



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 3073

Clark-Sims Family
Papers

1797-1908

1 box (7 folders), 0.45 lin. feet

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Papers, 1797-1908
1 box, 4 vols., 0.45 lin. feet

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Abstract

John Lardner Clark (1770-1837) of Philadelphia was the fifth child born to Elijah and Jane (Lardner) Clark. He married Sophia Marion Ross (1779-1812) of Mount Holly, New Jersey on August 1, 1797. Their youngest daughter, Emeline Marion (b. 1807), married John Clarke Sims (1807-1882), son of John and Mary (Neale) Sims, on December 8, 1830. John Clarke and Emeline lived in Philadelphia, where John was a successful lawyer. One of their four sons, Clifford Stanley Sims (1839-1896), also went on to enjoy a notable career as an attorney. On August 2, 1865, Clifford married Mary Josephine Abercrombie (1841-1908).

This collection contains family papers spanning three generations, beginning with the courtship of John Lardner Clark and his wife Sophia Marion Ross, through the daily correspondence of their daughter Emeline Marion Clark and son-in-law John Clarke Sims, and finally the personal and legal documents of their grandson Clifford Stanley Sims and his wife Mary Josephine Abercrombie. The papers include correspondence, legal documents, information on estates, wills, genealogical records, and an address book.

Background note

John Lardner Clark (1770-1837) was the fifth child of Elijah (d. 1795) and Jane (Lardner) (d. 1804) Clark. Little is known about John Lardner's ancestry except that his father's family is descended from Thomas Clark, who immigrated to New Haven, Connecticut from Great Mundon, Hertfordshire, England in the mid-seventeenth century. During Elijah Clark's service in the New Jersey Militia as a colonel, he and Richard Westcott built a small fort at Fox Burrows, at their own expense, to serve as a defense against the British.

While he was living in Philadelphia, John Lardner took up correspondence with Sophia Marion Ross (1779-1812) of Mount Holly, New Jersey. Sophia Marion was the first child of Dr. John (d. 1796) and Mary (Brainerd) Ross (d. 1792). Sophia's father served in

a New Jersey Regiment during the Revolutionary War, rising from a captain to a major, and was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati of New Jersey.

After a substantial courtship, John and Sophia were betrothed and on August 1, 1797, were married. Over their fourteen year marriage, Sophia gave birth to three sons and three daughters. Three of their children, Louisa Vanuxem, Brainerd, and Emeline Marion, are known to have survived childhood and establish families of their own.

Emeline Marion (b. 1807) married John Clarke Sims (1807-1882) on December 8, 1830. John Clarke was the son of John Sims and Mary Neale. His father immigrated to America from England around 1794 and after a few years in America changed his surname from Simm to Sims. John Clarke and Emeline Marion lived in Philadelphia, where John Clarke was a successful attorney. The Sims had five sons, four of whom reached adulthood, and one daughter.

One of their four sons, Clifford Stanley Sims (1839-1896), joined the United States Navy and, in 1862, was appointed captain's clerk. Soon after his appointment, Clifford moved to Prairie Ridge Plantation, Arkansas. Clifford also served in the 4th Arkansas Infantry as a lieutenant colonel and was taken prisoner by Confederate forces in 1864. After his release, he began courting Mary Josephine Abercrombie (1841-1908), the second daughter of Dr. Charles Steadman and Mary (Boumar) Abercrombie of Roseland, Tennessee. Clifford and Mary Josephine were married on August 2, 1865, at St. Mary's Church in Memphis, Tennessee and had eight sons.

Like his father, Clifford established a successful law practice. He was elected a member of the Arkansas Constitutional Convention in 1867-1868 and state legislator in 1868-1869. In 1868, Clifford accepted an appointment as the judge advocate general of Arkansas. Clifford was appointed consul for the District of Canada in 1869 and remained there until he resigned in 1878. He then went to work for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company where he remained until 1887. In 1883, Clifford became president of the Society of the Cincinnati of New Jersey, an organization of which he had been a member since 1861. Clifford Stanley Sims died on March 3, 1896, in Trenton, New Jersey.

Scope & content

This collection documents the history of the Clark-Sims family. The papers date from 1797 to 1908 and contain correspondence, legal documents, information on estates, wills, genealogical records, and an address book.

The first folder contains early correspondence between John Lardner Clark of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and his future wife, Sophia Marion Ross, in Mt. Holly, New Jersey. In these love letters, John Lardner expresses his longing for Sophia, sends his regards to her family, and includes details of his own life in Philadelphia. In nearly every letter, John questions why Sophia writes to him so infrequently, almost never at all. John laments, "your silence disrupts me" (April 27, 1797) and urges, "you can certainly devote

a half an hour every day or two to your pen” (April 22, 1797). These letters also include poetry, some John’s own and some borrowed.

The second folder of correspondence between the two includes discussion of John Lardner’s marriage proposal to Sophia, and her acceptance. John and Sophia were married on August 1, 1797, and had six children. The third folder contains correspondence during their early married life when Sophia was living at home with her family in Mt. Laurel, while John was in Philadelphia. Inquiries about mutual acquaintances and family updates are found in both folders two and three.

Folder Four contains the papers of John Clarke Sims, a Philadelphia lawyer who married Emeline Marion Clark, daughter of John Lardner Clark and Sophia Marion Ross. The couple had five children who survived into adulthood. This folder contains checks to and from John, correspondence between John and his wife and the first and final drafts of a letter by John regarding property owned by his family. At the end of the folder is a mortgage document from The American Life Insurance Company of Philadelphia. This document is in John Clarke and Emeline Marion Sims’ names and corresponds to a piece of land owned by the couple in Hancock County, Iowa.

Folder Five contains papers of Clifford Stanley Sims, the third son of John Clarke and Emeline Marion (Clark) Sims. This folder contains illustrations and photos of Clifford as well as illustrations of what appears to be the family crest. Correspondence between Clifford and his future wife, Mary Josephine Abercrombie (“Miss Josephine”), and letters discussing his trip from Philadelphia to Memphis are also included. There is a letter of recommendation on Clifford’s behalf from the New Jersey Supreme Court, requesting the governor’s permission for the attorney to practice law in New Jersey as he was already certified in Arkansas and Pennsylvania. There are letters from the U.S. Department of State and the Arkansas Supreme Court, a note attesting to Clifford’s membership in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and a two-page list of his career history and affiliations. A list of qualifications required for admission to the Pennsylvania Society of the Colonial Dames of America is also in the folder. Finally, there is a small book of the pedigrees of the Clark and Ross families (ancestors and descendants of John L. Clark and Sophia M. Ross) compiled by Clifford Stanley Sims.

Folder Six contains later papers from the Sims family, including letters, postcards, notes, a report card for G.J. Davis from Bowdoin College, and a certificate granting John G. Sims, Jr. license to practice law in New Jersey.

Folder Seven is dedicated to legal and insurance papers, including the wills of J.C. Scheetz and George D. Moore and documents for the execution of John C. Scheetz’s estate. There is an indenture bequeathing land in Chester County to John P. McClellan from William B. Smith, one from C.S. Sims and his wife, and additional papers on the Sims estate and land deeds.

Following the folders are several small leather-bound books. The first is a medium-sized journal which contains a record of letters written by Emeline Marion (Clark) Sims, including recipients, page lengths, and notes about each letter (e.g., “written closely,” “on

hearing of the death of your husband,” etc.). The second is a larger book containing a family record of the Clark, Sims, and Ross families written by Mary Josephine Sims on February 8, 1898, beginning with Antoine Pintard’s arrival in America from France during the 17th century. The next large book is a detailed inventory of the estate of Mary Josephine Sims, compiled on June 15th, 1908, including jewelry, furniture, books, and china. The smallest of the leather books is the address book of Mary Josephine Sims.

Separation report

None.

Related materials

None.

Bibliography

Sims, Almon J. The Pariss Sims Family.

<http://kinnexions.com/kinnexions/sims/index.htm>.

Sims, Clifford Stanley. An Account of the Ancestors and Descendants of John Lardner Clark and Sophia Marion Ross: who were married 1st August, 1797. Prescott, Ontario: P. Byrne, Printer, 1870.

Subjects

Courtship—18th century

Deeds of trust—Arkansas—Desha County—19th century

Deeds—Pennsylvania—Chester County—19th century

Deeds—New York—Steuben County—19th century

Employment references—19th century

Genealogy

Insurance, Property Policies—New York—Yates County—20th century

Inventories of decedent's estates—19th century

Inventories of decedent's estates—20th century

Marriage—18th century

Marriage—19th century

Mortgages—Iowa—Hancock County—19th century

Mortgages—New York—Yates County—19th century

Widow's allowance—20th century

Wills—New York—Yates County—19th century

Clark, John Lardner, 1770-1837

Clark, Sophia Marion Ross, 1779-1812

Sims, Clifford Stanley, 1839-1896

Sims, Emeline Marion Clark, b. 1807

Sims, John Clarke, 1807-1882

Sims, Mary Josephine Abercrombie, 1841-1908

Administrative Information

Restrictions

None.

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None.

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Processing note

Processed by Tory Kline, 2006, and completed by Rachel Moskowitz, 2007.

Box and folder listing

Folder/volume title	Date	Box/vol.	Folder
Correspondence: John Lardner Clark to Sophia Marion Ross	March 4, 1797-May 16, 1797	1	1
Correspondence: John Lardner Clark to Sophia Marion Ross	June 1, 1797-Aug. 13, 1798	1	2
Correspondence: John Lardner Clark to Sophia Marion Ross	April 17, 1800- n.d.	1	3
Correspondence: John Clarke Sims	Post 1805	1	4
Correspondence: Clifford Stanley Sims	n.d.	1	5
Correspondence: Sims later	n.d.	1	6
Correspondence: legal	n.d.	1	7
List of letters written by Emeline Marion Sims	July 1867- February 1881	vol. 1	n/a
Mary Josephine Sims family record	February 8, 1898	vol. 2	n/a
Estate of Mary Josephine Sims	June 15, 1908	vol. 3	n/a
Address book of Mary Josephine Sims	n.d.	vol. 4	n/s