

Guide to the Charles H. Cummings Papers, 1830-1919, bulk 1885-1907

Administrative Information

Title and Dates:

Charles H. Cummings Papers, 1830-1919, bulk 1885-1907

Repository:

New Hampshire Historical Society
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Concord, NH 03301
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Collection Number:

2021.003

Author of Finding Aid:

Sandra L. Wheeler

Creator:

Cummings, Charles H., 1842-1920

Language:

The materials in this collection are in English.

Extent:

12 boxes ; 5.59 linear feet

Abstract:

Charles Henry Cummings (1842-1920) was born on a farm in Plymouth, New Hampshire, and made a fortune in railroads and the coal industry. Although he lived much of his working life in Pennsylvania, he visited family in New Hampshire and eventually retired to Meredith, New Hampshire. His papers consist primarily of his business correspondence, but included among them are bills for personal expenditures and letters received from friends and family members. The materials were created during the peak of his success and early retirement, 1885-1907. There are also extensive records of expenditures on his winter estate in Jacksonville, Florida, in the 1880s and 1890s.

Access and Use

Acquisition Information and Provenance:

The Charles H. Cummings Papers were a gift of Q. David Bowers in 2021.

Processing Information:

This collection was processed by Sandra L. Wheeler in July 2021. The finding aid was written by Sandra L. Wheeler in July 2021. This finding aid follows the standards set forth by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Access Restrictions:

Available for research.

Location:

The collection is housed at the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord, New Hampshire.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements:

The materials in this collection are paper based and have no special technical requirements for use.

Copyright/Conditions Governing Use:

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Preferred Citation:

Item title, Charles H. Cummings Papers, 2021.003. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire. Date accessed.

Collection Overview

Biographical Information

Charles Henry Cummings was born on July 28, 1842, in Plymouth, New Hampshire, to Jonathan (1800-1844) and Philena (Adams) Cummings (1803-1879). There is no information about his early education and working life except that at some point he became a conductor on the railroad. By the time the papers in this collection were created, he was an important executive in the railroad and coal industries. An obituary in a Boston newspaper said he had been president of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, but nothing in this collection indicates that that supposition is correct.

He married Mary Packer (1839-1912) in 1885 and they lived in Mauch Chunk (now Jim Thorpe) Pennsylvania. She was an heiress; her father, Asa Packer (1805-1879), was a coal and railroad baron (Lehigh Valley Railroad), and founder of Lehigh University. Mary Packer Cummings and Charles Cummings had no children and may not have lived together for much of the time, though they probably wintered together at their Florida estate. At least in her last years, she lived

in her ancestral home in Mauch Chunk. In her will, she left the house and its furnishings to be a museum, now the Asa Packer Mansion; it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1985.

Charles Cummings owned a large estate in Jacksonville, Florida, called “Keystone.” Here he had a yacht and orange groves. In 1892, he purchased land in Meredith, New Hampshire, and built a large house on Lake Winnepesaukee called “Spindle Point.” By the time of his death, this was a large property that encompassed several miles of shoreline, two small islands, and several dwelling houses. He was the last owner of the *Lady of the Lake* steamer on that lake and when the boat was dismantled, the figurehead, now in the Society’s collection, stood at the top of Cummings’ boathouse. He willed the figurehead to the Society in 1920.

Charles H. Cummings traveled extensively both in the United States and abroad and seems to have retired from an active role in his business by the mid-1890s, after which he retired and spent extended periods in Meredith, NH, where he died on January 20, 1920.

Collection Scope and Content Note:

The Charles H. Cummings Papers consist primarily of his correspondence with other railroad executives between 1885 and 1895, with the addition of extensive records of repairs and other operating costs associated with his winter estate in Jacksonville, Florida. Incoming letters from friends, business associates and family are interspersed with bills and other financial papers. Many of the letters were actually written to Cummings’ secretary, David Pearsall (1861-1921), who handled many of the business and personal details of Cummings’ life. Cummings was a Freemason, and there are membership cards and letters from various lodges. The materials trail off in the 1890s, and there is no documentation of his life after 1907, by which time he presumably lived full time in Meredith, New Hampshire. Although an obituary indicated that Cummings had been president of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, his exact titles and roles in the railroad and the coal industries are not documented in these papers.

The purchase of the Jacksonville, Florida estate (called “Keystone”) and its eventual presumed sale are not documented, although the construction of a house there (after the first one burned down) and the building and supplying of a ‘steam yacht’ are. The resident manager of the estate wrote David Pearsall, Cummings’ secretary, every two weeks to report on work done for maintenance of the house and grounds, as well as any new construction undertaken. Spindle Point, his house in Meredith, is not as well documented, though there are bills for household supplies and construction/repair materials. He called it a ‘farm,’ but by the time of his death, it was a large property: his will mentioned several miles of shorefront, two islands, farm buildings and a “lodge.”

Notable among the business papers are many personal letters appealing to him for help: former employees, relatives, colleagues who suffered business failures, widows and orphans of all the above. They ask for money, jobs, and recommendations and usually detail the circumstances surrounding their need. These letters offer a stark illustration of life before any sort of organized charity or financial security existed for most people.

There is no outgoing correspondence, and although he traveled extensively in the United States as well as Europe and Asia, no materials describing the trips or ephemera associated with them

are present. After congratulations on his wedding in 1885, his wife is not mentioned and there are no letters from her. There are no photographs.

The collection also contains scattered issues of two satirical magazines, *Judge* and *Puck* between 1880 and 1892.

There is also a group of letters written to “Henry Cummings” between 1858 and 1874 with family news (deaths of grandmother, grandfather, local gossip, etc.). The identity of this person and his relationship to Charles Henry Cummings is unknown.

Arrangement:

The materials in this collection are arranged in the following series:

Series 1. Bound letter books, 1885-1901

Series 2. Financial papers, 1862-1907

Series 3. Correspondence, 1830-1877

Series 4. Printed matter, 1880-1898, undated

Contents List

Series 1. Bound letter books, 1885-1901

Extent: 128 folders and 1 letter book box

Scope and Content: This series consists of business financial records and correspondence, with personal and family incoming correspondence interspersed. They were found in dated binders, where they had been placed in alphabetical order as they arrived. Correspondence about railroad matters decreases in the 1890s, and becomes more about his personal purchases, repairs and maintenance of the Florida property, and from colleagues, friends and family members. Letters and bills have been removed from the binders (a sample binder is in Box 8), but kept in their original order. The spines of the letter books were labeled: CHC (Cummings’ initials), then a book number, then the contents (letters or bills), then the dates contained in the book. Folders are labeled with this information, though it is not always accurate. Dates in some books overlap with others, and there are gaps in the sequence.

Box 1

Folder 1	CHC 2 Letters: A-B, 1885 April-October
Folder 2	CHC 2 Letters: C-E, 1885 April-October
Folder 3	CHC 2 Letters: F-G, 1885 April-October
Folder 4	CHC 2 Letters: H, 1885 April-October
Folder 5	CHC 2 Letters: I-K, 1885 April-October
Folder 6	CHC 2 Letters: L-M, 1885 April-October
Folder 7	CHC 2 Letters: N-P, 1885 April-October
Folder 8	CHC 2 Letters: Q-S, 1885 April-October
Folder 9	CHC 2 Letters: T-W, 1885 April-October
Folder 10	CHC 2 Letters: Y-Z, 1885 April-October
Folder 11	CHC 3 Letters: A, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 12	CHC 3 Letters: B, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 13	CHC 3 Letters: C, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 14	CHC 3 Letters: D-E, 1885 November-1886 June

Folder 15 CHC 3 Letters: F, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 16 CHC 3 Letters: G, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 17 CHC 3 Letters: H-J, 1885 November 1885-1886 June
Folder 18 CHC 3 Letters: K-L, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 19 CHC 3 Letters: M, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 20 CHC 3 Letters: N-R, 1885 November-1886 June

Box 2

Folder 1 CHC 3 Letters: S, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 2 CHC 3 Letters: T-Z, 1885 November-1886 June
Folder 3 CHC 5 Letters: A-B, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 4 CHC 5 Letters: C-D, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 5 CHC 5 Letters: E-F, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 6 CHC 5 Letters: G, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 7 CHC 5 Letters: H-J, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 8 CHC 5 Letters: K-M, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 9 CHC 5 Letters: N-R, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 10 CHC 5 Letters: S-T, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 11 CHC 5 Letters: U-Z, 1886 July-1887 April
Folder 12 CHC 8 Letters: A-B, 1887 May-December
Folder 13 CHC 8 Letters: C, 1887 May-December
Folder 14 CHC 8 Letters: D-F, 1887 May-December
Folder 15 CHC 8 Letters: G, 1887 May-December
Folder 16 CHC 8 Letters: H-K, 1887 May-December
Folder 17 CHC 8 Letters: L-N, 1887 May-December
Folder 18 CHC 8 Letters: O-R, 1887 May-December
Folder 19 CHC 8 Letters: S, 1887 May-December

Box 3

Folder 1 CHC 8 Letters: T-V, 1887 May-December
Folder 2 CHC 8 Letters: W-Z, 1887 May-December
Folder 3 CHC 9 Letters: A-B, 1888 January-September
Folder 4 CHC 9 Letters: C, 1888 January-September
Folder 5 CHC 9 Letters: D-E, 1888 January-September
Folder 6 CHC 9 Letters: F, 1888 January-September
Folder 7 CHC 9 Letters: G-H, 1888 January-September
Folder 8 CHC 9 Letters: I-L, 1888 January-September
Folder 9 CHC 9 Letters: M-N, 1888 January-September
Folder 10 CHC 9 Letters: O-R, 1888 January-September
Folder 11 CHC 9 Letters: S, 1888 January-September
Folder 12 CHC 9 Letters: T-Z, 1888 January-September
Folder 13 CHC 13 Letters: A-B, 1888 October-1889 July
Folder 14 CHC 13 Letters: C-F, 1888 October-1889 July
Folder 15 CHC 13 Letters: G-L, 1888 October-1889 July
Folder 16 CHC 13 Letters: M-R, 1888 October- 1889 July
Folder 17 CHC 13 Letters: S, 1888, October-1889 July

Folder 18 CHC 13 Letters: T-Z, 1888 October-1889 July

Box 4

Folder 1 CHC 17 Letters: A-B, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 2 CHC 17 Letters: C, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 3 CHC 17 Letters: D, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 4 CHC 17 Letters: E-H, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 5 CHC 17 Letters: I-L, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 6 CHC 17 Letters: M-N, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 7 CHC 17 Letters: O-R, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 8 CHC 17 Letters: S, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 9 CHC 17 Letters: T-Z, 1891 October-1892 September
Folder 10 CHC 18 Letters: A-B, 1892 October-1893 September
Folder 11 CHC 18 Letters: C-D, 1892 October-1893 September
Folder 12 CHC 18 Letters: E-G, 1892 October-1893 September
Folder 13 CHC 18 Letters: H-K, 1892 October-1893 September
Folder 14 CHC 18 Letters: L-N, 1892 October-1893 September
Folder 15 CHC 18 Letters: O-P, 1892 October-1893 September
Folder 16 CHC 18 Letters: R-S, 1892 October-1893 September
Folder 17 CHC 18 Letters: T-Z, 1892 October-1893 September

Box 5

Folder 1 CHC 19 Bills: A-B, 1892 July-1893 October
Folder 2 CHC 19 Bills: C-G, 1892 July-1893 October
Folder 3 CHC 19 Bills: H, 1892 July-1893 October
Folder 4 CHC 19 Bills: I-M, 1892 July-1893 October
Folder 5 CHC 19 Bills: N-R, 1892 July-1893 October
Folder 6 CHC 19 Bills: S, 1892 July-1893 October
Folder 7 CHC 19 Bills: T-Z, 1892 July-1893 October
Folder 8 CHC 23 Letters: A-B, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 9 CHC 23 Letters: C, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 10 CHC 23 Letters: D-E, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 11 CHC 23 Letters: F-H, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 12 CHC 23 Letters: I-L, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 13 CHC 23 Letters: M-N, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 14 CHC 23 Letters: O-P, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 15 CHC 23 Letters: R-S, 1893 October-1894 April
Folder 16 CHC 23 Letters: T-Z, 1893 October-1894 April

Box 6

Folder 1 CHC 24 Letters: A-B, 1894 May-1895 April
Folder 2 CHC 24 Letters: C-E, 1894 May-1895 April
Folder 3 CHC 24 Letters: F-H, 1894 May-1895 April
Folder 4 CHC 24 Letters: I-N, 1894 May-1895 April
Folder 5 CHC 24 Letters: O-P, 1894 May-1895 April
Folder 6 CHC 24 Letters: R-Z, 1894 May-1895 April

Folder 7	CHC 25 Bills: A-B, 1893 November-1894 December
Folder 8	CHC 25 Bills: C-D, 1893 November-1894 December
Folder 9	CHC 25 Bills: E-F, 1893 November-1894 December
Folder 10	CHC 25 Bills: G-L, 1893 November-1894 December
Folder 11	CHC 25 Bills: M-N, 1893 November-1894 December
Folder 12	CHC 25 Bills: O-P, 1893 November-1894 December
Folder 13	CHC 25 Bills: Q-S, 1893 November-1894 December
Folder 14	CHC 25 Bills: T-Z, 1893 November-1894 December

Box 7

Folder 1	CHC 37 Letters: A-B, 1898 January-October
Folder 2	CHC 37 Letters: C, 1898 January-October
Folder 3	CHC 37 Letters: D-G, 1898 January-October
Folder 4	CHC 37 Letters: H-J, 1898 January-October
Folder 5	CHC 37 Letters: K-L, 1898 January-October
Folder 6	CHC 37 Letters: M-N, 1898 January-October
Folder 7	CHC 37 Letters: O-P, 1898 January-October
Folder 8	CHC 37 Letters: Q-S, 1898 January-October
Folder 9	CHC 37 Letters: T-Z, 1898 January-October
Folder 10	CHC 38 Letters: A-B, 1898 November-1899 March
Folder 11	CHC 38 Letters: C, 1898 November-1899 March
Folder 12	CHC 38 Letters: D-G, 1898 November-1899 March
Folder 13	CHC 38 Letters: H-L, 1898 November-1899 March
Folder 14	CHC 38 Letters: M-N, 1898 November-1899 March
Folder 15	CHC 38 Letters: O-P, 1898 November-1899 March
Folder 16	CHC 38 Letters: Q-S, 1898 November-1899 March
Folder 17	CHC 38 Letters: T-Z, 1898 November-1899 March

Box 8

Folder 1	CHC 39 Bills: A-G, 1899 January-1901 July
Folder 2	CHC 39 Bills: H-M, 1899 January-1901 July
Folder 3	CHC 39 Bills: N-R, 1899 January-1901 July
Folder 4	CHC 39 Bills: S-Z, 1899 January-1901 July
Folder 5	CHC 41 Letters: A-D, 1900 April-1901 December
Folder 6	CHC 41 Letters: E-G, 1900 April-1901 December
Folder 7	CHC 41 Letters: H-Z, 1900 April-1901 December

At the back of Box 8 is a sample of the letter books.

Series 2. Financial papers, 1862-1875, 1891-1895

Extent: 46 folders

Scope and Content: These items were loose in a large box; the contents are much as in the bound letter books. Some were in dated envelopes. They have been placed in chronological order by year and month. The 1895 and 1896 papers are about the house in Florida. The January 1898 folders contain letters from friends and colleagues in thanks for Cummings' Christmas/New Year's card.

Box 9

- Folder 1 Financial papers, 1862-1866
- Folder 2 Financial papers, 1867-1869
- Folder 3 Financial papers, 1870-1875
- Folder 4 Financial papers, 1886-1888, 1890
- Folder 5 Financial papers, 1891 January-March
- Folder 6 Financial papers, 1891 April-July
- Folder 7 Financial papers, 1891 October
- Folder 8 Financial papers, 1892-1894
- Folder 9 Financial papers, 1895 January 1-15
- Folder 10 Financial papers, 1895 January 16-31
- Folder 11 Financial papers, 1895 February
- Folder 12 Financial papers, 1895 March
- Folder 13 Financial papers, 1895 April-May
- Folder 14 Financial papers, 1895 June-August
- Folder 15 Financial papers, 1895 September-December

Box 10

- Folder 1 Financial papers, 1896 January
- Folder 2 Financial papers, 1896 February
- Folder 3 Financial papers, 1896 March
- Folder 4 Financial papers, 1896 April
- Folder 5 Financial papers, 1896 May-July
- Folder 6 Financial papers, 1896 August-September
- Folder 7 Financial papers, 1896 October-December
- Folder 8 Financial papers, 1897 January-November
- Folder 9 Financial papers, 1897 December
- Folders 10-12 Financial papers and thank you notes, 1898 January
- Folder 13 Financial papers, 1898 February-December
- Folder 14 Financial papers, 1899
- Folder 15 Financial papers, found in envelope labeled "Moctezuma," 1899 February-1900 April
- Folder 16 Financial papers, 1901-1902
- Folder 17 Financial papers, 1903-1904
- Folder 18 Financial papers, 1905

Box 11

- Folder 1 Financial papers, 1906 January-April
- Folder 2 Financial papers, 1906 May
- Folder 3 Financial papers, 1906 June
- Folder 4 Financial papers, 1906 July
- Folder 5 Financial papers, 1906 August-September
- Folder 6 Financial papers, 1906 October-December
- Folder 7 Financial papers, 1907 January-April
- Folder 8 Financial papers, 1907 May-June
- Folder 9 Financial papers, 1907 July-August

- Folder 10 Financial papers, 1907 September-October
- Folder 11 Financial papers, 1907 November-December
- Folder 12 Financial papers, 1910, 1911, 1919, undated
- Folder 13 Ephemera: greeting cards, postcards about railroads, calling cards, tickets, train brochures, 1902, 1904, undated

Series 3. Correspondence, 1830, 1841, 1858-1874

Extent: 2 folders

Scope and Content: This series consists of one 1830 letter from Moses Merrill, an 1841 receipt and letter to Mr. Justice Hall, and incoming letters to Henry Cummings from 1858 to 1872. Henry's identity and relationship to Charles H. Cummings are unknown.

Box 11

- Folder 14 Merrill, Moses, notification that Caleb Cushing has been chosen a representative to congress, 1830 December 29
Hall, Mr. Justice, receipt, 1841 May 22
Hall, Mr. Justice, incoming letter from unknown writer, 1841 May 22
- Folder 15 Cummings, Henry, incoming letters, 1858-1867, 1874

Series 4. Printed matter, 1886-1892, undated

Extent: 5 folders

Scope and Content: This series contains a variety of printed materials, including a yacht inspection, broadside advertisement for a fare box, the front sheets of sheet music, and scattered editions of two satirical magazines, *Judge* and *Puck*. The "Quick Steps" have images of soldiers. Arranged by genre, then chronological.

Box 12

- Folder 1 Certificate of inspection of "pleasure steamer" Keystone, Jacksonville, Florida, 1898
- Folder 2 Broadside advertisement for "Slawson's Patent Fare Box," undated
- Folder 3 Sheet music front pages, illustrated, undated
 - The Blue's Quick Step
 - Freemen's Quick Step
 - Greys Quick Step
 - Hero's Quick Step (2)
 - The Lancer's Quick Step
 - The Norfolk Guards Quick Step
 - Marches & Quick Steps
 - Pulaski Quick Step
 - Death of Warren
 - The Harrison Song
 - John Anderson my Jo
 - Revere Polka
 - The Schoolmaster
- Folder 4 *Judge* magazine, published in New York City, 1886-1892
 - 1886 March 6, Christmas
 - 1888 October 27
 - 1889, Christmas

1890 December 13, Christmas
1891 February 28, March 14, Easter, June 6, November 28
1892 January 2, January 16
Folder 5 *Puck* Magazine, published in New York City, 1880-1892
1880 September 29
1885 September 9
1886 March 17
1888 October 10
1889 February 27
1890 November 26, December 10, Christmas
1891 February 25, March 11, March 25, November 25, December 30
1892 January 13, February 24
Cover only: "Pickings from Puck," undated

Published Material:

Judge
Puck

This list is not exhaustive.

Subject Terms

People:

Cummings, Charles Henry, 1842-1920

Organizations:

Lehigh Valley Railroad Company

Subjects:

Charity
Correspondence
Dwellings--Maintenance and repair
Freemasons
House construction
Periodicals
Railroads
Sheet music
Yachts--Design and construction

Locations:

Jacksonville, FL
Mauch Chunk [Jim Thorpe], PA
Meredith, NH
Plymouth, NH

Occupations:

Businessmen
Railroad conductors

Related Materials

Museum

Figurehead, "Lady of the Lake," 1922.023