The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Geoffrey Ward collection on Ferdinand Ward and the Ward family

1825-2012
MssCol 22284

Summary

Collector: Ward, Geoffrey C.

Title: Geoffrey Ward collection on Ferdinand Ward and the Ward family

Date: 1825-2012

Size: 8.4 linear feet (21 boxes)

Source: Purchased from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, Inc., 2013.

Abstract: Geoffrey Ward is the author of A Disposition to Be Rich, a biography of his great-grandfather, Ferdinand Ward, who ran a fraudulent Wall Street investment firm from 1880 to 1884. The Geoffrey Ward collection on Ferdinand Ward and the Ward family (1825-2012) consists of material collected and created by Geoffrey Ward in preparation of the book. The collection documents the activities of Ferdinand Ward and his extended family from the 1810s to 1949 through original family correspondence, legal documents, newspaper articles, and Geoffrey Ward's research notes, among other materials.

Preferred citation: Geoffrey Ward collection on Ferdinand Ward and the Ward family, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014 Some files were sorted by subject.

Creator History

Geoffrey Ward is an American author and historian. His books include A Disposition to Be Rich (2012), a biography of his great-grandfather, Ferdinand De Wilton Ward, Jr., who was notorious for running a fraudulent investment firm from 1880 to 1884.

Ferdinand Ward was born in 1851 to Jane Shaw Ward and Ferdinand De Wilton Ward, a Presbyterian minister. His parents had served as missionaries in India from 1837 to 1846. Ward spent his childhood in Geneseo, New York. He married Ella Green of Brooklyn Heights, with whom he had one son, Clarence Ward. Ella died in 1890.

Ward's investment firm, Grant & Ward, was run as a Ponzi scheme. The firm's collapse precipitated the Wall Street panic of 1884. It also bankrupted former president Ulysses S. Grant,

who was a partner in the firm. Ferdinand Ward was convicted of grand larceny and served seven years in Sing Sing Prison. After his release in 1892, Ward was involved in further scandal when he kidnapped his son Clarence to gain access to the income Clarence received from his mother's estate.
Ferdinand Ward died in White Plains, New York in 1925.

Scope and Content Note

The Geoffrey Ward collection on Ferdinand Ward and the Ward family (1825-2012) consists of research materials collected and created by Geoffrey Ward in the preparation of his biography of Ferdinand Ward. The materials document the activities of Ferdinand Ward and his extended family from the 1810s to 1949.
The collection contains original Ward family correspondence dating from 1842 to 1949, addressing subjects such as family members' health, finances, and legal matters. Much of the correspondence is that of Ferdinand Ward, Jr., dating from the 1860s to 1924, including letters sent to and from Sing Sing Prison, which discuss Ward's requests for money and goods, his life in Sing Sing, and the state of his family in his absence. Ward's primary correspondents are his wife, Ella Green Ward; his son, Clarence Ward; his sister, Sarah Ward Brinton; his parents, Jane Shaw Ward and Ferdinand Ward, Sr.; and his sister-in-law, Ellen (Nellie) Chaffee Green, who was Clarence's guardian with her husband, Fred Green. The collection contains legal correspondence regarding Clarence's guardianship and his mother's estate, including letters from attorney James McKeen to Fred Green, which also contain information about Green's finances, and letters from McKeen to Clarence Ward. Other correspondence includes letters to Ferdinand Ward, Sr. from his colleagues regarding his church work, lectures, and publications. One file of letters from James D. Fish, president of the Marine National Bank, to Ferdinand Ward, Sr., is present. The collection also contains copies and transcripts of Ward family correspondence dating as early as the 1830s, for which no originals are present; among these are a large number of letters from Ferdinand Ward, Sr., written after his return from India, regarding his life and work with the church. The earliest item in the collection is an invitation to a ball, dated 1825.
The collection also contains original legal documents such as the wills of Ella Ward, Ferdinand Ward, Sr., and Jane Shaw Ward, and the 1885 document sentencing Ferdinand Ward to hard labor in Sing Sing Prison. Family memorabilia includes items such as booklets printed for Ward family reunions from 1886 to 1909 and memorial pamphlets for Jane Shaw Ward. Some of Geoffrey Ward's notes from family correspondence and family papers are also present. Ward's notes and photocopies of family documents generally date to the 2000s.
Subject files contain biographical and genealogical information about the Ward family and background information on places, people, and organizations associated with them. The bulk of the material in the subject files is Geoffrey Ward's research notes and copies of contemporary print material, such as newspaper and journal articles. Most of the materials in the subject files date from the 1960s to 2012; a small amount of 19th century and early 20th century clippings is also present. Subjects include the Ward family; the Green family; the Brinton family; the Wards' mission to India; the 1837 schism in the Presbyterian Church; Rochester, New York; and Geneseo, New York. The Ward family files also hold detailed chronologies of the Ward family's activities from 1811 (the birth of Jane Shaw) to 1925 (Ferdinand Ward's death). Ferdinand Ward files include research on his associates (notably James D. Fish) and on Grant & Ward investors. Some biographical notes on Clarence Ward are also present in the Ferdinand Ward files.
Geoffrey Ward conducted correspondence and interviews with family members, historians, and others during the course of his research. The collection contains files of this correspondence and a folder of notes and transcripts from interviews. His correspondence can also be found

throughout the subject files.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Correspondence
Research notes

Subjects
Genealogy
Ponzi schemes -- New York (State) -- New York -- 19th century
Swindlers and swindling -- United States

Geographic Names
Geneseo (N.Y.)

Names
Fish, James Dean, 1819-1912
Ward, Clarence, 1884-1973
Ward, F. De W. (Ferdinand De Wilton), 1812-1891
Ward, Ferdinand De Wilton, 1851-1925

Container List

Correspondence, Legal Documents, and Memorabilia

This section contains originals and copies of Ward and Green family correspondence, legal documents, and family memorabilia dating from 1842 to 1949. Items dated after 1949 are photocopies and transcripts of original material or Geoffrey Ward's research notes.

Green Family

b. 1 f. 1 Chaffee Family--Letters to Nellie Green 1889-1907, 2000s

b. 1 f. 2 Helen Green Liello circa 1907, 1937-1997

b. 1 f. 3 Letter to Mrs. Green undated

b. 1 f. 4 Mary Green--Letters to Fred Green 1889-1890, 2000s

b. 1 f. 5 Green Family--Letters to Fred Green circa 1870s, 2000s

b. 1 f. 6 Dr. and Mrs. Vail--Letters to Nellie Green 1880s-1891, 2000s

b. 1 f. 7 Letters to Fred Green; Thompson, Connecticut Material 1890-1891, 1967-1968, 2008-2010

b. 1 f. 8 Family Silver Notes 1906, 2000s

b. 1 f. 9 Fred Green Finances 1887-1909

b. 1 f. 10 James McKeen--Letters to Fred Green 1888-1893, 2000s

b. 1 f. 11 Charles Searls--Letters to Fred Green 1891, undated

Clarence Ward

b. 1 f. 12 James McKeen and Charles Searls--Letters Regarding Clarence Ward 1894, 2000s

b. 1 f. 13 Finances 1906-1908, 2010

b. 1 f. 14-18 Letters to and from Ferdinand Ward; Legal Correspondence 1890-1905, 1921-1924, 2000s

b. 2 f. 1-6 Letters to and from Ferdinand Ward; Legal Correspondence and Legal Documents 1905-1911, 2000s

b. 2 f. 7-10 Miscellaneous Letters to Clarence Ward 1891-1909, 1932, 2000s

Ella Ward

b. 2 f. 11-13 Will and Estate 1889-1894, 2000s

b. 3 f. 1-13 Letters to Ferdinand Ward 1886-1890, 2000s

b. 2 f. 14 Letter to Fred Green 1889

Ferdinand Ward

Ferdinand Ward's letters to his son are filed with Clarence Ward's correspondence.

b. 3 f. 14 Letters to Family Members (Pre-Grant & Ward) 1868-1878, 2000s

b. 4 f. 1-3 Letters to and from Nellie Green 1890-1893, 2000s

b. 4 f. 4 Letter to Thomas H. Hubbard 2000s
Transcript of letter from 1885.

b. 4 f. 5 Letters to Mrs. Thomas Tallman 1892, 2000s

b. 4 f. 6 Marriage to Belle Storer 1894, 2000s

b. 4 f. 7-8 Letters from Helen A. Durant 1888-1890, 2000s

b. 4 f. 9 Condolence Letters at Ella Ward's Death 1890, 2000s

b. 4 f. 10 Letters from James McKeen 2000s
Transcripts of letters from 1890.

Correspondence, Legal Documents, and Memorabilia (cont.)
Ferdinand Ward (cont.)

b. 4 f. 11 James D. Fish Pardon and W. Bourke Cockran Correspondence 1886-1890, 1970s, 2000s

b. 4 f. 12 Original Sentencing Document for Sing Sing Prison 1885, 1967

b. 4 f. 13 Ferdinand Ward's Life in Sing Sing 1887-1890, 1975, 2000s

b. 4 f. 14 Legal Briefs and Memoranda circa 1886, 2000s
George C. Holt, as Assignee, &c. of Ferdinand Ward, against William S. Warner, Impleaded with Others.

b. 4 f. 15 Letter from Brooklyn Doctor 1889

Ferdinand Ward, Sr

b. 5 f. 1 Letters from James Fish 1884, 2000s

b. 5 f. 2-3 Letters to Ferdinand Ward, Jr 1873-1890, 2000s

b. 5 f. 4 Letters to Sarah Ward Brinton circa 1876-1888, 2000s

b. 5 f. 5-10 Letters to Levi A. Ward 2000s
Copies of letters from 1849 to 1854.

b. 5 f. 11-12 Letters to Henrietta Clarke 1989, 2000s
Copies of letters from 1830 to 1845.

b. 5 f. 13 Letter to Sidney Green (Ella's Father) 2000s
Transcript of letter from 1875.

b. 6 f. 1-2 Letters from Colleagues and Others 1843-1894, 2000s

b. 6 f. 3-5 Mission to India 2000s
Copies of letters from the 1830s and 1840s.

b. 6 f. 6 Death and Will 1889, 2008

Ferdinand Ward, Sr. and Jane Shaw Ward

b. 7 f. 1-2 Wills and Estates 1896, 1923, 2000s

b. 7 f. 3 Letters from John Torrey 2000s
Transcripts of letters from 1844.

b. 7 f. 4-5 Letters to Henrietta Clarke 2000s
Copies of letters from 1847 and the 1850s.

Jane Shaw Ward

b. 7 f. 6-7 Letters to to Ferdinand Ward 1888, 1890, 2000s

b. 7 f. 8 Letter to Ferdinand Ward, Sr 2000s
Copy of letter from 1836.

b. 7 f. 9 Letters to Sarah Ward Brinton 2000s
Copies of letters from 1886.

b. 7 f. 10 Memorial Pamphlets 1888

b. 7 f. 11-25 Ward Family 1825-1894, 1964-2000s
Letters by Sarah Ward Brinton, Brinton family materials, other Ward family materials. Includes Geoffrey Ward's correspondence with Jasper Y. Brinton.

b. 7 f. 25 Ward Family Reunion Booklets 1886, 1907-1909

b. 8 f. 10 Miscellany 1825-1893

Subject Files

Subject files contain biographical and genealogical information about the Ward family and background information on places, people, and organizations associated with them. The files primarily contain Geoffrey Ward's research notes and photocopies of nineteenth century print material, such as newspaper articles. A small amount of 19th century and early 20th century clippings is also present.

Subject Files (cont.)

b. 8 f. 1-3 Brinton Family 1969-1973, 2000s

b. 8 f. 4-9 Green Family 1913, 1970s-2000s

Ward and Shaw Families

b. 9 f. 1-15 1872, 1886, 1907-1909, 1952-2010
Includes files on early family history, general genealogical information, and John Torrey.

b. 10 f. 6-9 Geneseo 2000s

b. 11 f. 1-5 Geneseo 2000s

b. 10 f. 1-5 Rochester 2000s

b. 21 f. 6-8 Ward Family Chronologies 2000s

b. 20 f. 1-7 Clarence Ward 1885, 1990s-2010

Ferdinand Ward

b. 14 f. 1-12 Before 1884 2000s

Scandal and Trial (1884-1885)

b. 14 f. 13 2000s

b. 15 f. 1-11 1997-2012

b. 16 f. 1-9 2000s

b. 17 f. 1-8 2000s

b. 21 f. 1-5 1884, 2000s
Articles and illustrations from periodicals only.

b. 17 f. 9-10 Sing Sing Prison 2000s

b. 18 f. 1-9 Sing Sing Prison 2000s

b. 19 f. 6-19 After Sing Sing 1969-2000s

b. 18 f. 10 James D. Fish 2000s

b. 19 f. 1-5 James D. Fish 2000s

Ferdinand Ward, Sr., and Jane Shaw Ward
Includes research on Presbyterian schism and copies of writings by Ferdinand Ward, Sr., such as his notes on wives' duties and pages of his handwritten autobiography.

b. 11 f. 6-12 1891, 1971, 2000s

b. 12 f. 1-11 1980s-2000s

b. 13 f. 1-12 Foreign Missions 1857, 1930, 1969-2000s

b. 20 f. 8-14 Geoffrey Ward Interviews and Correspondence 1906-2000s