm. (2436)

Box	Folder	Description
1	24	A.L.S.: to Azariah C. Flagg, December 29, 1842; 1(4) p. 9 cm. (1544)
1	24A	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.] to Samuel Seward, Florida, Orange County, N.Y., August 24, 1843; 3(4) p. 28 cm.
1	25	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to John C. Spencer, Secretary of Treasury, Washington, [D.C.], November 27, 1843; 2(4) p. 29 cm.(15562)
1	26	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to George Dawson, Rochester, [N.Y.], November 28, [1843?]; 2(4) p. 26 cm.; small portraits (3.5 x 2.75 cm.) of Dawson and Seward affixed to the letter (10362-14)
1	27	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to George Dawson, April 11, 1844; 1(4) p. 25 cm. (10362-3)
1	28	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Joseph Boughton, Binghamton, N.Y., August 24, 1844; 2(4) p. 26 cm. (12231)
1	29	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Mrs. E.H. Schuyler, New York, November 13, 1844; 3(4) p. 26 cm.(15670)
1	30	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Rufus King, February 15, 1845; 2 p. 26 cm. (10362-4)
1	31	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Erastus Corning, Albany, N.Y., February 22, 1845; 1(4) p. 25 cm. (15669)
1	32	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Henry Welles, Penn Yan, [N.Y.], April 4, 1845; 1 p. 26 cm. (1206)
1	33	A.L.S.: Florida, [N.Y.], to Thurlow Weed, September 7, 1845; 1(4) p. 25 cm. (10362-7)
1	34	A.L.S.: Albany, [N.Y.], to Frederick Seward, January 4, 1849; 1(4) p. 26 cm. (15988)
1	35	A.L.S.: Astor house, New York, to James Watson Webb, February 1, 1849; 3(4) p. 33 cm. (14855)
1	36	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Robert Thompson, Albany, [N.Y.], June 18, 1849; 1(4) p., 26 cm. (19362-6)
1	37	A.L.S.: Florida, [N.Y.], to Hamilton Fish, Governor of New York, October 4, 1849; 1(4) p. 25 cm. (990)
1	38	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to A.D.P. Randolph, March 13, [185-?] 3(4) p. 20 cm. (7990)
1	39	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to L.C. Turner, Cooperstown, N.Y., September 23, [185-?] 1(4) p. 17 cm.; includes postal cover (2229)
1	40	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Horace Greeley, May 24, [185-?]; 1 p. 18 cm. (1256)
2	41	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Dudley D. Phelps, February 15, 1850; 1(4) p. 19 cm. (7659)
2	42	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to H.V. Howland, Woodville, N.Y. April 21, 1850; 1(4) p. 18 cm. (15916)
2	43	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Henry B. Dawson, New York, March 14, 1851; 1(4) p. 17 cm. (3468)
2	44	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Thurlow Weed, November 13, 1851; 1(4) p. 25 cm. (10362-8)
2	45	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Daniel P. Noyes, New York, January 19, 1852;

Box	Folder	Description
		1(4) p. 20 cm. (16724)
2	46	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Henry B. Dawson, New York, March 21, 1853; 1(4) p. 19 cm. (2469)
2	47	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to [Matthew] H. Richards, Pottstown, Pa., June 25, 1853; 1(4) p. 19 cm.; news clipping attached. (2227)
2	48	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to [William] W. Crannell, Albany, N.Y., August 29, 1853; 1(4) p. 20 cm. (10362-9)
2	49	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Monroe Crannell, Albany, N.Y., September 12, 1853; 1(4) p. 20 cm. (10362-11)
2	50	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Nathaniel P. Benton, Little Falls, N.Y., December 3, 1853; 1(4) p. 17 cm. (10362-10)
2	51	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to John Todd, Pittsfield, Mass., February 25, 1854; 2(4) p. 19 cm. (16156)
2	52	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Jabez D. Hammond, Cherry Valley, N.Y., July 27, 1854; 2(4) p. 19 cm. (7660)
2	53	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to William B. Sprague, Albany, N.Y., December 18, 1854; 1(4) p. 19 cm. (2228)
2	54	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to James Kelly, New York, March 14, 1855; 1 p. 19 cm. (2640)
2	55	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Robert S.D. Wilson, Bernhards Bay, Oswego Co., N.Y. March 24, 1855; 1 p. 21 cm. (10608)
2	56	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Otis Allen, July 12, 1857; 18 cm. (10362-12)
2	57	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to L.D. Proctor, Dansville, N.Y., January 8, 1858; 1(4) p. 20 cm. (10362-13)
2	58	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to F.H. Underwood, editor, <i>Atlantic Magazine</i> , March 30, 1858; 2(4) p. 21 cm. (1259)
2	59	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to Henry S. Randall, June 22, 1858; 2(4) p. 20 cm. (15989)
2	60	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Francis Lieber, July 1, 1858; 2(4) p. 20 cm.; includes transcript. (15561)
2	61	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to Henry L. Pierce, and others, April 5, 1859; 2(4) p. 25 cm. (1258)
2	62	A.L.S.: Auburn, [N.Y.], to P.G. Webster, November 20, 1860; 2(4) p. 20 cm. (7789)
2	63	A.L.S.: Department of State, Washington, [D.C.], to Henry B. Dawson, Morrisiana, New York, June 3, 1862; 1 p. 26 cm. (3963)
2	64	A.L.S.: Washington, [D.C.], to William H. Carpenter, June 24, 1862; 4 p. 21 cm. (15990)
2	65	L.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., to A.T. Goodman, Cleveland, Ohio, December 22, 1868; 2(4) p. 25 cm. (6491)
		Documents, ca. 1838-1872
2	66	Order, to New York Militia. A.D.S. September 12, 1842; 1(4) p. 33 cm. (7663)
2	67	a) Certificate of Appointment: J.S. Olin as Justice of Court of Troy, N.Y. A.D.S. September 12, 1842; 1 p. 26 cm. (1420) b) Arrest Warrant for Orleans County Sheriff to apprehend Edward Staats.

Box	Folder	Description
		A.D.S. Albany, N.Y. September 20, 1841; 1(4)p. 42 cm. (4637) c) Pardon of Rufus Robertson. A.D.S. Albany, N.Y. July 12, 1842; 2(4) p. 28 cm. (9097)
2	68	a) Circular no. 5. Department of State. Washington, D.C. June 3, 1861. A.D.S. regarding directive to custom house inspectors to seize military contraband destined for the confederacy. 1(4) p. 25 cm. (16156-1) b) Visa for Theodore Canisius as U.S. Consul at Vienna. U.S. Department of State. A.D.S. August 21, 1861; 1(4) p. 42 cm. (16156-2) c) Form letter to Henry D. Dawson. L.S. Washington, D.C. August 25, 1868. Regarding distribution of publication <i>Tribute of the Nations to Abraham Lincoln</i> . 1 p. 26 cm. (4620)
2	69	Memorandum, receipts, etc. 1838-1868. 9 items a. Receipt, Cashier of New York State Bank, July 19, 1838; 1 p. 11 cm. (10362-1) b. Receipt, Cashier of New York State Bank, July 11, 1842; 1 p. 7 cm. (10362-2) c. Receipt, February 23, 1847; 1 p. 9 cm. (10362-5) d. Note (photostatic copy), 1883; 1 p. ca. 5 cm. (10362-17) e. Note (A.N.S.), Astor House, to [?], [n.d.]; 1(4) p. 16 cm. f. Note (A.N.S.), Washington, D.C., to John W. McHarg, Geneva, [N.Y.?]. March 17, [?]; 1 p. 21 cm. (10362-18) g. Note (A.N.S.), Washington, D.C., to Edwin J. Farnum, Concord, N.H., December 12, 1853; 1 p. 20 cm. (16156) h. Note (A.N.S.), Auburn, [N.Y.], to William Hunter, Washington, D.C., August 5, 1868; 1(4) p. 21 cm. (16156) i. Note (A.N.S.), to William B. Kimball, Washington, D.C., February 26, 1852; 1 p. 25 cm.
		Printed Material
2	70	a) Obituary, 1872 (newspaper clipping) b) Memorial Service Program, 1873 (10362-16) c) New York State Coat of Arms. D.S. (17213)
2	71	“A Short History of the Birthplace of William Henry Seward and Some Facts Concerning the S.S. Seward Institute compiled by Herbert N. Mapes” [1936] 14 p. Cover title. Includes photographs and news clippings (17390)
2	72	Photographs (loose items found with previous document) a. Mapes Family Home, Florida, New York – on site of the birthplace of William H. Seward (2 copies) b. Samuel S. Seward Mansion, Florida, New York (2 copies) c. Samuel S. Seward Institute Building (former Randolph Hotel), Florida, New York d. Florida, N.Y. National Bank, showing S.S. Seward Institute in the background.

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