

## Thorndike Family Papers, 1750 – 1897

**MSS:** #023

**Processed by:** Hannah Callahan, March 2018

**Volume:** 3 boxes ; 1.25 linear feet

**Location:** CHMV Unit 5 Shelf A

### **Abstract**

This collection is comprised largely of receipts and transaction records, but also contains wills, letters, ledgers, deeds, notebooks, and other personal and business documents belonging to several members of the Thorndike family. The bulk of the collection pertains to Captain Nicholas Thorndike (1764-1821), his father, and his nephew to whom he was appointed guardian. It also includes records on Albert, Israel, William, and several others (see Series List.) Dates in this collection range from the mid-1700s to the late 1800s.

**Collection Creator:** Thorndike family

**Provenance:** The provenance of this collection is not known.

### **Conservation**

This collection has been re-housed in acid-free folders and boxes. Many documents in this collection are brittle or deteriorating, and should be handled with extreme care. Papers have been unfolded where possible, but some larger documents remain partially folded and should be treated carefully. Series XV (Box 1 Folder 23) contains a large parchment document, which has been kept folded as it was originally stored.

### **Processor's Note**

This collection has been arranged alphabetically by individual forename. Within forename series, folders are grouped chronologically, by document type, or content. Every effort has been made to match individuals with the correct genealogical records. In the case of repeated family names, such as Abigail, Albert, and Paul, the filing of more ambiguous documents with a particular individual represents the best educated inference of their identity. In all cases, birth and death dates are given where known in the series title, to help differentiate family members with the same name. Where documents pertain to more than one family member, an effort has been made to group them by primary personal and chronological relationships.

Three people named Nicholas Thorndike are represented in this collection. Because of their overlapping dates and lack of distinction in the documents, all three of their records have been

filed under a single forename series and have been arranged chronologically. Where birth and death dates make it possible to assume a single identity, the likely individual has been indicated in the folder description in parentheses. See the Biographical Sketch for more information on these three individuals.

**Copyright:** Request for permission to publish material from the collection must be submitted in writing to the Curator of Collections at the Cabot House of the Beverly Historical Society and Museum.

**Preferred Citation:**

Title of Document, Thorndike Family Papers, Historic Beverly, 117 Cabot Street, Beverly, MA 01915.

**Biographical Note**

Members of the Thorndike family came to New England from Lincolnshire, England, in the 1600s and settled in Essex County on the North Shore of Massachusetts. John Thorndike was one of the first Europeans to settle in Ipswich in 1633, where he married Elizabeth Stratton. He returned to England in 1668 with his two daughters Martha and Alice, and died there in 1672. The following is a brief sketch of the Thorndike descendants of Essex County that are *significantly* represented in this collection. Genealogical and biographical information on other Thorndike family members, including those represented in this collection, can be found in the resources listed in the bibliography on page 10 of this document.

Israel Thorndike (1755-1832), fifth in descent from John Thorndike, was born in Beverly. He was a strong supporter of American independence and served as Captain of the armed ship *Resource* during the revolution. After the war, Israel entered a business partnership with his brother-in-law, Moses Brown. Brown & Thorndike (see Series XII Subseries II) conducted lucrative commercial trade in the East. Israel Thorndike continued on to hold public office and engage in significant philanthropy. Most notably, in 1818, he purchased a large American history collection from a Professor Ebeling of Hamburg as a gift for the Harvard library. The collection was purchased for \$6,500. Israel Thorndike moved to Boston in 1810 and died there in 1832, leaving a significant fortune. This collection contains numerous financial records from Israel Thorndike, such as receipts and bills. It also includes his will, correspondence, and a customs form for trade conducted by Brown & Thorndike at Pointe-a-Pitre, Guadeloupe.

Nicholas Thorndike (1733-1788), the eldest of the three represented in this collection, was born in Beverly and “participated in the events at Concord” of the American Revolution (Altobelli, 1964, p. 247). He married Abigail Trask (see Series II) in 1757. They had eleven children, including Nicholas Thorndike (1764-1821).

Captain Nicholas Thorndike (1764-1821), born in Beverly, served at a young age on his cousin Israel Thorndike’s ship *Resource* during the American Revolution. He married Mehitable Rea (see Series XIX) in 1789, and in the same year assumed command of the cargo schooner, *Two Friends*, which began his successful career at sea until retiring and becoming a merchant at age

42. He served as legal guardian to minors in the family who had lost their parents, including Nicholas Thorndike (1789-1819), documentation of which exists in this collection. Captain Thorndike is considered “one of the first American shipmasters to reach India” (Altobelli, 1962, p. 194).

Nicholas Thorndike (1789-1819) was born in Beverly to Captain Osman Thorndike and Eleanor Lovett. It appears that after the death of his father in 1796, and his mother in 1805, he became the ward of his uncle, Captain Nicholas Thorndike (1764-1821). He served as master of the brig *Mary* until his death in 1819, as to which accounts vary about whether he was lost at sea or murdered by his crew.

William Thorndike (1795-1835) was born in Beverly and attended Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire before studying at Harvard. He went on to study law, was admitted to the Bar in 1816, and married Nancy Stephens in 1821. Following her death in 1823, he returned to his native Beverly from their home in Bath, Maine, and served as Senator for Essex County from 1828 to 1832. He took prominent positions in insurance and banking following his tenure in the Senate. William Thorndike was a member of the First Parish Church of Beverly; this collection includes several manuscripts of orations he delivered.

### **Scope and Content Note**

This collection is comprised largely of receipts and transaction records, but also contains letters, ledgers, deeds, notebooks, and other personal documents belonging to several members of the prominent Thorndike family of Massachusetts. The dates covered in this collection range from the mid-1700s to the late 1800s, with the bulk falling in the mid-1800s. The receipts range from small scraps of paper to itemized page-length records, and pertain to goods and labor of all sorts, for both personal and corporate transactions. Some receipts and correspondence pertain to international commerce, but most are local to the North Shore of Massachusetts.

The receipts in this collection represent everyday personal affairs as well as shipping and trade business transactions. There are a number of legal documents (e.g. deeds, wills) that pertain to estate administration and transactions between family members. The bulk of the collection pertains to three separate individuals named Nicholas Thorndike (see Biographical Sketch for more details) but series are included on Albert, Israel, William, and several others, including business partnerships. Naturally there is some overlap in content between family members, especially with regard to financial, family, and estate documents. See Series List for a complete list of the family members and businesses covered in this collection.

## Series List

This collection is arranged into 26 series:

- Series I: Thorndike, Abigail (Ober), 1711-1796
- Series II: Thorndike, Abigail (Trask), 1739-1795
- Series III: Thorndike, Albert, 1800-1858
  - Subseries I: Personal Papers
  - Subseries II: Endicott & Thorndike (Business)
- Series IV: Thorndike, Albert, 1837-1885
- Series V: Thorndike, Charles, 1795-1833
- Series VI: Thorndike, Edward, 1801-1874
- Series VII: Thorndike, Eleanor (Lovett), 1760-1805
- Series VIII: Thorndike, Elizabeth, 1771-1824 (?)
- Series IX: Thorndike, Freeborn, 1780-1812
- Series X: Thorndike, Henry, 1755-1811
- Series XI: Thorndike, Henry, 1800-1824
- Series XII: Thorndike, Israel, 1755-1832
  - Subseries I: Personal Papers
  - Subseries II: Brown & Thorndike (Business)
- Series XIII: Thorndike, Jeremiah, 1773-1803
- Series XIV: Thorndike, Joanna (Batchelder Lovett), 1803-1874
- Series XV: Thorndike, John H., 1811-1879
- Series XVI: Thorndike, Joshua, 1739-1825
- Series XVII: Thorndike, Larkin, 1786-1857
- Series XVIII: Thorndike, Luke, 1782-1811
- Series XIX: Thorndike, Mehitable (Rea), 1768-1808
- Series XX: Thorndike, Nicholas, 1733-1788 / 1764-1821 / 1789-1819
- Series XXI: Thorndike, Paul, 1698-1738
- Series XXII: Thorndike, Paul, 1706-1750
- Series XXIII: Thorndike, Robert, c. 1696-after 1765
- Series XXIV: Thorndike, Samuel Lothrop, 1829-1911
- Series XXV: Thorndike, William, 1795-1835
- Series XXVI: Miscellany

Container ListSeries I: Thorndike, Abigail (Ober), 1711-1796

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	1	Estate documents	1750-1758

Series II: Thorndike, Abigail (Trask), 1739-1795

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	2	Receipts	1791-1796

Series III: Thorndike, Albert, 1800-1858

## Subseries I. Personal Papers

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	3	Correspondence	1819-1851
1	4	Receipts	c. 1808-1850
1	5	Misc. (insurance documents, memorandum, bills)	1839-1950

## Subseries II. Endicott &amp; Thorndike (Business)

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	6	Receipts and business records	1840s-1850s
1	7	Receipts and business records	1840s-1850s
1	8	Receipts and business records	1853-1856

Series IV. Thorndike, Albert, 1837-1885

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	9	Correspondence and military documents	c. 1851-1862

Series V. Thorndike, Charles, 1795-1833

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	10	Estate documents	1833-1834

Series VI. **Thorndike, Edward, 1801-1874**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	11	Legal records and misc.	c. 1832-1874

Series VII. **Thorndike, Eleanor (Lovett), 1760-1805**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	12	Estate receipt	1806

Series VIII. **Thorndike, Elizabeth, 1771-1824 (?)**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	13	Account current with Robert Rantoul	1812-1815

Series IX. **Thorndike, Freeborn, 1780-1812**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	14	Receipt and correspondence	1799-1804

Series X. **Thorndike, Henry, 1755-1811**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	15	Correspondence, accounts, and misc.	1806-1812

Series XI. **Thorndike, Henry, 1800-1824**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	16	Receipt for newspaper notice of estate	1824

Series XII. **Thorndike, Israel, 1755-1832**

## Subseries I. Personal Papers

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	17	Receipts, invoices, correspondence	1795-1804
1	18	Estate-related documents and will	1827-1842

## Subseries II. Brown &amp; Thorndike (Business)

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	19	Customs document from Guadeloupe and receipt	1790-1793

Series XIII. Thorndike, Jeremiah, 1773-1803

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	20	Estate documents	1803-1804

Series XIV. Thorndike, Joanna (Batchelder Lovett), 1803-1874

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	21	Correspondence	c. 1841-1871

Series XV. Thorndike, John H., 1811-1879

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	22	Correspondence, receipts, and records related to the Bolt, Spike, and Rivet Company	c. 1869-1872
1	23	Letters patent (folded parchment)	1873

Series XVI. Thorndike, Joshua, 1739-1825

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	24	Receipts for sale of land to Isaac Thorndike	1774

Series XVII. Thorndike, Larkin, 1786-1857

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	25	Court document and posthumous letter about Larkin	1829-1889

Series XVIII. Thorndike, Luke, 1782-1811

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	26	Receipts	1806-1807

Series XIX. **Thorndike, Mehitable (Rea), 1768-1808**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	27	Receipts	1797-1801

Series XX. **Thorndike, Nicholas, 1733-1788 / 1764-1821 / 1789-1819**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	28	Receipts, accounts, and contracts (N.T. 1733-1788)	1755-1782/3
1	29	Receipts, accounts, contract, and auction permit	1783-1785
2	1	Receipts and accounts	1786-1788
2	2	Receipts and accounts	1789-1791
2	3	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence (N.T. 1764-1821)	1792-1794
2	4	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence (N.T. 1764-1821)	1795-1797
2	5	Receipts, accounts, correspondence, and shipping permit (N.T. 1764-1821)	1798-1800
2	6	Receipts, accounts, correspondence (N.T. 1764-1821)	1801
2	7	Receipts and accounts (N.T. 1764-1821)	1802
2	8	Receipts and accounts (N.T. 1764-1821)	1803
2	9	Receipts, accounts, correspondence, and custody document	1804
2	10	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1805
2	11	Receipts, accounts, correspondence, custody document, and insurance contract	1806
2	12	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1807
2	13	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1808
2	14	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1809
2	15	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1810
2	16	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1811
2	17	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1812
3	1	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1813-1815
3	2	Receipts, accounts, and correspondence	1816-1818
3	3	Receipts, accounts, and bills	1819-1821
3	4	Undated receipts, accounts, bills, and correspondence	n.d.
3	5	Beverly Bank accounting books labeled A-D	1803-1820

3	6	Ledger of Nicholas and widow Abigail (N.T. 1733-1788)	1788-1790
3	7	Bound ledger (Beverly) and unbound ledger gathering (Calcutta) (N.T. 1764-1821)	1791-1800
3	8	Ledger of Nicholas, as appointed guardian of the Rea minors (N.T. 1764-1821)	1804-1809

Series XXI. **Thorndike, Paul, 1698-1738**

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
3	9	Estate document (2 copies)	1779-1782

Series XXII. **Thorndike, Paul, 1706-1750**

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
3	10	Inventory of estate	1750

Series XXIII. **Thorndike, Robert, c. 1696-after 1765**

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
3	11	Estate document	1761

Series XXIV. **Thorndike, Samuel Lothrop, 1829-1911**

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
3	12	Notebooks and report cards from Beverly Academy, and correspondence	1843-1897

Series XXV. **Thorndike, William, 1795-1835**

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
3	13	Receipts, correspondence, poem, and diary entry	c. 1809-1816
3	14	Unbound gatherings of writings and orations	c. 1818

Series XXVI. Miscellany

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
3	15	Undated and unnamed receipts and booklets	n.d.
3	16	Genealogy notebook labeled "Thorndike Notes"	Late 1800s?

**Bibliography**

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**Keywords/Access Points**

Beverly (Mass.)

Beverly (Mass.)--History

Commerce--History--19th century

Shipping

Thorndike family

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783