

The Filson Historical Society
Speed Family
Papers – Farmington Collection
1816-1961

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, see the
Curator of Special Collections.

Size of Collection:
.33 cubic feet

Locator Number:
Mss./A/S742e

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Biographical Note

The Speed family is one of the oldest and most prominent families in Louisville, Kentucky. Judge John Speed (1772-1840) moved to Kentucky with his family when he was ten years old. His first marriage to Abby Lemaster resulted in two children, Mary and Eliza. After Abby's death, John Speed married Lucy Gilmer Fry in 1808. In 1810, Speed bought land in Jefferson County, Kentucky along Beargrass Creek, which would become a hemp plantation named Farmington. Lucy and John had eleven children: Thomas, Lucy Fry, James, Peachy Walker, Joshua Fry, William Pope, Susan Fry, Philip, John Smith, Martha Bell, and Ann Pope (Ann died in childhood.) The Speed children married prominently, and gained high-standing political connections. Peachy Speed Peay's daughter, Eliza, married Colonel John Hardin Ward, who served with the 27th Kentucky Volunteers during the Civil War. Lucy Fry Speed married James D. Breckinridge, a Congressman from Kentucky. Philip Speed married Emma Keats, niece of the famous author, John Keats. Joshua Fry Speed roomed with Abraham Lincoln as a young man in Springfield, Illinois, and Lincoln became a close family friend. James Speed was a lawyer and politician whom Abraham Lincoln appointed as Attorney General of the United States.

Judge John Speed's brother, Thomas, settled in Bardstown, Kentucky. His son, Thomas Spencer Speed, corresponded regularly with Peachy Speed Peay and other members of the Speed family. Thomas Spencer Speed had three children with his first wife, Sarah Whitney Sparhawk, and five children with his second wife, Margaret Hawkins. He named one son after Peachy Speed's husband, Austin Peay.

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Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of material collected by the Farmington Historic Home in the mid-twentieth century. The collection contains of letters written by and between members of the Speed family, including Judge John Speed, Peachy Speed Peay and Eliza Speed, James Speed, Joshua Fry Speed, Thomas Speed, Eliza Peay Ward, her husband, John H. Ward, and her father-in-law, William T. Ward. Also included is some limited genealogy and biographical information on the Speed and Ward families, deeds for the sale for land owned by John Speed and inherited by his children. Miscellaneous material includes a pamphlet entitled, *Address of Honorable James Speed Before the Society of the Loyal Legion of Cincinnati*, a pamphlet from the memorial for Thomas Speed, a stock certificate for the Louisville and Frankfort Railroad, and a memoir written by Eliza Peay Ward remembering stories told to her by her grandmother, Lucy Gilmer Speed.

Separated material

A book of verses by George M. Davie, originally owned by Thomas Speed, was transferred to The Filson Library. A newspaper article pasted in back of book has been copied and placed in folder 13 with the remainder of the newspaper articles in this collection.

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Folder List

- Folder 1: John Speed Correspondence, 1816-1836
- Folder 2: Joshua Fry Speed Correspondence, 1840-1841
- Folder 3: Eliza Speed Correspondence, 1840-1854
- Folder 4: Peachy Speed Peay and Eliza Peay Ward Correspondence, 1847-1866
- Folder 5: James Speed Correspondence, 1848-1866
- Folder 6: Thomas Speed Correspondence, 1841-1872
- Folder 7: John Hardin Ward Correspondence, 1863-1885
- Folder 8: William T. Ward Correspondence, 1853-1866
- Folder 9: Miscellaneous Correspondence of other Speed family members, 1849-1886
- Folder 10: Correspondence relating to the Farmington Historical Home, 1959-1961
- Folder 11: Legal Papers, 1844-1867
- Folder 12: Newspaper Articles, 1906-1960
- Folder 13: Genealogy and family history of the Speed and Ward families
- Folder 14: Miscellaneous Material, 1853-1906
- Folder 15: Oversize, 1829

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Subject Headings

Bramlette, Thomas E. (Thomas Elliott), 1817-1875
Cholera – Kentucky – Louisville
Courtship
Farmington (Louisville, Ky.)
Grief
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865
Lind, Jenny, 1820-1887
Rousseau, Lovell Harrison, 1818-1869
Slavery – Kentucky
Speed family
Speed, James, 1812-1887
Speed, John, 1772-1840
Speed, Joshua F. (Joshua Fry), 1814-1882
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – African Americans
United States. Army – African American troops
United States. Army. Kentucky Infantry Regiment, 27th (1861-1864)
Ward family
Ward, J.H. (John Hardin), 1835-1908
Ward, William Thomas, 1808-1878
Weddings – Kentucky
Women – Education – Kentucky