

## E. CORNING I. PAPERS

## ARRANGEMENT METHODOLOGY

Selection Criteria used in this arrangement.

Erastus Corning was a man of many activities. His interests included, but were not limited to, banks, iron manufacture, general merchandise, railroads, land companies, insurance companies, whaling, and diverse social activities. His many financial interests included participation in some cases as the president of an operation, other times as a director, and still other times as a minor or major shareholder. Many of these activities are well documented in these papers, while others are obscure.

With so many different activities, it is no surprise that many of the sorts of business are interrelated. In addition, it is often difficult to determine whether Corning was in a given case doing business as a private citizen, or as a representative of some firm. It is not always easy to tell, for example, if in the case of some loan whether he makes it as a private money-lender, or as the president of his bank. or as an influential member of a board of directors of some other institution.

In terms of banking activities, a folder is set up for a given bank if it is evident that Corning had a significant interest in that bank. In particular, the folder is created if Corning held stock in that bank. A given document will go into such a file if, first, the document is primarily concerned with the usual activities of a bank, and second, if it can reasonably be certain that it pertains to the specific bank. Obviously, a letter dated at the Albany City Bank and regarding the loan of some large sum of money does pertain to the bank. A letter from Watts Sherman, the cashier of that bank, is also included unless the contents obviously have little or nothing to do with banking. In the case of the numerous small banks, obviously those in which Corning held stock rate separate folders, those represented merely by letters requesting information on the character of some loan candidate do not, and in the cases of those with which Corning had business but in which he had no stock it depends on the type of business. In some cases, it is obvious that Corning had a great interest in a bank, but there is no indication of the name of the bank; thus it is filed under "misc.". In the future, it may be possible to identify some of these institutions, but at present it is not.

Most of the banks noted in these papers are of New York. Many, especially in the later files, are new institutions founded in other states, notably in Michigan. Chief among these latter is the Michigan Insurance Co., which despite the name was a bank.

There are several institutions of this sort, which can be

difficult; it is not easy to tell what is or is not a bank. If it calls itself a bank, it is considered to be one. Something like the Farmers' Loan and Trust Co., on the other hand, is somewhat more difficult. Definitions used here generally consider a bank to be an institution, which takes deposits for individuals or companies, in addition to making loans and issuing notes. Institutions such as the Farmers' Loan Co. do not appear to have taken deposits, and therefore are not here considered as banks.

Problems arise when papers appear which describe some function, which evidently pertains to banking, mainly regarding loans of money and mortgages. It is not always possible to ascertain whether a given transaction of this sort is carried out by Corning as a private citizen, or as the president of the Albany City Bank, or as some other bank or trust company official. For the purposes of this arrangement, in general if there is nothing in the document, which specifies that it has to do with the bank, it is presumed to be personal or private business, and filed under the heading of "general business". Undoubtedly there is a good deal of material in those folders, which relates to one or more of the banks, but since there is nothing in such papers to specify this, they are filed among the "general business" papers. Along with these are filed papers, which obviously relate to personal loans, particularly those concerning small loans, with or without interest, to individuals asking for relief. These loans are typically of a few dollars up to twenty-five dollars, and obviously have nothing to do with any bank.

Corning conducted a great deal of business on his own, as well as a banker, or as partner in the firm of Erastus Corning and Co., under its various names. One reason for filing such uncertain papers under the heading of "general business" rather than assuming some banking connection is the possibility of some of them being related to the mercantile or iron business. It may eventually be possible to separate all the different loans, mortgages, notes, and the like; at present it is not possible.

Corning was also well known as a merchant and manufacturer. His business included various lines of goods, especially hardware. His lines of goods included much more than merely ironmongery, however. His plants in Troy produced all sorts of ironwork, especially railroad iron (rails, spikes, and other items). One or other of the units of the Corning enterprises also imported a great deal of iron products, especially raw iron from England and Sweden. It is not entirely certain to which unit any of this material pertains. Obviously, the spike manufacturing process was carried on for the most part by the Albany Nail Factory, owned by E. Corning and Co. The import business is not quite so clear-cut. It is often difficult to tell exactly what sort of merchandise is under discussion in a given paper. Therefore in this arrangement all papers relating to the various enterprises involving manufacture and sale of goods are filed under the various names of the firm. The names include Corning and Norton, Corning and Horner, and of course Erastus Corning and Co. It is easy to separate the names of the firm,

since they are strictly chronological; but the various divisions are too closely interconnected to completely separate. In many ways the Iron Works was at least partially independent, but in many if not most cases it is difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins. Therefore the two firms are both filed chronologically under E. Corning and Co., with the partial exception of the railroad business. Some of that business is obvious, and it is filed separately.

Another problem with filing merchandise-related documents is that it is difficult to tell where business ends and personal purchases begin. It may be that small quantities of, say, wine or silver plate were ordered for personal use. The problem is that the records of such transactions are limited to bills presented by the non-local sellers, and they do not tell anything about whether the items are small stocks of some luxury goods to be kept on hand in the store, or something for personal use, or something ordered by a customer, or something designed for the use of some politicians. Thus these items, unless the papers state plainly that they are sold for personal use, are filed under the affairs of E. Corning and Co.

Another area in which confusion is possible is in the business of land companies and other real estate. Corning's interests in such companies and lands were vast, or at least widely distributed. Through foreclosures of mortgages, he acquired a good deal of land in his own name and that of his company. He also purchased a considerable amount of acreage. In addition to this, Corning had large interests in a number of land companies, both within New York and outside of its borders. The American Land Co. was just one of these interests. Corning was involved in a number of operations of this sort, both formal and informal, both which made money and which did not. In New York alone, besides the aptly-named Corning Company, which was responsible for improving and selling lots in the site at Corning, there were others: one at Auburn, another at Irving, and one near Catskill which caused a great deal of trouble. There were numerous land companies, both formal and informal, both land speculations purely as well as lands bought for other purposes, outside the state as well.

The selection criteria involve separating the real estate papers into three main groups: individual transactions of miscellaneous lots, to be filed under "real estate"; known land company business, filed under the name of the company if known, and those records of land speculations where the name of the company is not known or where the company is informal, which are filed under "misc. land companies". The former are straightforward, but it must be noted that sales of individual lots in villages such as Corning are filed with their specific companies rather than here. The named land companies are filed as the individual companies, whether American Land Co., Corning Co., Irving Co., or such land deals as the Port Huron lands, which are not apparently connected with anything else. The last category involves those land ventures, which are uncertain, notably those referred to as the New York Land Co. but which never appears as such in the documents, or the land venture in or

around Catskill, which appears to have been somewhat dubious. Much of the papers in the "misc." files no doubt have to do with the former company. Such lands as coal lands are generally filed under the various companies to which they pertain, notably the Blossburg/Arbon Coal Co. since these lands were not purchases as land speculations as such, but rather as land to be developed. One problem with separating out the papers of the New York Land Co. from other uncertain concerns is that the same investors (such as Delevan and Barney) were also involved in such firms as the Fox and Wisconsin Improvement Co. or the Michigan Improvement Co. which, although they were mainly later than this arrangement covers, are difficult to distinguish from papers relating to the New York co. when they do appear. Thus, to avoid excessive confusion, they are all filed as "misc. land companies". There are still possible sources of confusion, however. Many lots were sold individually to buyers, and it is not always easy to determine whether a lot was sold as part of a land company's sales, or by Corning personally, or by some bank, or whatever. In some cases, notably that of the Irving Company, the company collapsed, and Corning ended up with a more direct interest than he had had before. Thus there is confusion. For the purposes of this arrangement, individual lot sales are considered to be related to a land company if: they are out of the state of New York; if they are of lands in a place in New York where the major sales are by a land company; or if the sales involve numerous lots at once. Isolated sales for other than railroad purposes, which are in New York, and which are not of land in or near a land-company parcel, are considered "real estate".

The papers include numerous other sorts of business as well. Corning had many different sorts of small investments in all sorts of firms. Insurance companies were the most important; they are listed as individual firms unless the firm is difficult to determine. Such other ventures as plank roads, canals, steamboat lines, water or gas works, and the like, are specifically filed by firm or not depending on their importance. Other operations appear among personal papers or social activities, depending on the type of activity, for which see below.

The most important of the investments, which Corning made, were of course the railroads. The papers contain a wealth of useful information about the setup and operation of some of the nation's first railroads, in which Corning was involved since the early 1830s. Corning was the president, first of the Utica and Schenectady, then of the New York Central, from the 1830s to 1864, and the correspondence fills many boxes.

Because of the importance of these papers, the railroad papers are filed as specifically as possible. Any railroad, which is specifically noted in a document, is filed under that name, unless it is one of a number quoted in a report of stock prices. Thus there are a very large number of folders with very few papers. The primary exception to this rule consists of the papers relating to the so-called "Central Lines", those roads that were consolidated in 1853 to form the New York Central. Up to 1842 they are listed separately, as their business could

easily be distinguished. After that, their businesses became intertwined, and therefore their papers are filed in the same files. There are general files as well; there is considerable business, which may relate to the Utica and Schenectady (filed separately until 1853), which has connection with that road only because it was sent to the president thereof. This material includes notices and circulars relating to technical improvements in carriage suspension and wheels, for example. This sort of paper relates to railroads in general rather than any railroad in particular, and thus it is filed under the heading of "railroads in general".

The papers of the New York Central are generally straightforward. They are mainly filed in chronological order. In a few cases, there are activities, which are sufficiently important to warrant separate filing, within the same boxes. These activities are, specifically, three: requests for employment; requests and other correspondence relating to the issuance of passes (usually free of charge, but occasionally reduced price), and papers relating to the "proxy fight" of Nov. and Dec. 1863, which had little to do with the general business of the railroad. These are, however, of considerable importance for the understanding of the activities both of the railroad and of Corning himself, and their volume is sufficient to indicate that they ought to be separated.

The consolidation, as opposed to the operation of the railroads themselves, is separated into one box. The roads themselves are placed in another, with the exception of the U. & S., which because of its importance and volume is separated into 5 boxes arranged chronologically. The Michigan Central is sufficiently voluminous to fill two boxes. The New York Central papers fill 8. The rest of the railroad papers fill the other boxes with miscellaneous folders.

General business, specifically those papers which cannot be definitely assigned to any other files, fill five boxes. The papers in these boxes are those, which cannot be definitely assigned to any other files. The papers consist of all sorts of items, such as receipts for uncertain payments, documents relating to uncertain loans, notices of protestation of notes, which Corning had endorsed, appeals for aid by various parties, and similar documents. Many of these documents are completely unclassifiable as they are now, whereas others simply cannot be assigned specifically. These folders are a sort of "catch-all" for miscellaneous papers, of which there are many.

Related to these papers are those documents relating to stock investments, which cannot be specifically assigned. There are many letters involving meetings of shareholders and dividends paid or subscriptions due which do not give the name of the company involved. There are also many, which involve offers to buy or sell uncertain stock. These are all filed under "misc. stock companies".

The remainder consists of material, which is personal, political, or social. Corning was a prominent Democratic politician, and his papers relate to the many offices, which he filled. The political papers include numerous letters from

persons requesting influence and references in their attempts to obtain some public position, whether as functionaries in the state legislature, or as inspectors, or as canal commissioners, or whatever. When the position is a public one, the papers regarding it are filed under "political activities"; when the position wanted is not, it is filed under the heading of the appropriate business.

Personal business involves certain sorts of activities, which obviously cannot be classified as business, as well as a few which can. Corning often was called upon to make loans of money to members of his family (the term "family" included many rather distant relations). These requests are filed as "family business", along with related items. Those papers filed as "personal" consist mainly of letters from family and friends, which have nothing to do with financial matters; some are letters addressed to Mrs. Corning from relatives. Also included are letters relating to schooling for Erastus Jr. and other relatives, which are obviously nothing like banking papers and the like.

Also filed as "personal", as far as the box is concerned, is a folder of documents relating to the farm business. Corning was a farmer as well, with an interest in livestock breeding, and his farm business is sufficient to warrant a separate folder.

Social activities are somewhat more complicated. Corning was involved in a number of organizations and social activities, as well as business. Many of these activities involved business, but the sort of business was social and philanthropic, not the sort designed to make profits. Social activities include such things as temperance societies, aid and assistance to the Indians of Stockbridge, meetings of the State University Board of Regents, various art galleries, and the like, as well as numerous social dinners and what not. Where the activity is known and specific, or where the activity is likely to be of interest even if not well defined, it is filed separately; where this is not the case, the correspondence is filed as "social activities".

#### **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE - DRAFT**

The papers in this collection consist mainly of correspondence. What of these papers is not correspondence consists mainly of enclosures originally included in letters. As is the case with most collections of this sort, the collection is only half complete: with very rare exceptions, none of Corning's replies are preserved; these letters are those received by Corning, not those sent by him.

Albany City Bank, 1834-52, 4 folders.  
1834.

This folder describes the routine operations of the bank (specifically, its financial transactions. It was the business

of a bank to take deposits and invest the money, especially in mortgage and other loans with interest. Much of the routine business involves the collecting of debts, the issuance of stock and payment of dividends, and the investigation of potential debtors. Additionally, there are found such obsolete activities as the issuance and circulation of bank-notes and the "discounting" of private paper, and related activities) and in particular Corning's involvement in it, from its beginnings to the end of 1834. The bank was officially chartered on 30th April 1834, and most of the letters are dated after that date. Most of the papers appear to be correspondence relating to requests for stock, or requests for employment in various offices, although some are letters concerning standard banking practices such as those requesting information concerning interest rates. Most of the papers appear to date to after the charter was obtained; the earliest appears to be dated 28 April. Corning was one of the original commissioners of the bank, before it was chartered, and was elected as its first president.

1835-40.

This folder describes the general activities of the bank for the next six years after its first. Most of the papers relate to general activities, such as obtaining accounts from other banks for their non-local business, the production of bank-notes, and the usual transactions. There are also many letters relating to state banking affairs and commissions, and inter-bank arrangements and meetings.

1841-7.

This folder continues the last through 1847. The topics are mainly the same as the previous, namely general banking business, but with a few other items as well. The cashier, Watts Sherman, reported all sorts of things, such as cases of forgery (15 Oct. 1845). Occasionally, someone sends a statement of account giving an idea of assets, such as the letter from H. S. Lansing (30 Aug. 1847) showing a combined balance of \$377,000 on two other banks in the bank's name. The letters also describe some of the investments, such as \$100,000 in Treasury notes purchased in Aug. 1847. The letters contain more ominous items as well, such as those, which notify Corning of the failure of important businesses. Unfortunately, most papers relating to affairs in 1845 and early 1846 are missing.

1848-52.

This folder continues the last through 1852. These letters describe mainly the usual banking business. In addition, during this period Corning was using the bank as a source of capital for his other ventures as well, in particular the railroads, as well as his general banking facility; there are many letters, which include information on loans for this purpose. During this period, Sherman left to join a private banking firm, and was replaced by Martin.

Banks in general, 1832-52.

This folder contains material which relates to such topics as bank conventions, bank examiners, the reactions of bankers in general to changes in the laws, and requests for employment in some bank or banks not specified (when the writer cared little about which bank they went to work in). Also included are such papers as letters concerning the purchase of bank stock in general, and newspaper or magazine articles demanding changes in the banking system. Most of these latter resulted from panics, in particular that of 1837.

Misc. Banks, 1831-52. 3 folders.

1831-33.

The contents of this series of folders consists largely of papers referring to some bank or other, which is not specified. Thus we find statements such as: "... last call on seventy shares in your bank..." (8 Sept. 1831). Corning owned a lot of shares in a lot of banks, and had business with many others. There are also numerous petitions relating to the establishment of banks in certain places, some of which were successful, while others were not. In this folder, most of the entries are of these two main types.

1834-9.

The material in this folder is much the same as that in the previous. Many of the items are concerned with proposed banking charters, or activities to do with business of "the bank" or similar uncertain companies. Corning in this period was continuing to invest in various banks, and there are several notes of stock transactions.

1840-52.

In this folder, there are fewer items concerning stock transactions. These items generally refer to banking business, either by "the bank" or other unhelpful title, or else they refer to some bank with which Corning had little to do, e. g. the Canal Bank of Lockport, which failed in 1846, noted in a letter dated 20 June.

Oliver Lee & Co.'s Bank, 1844-52.

1844-51.

This bank, originally a private banking firm, was chartered as a public bank in 1844. Despite being essentially the creation of Lee, Corning and Sherman held control: "Mr. Corning and yourself (i. e., Sherman), being a majority of the Stockholders of Oliver Lee & Co's Bank ..." (1 Feb. 1844). These letters contain information regarding the incorporation of the bank, as well as much of its routine business. Lee died in July 1846, but the bank continued in operation, paying dividends on its stock regularly.

1852.

In this year, the bank continued business as usual. The papers consist of the usual correspondence regarding bank operations, along with letters concerning stock dividends and the like.

Michigan Insurance Bank, 1843-51.

1843-51.

The Michigan Insurance Co. was chartered as an insurance co. in 1834. Its charter was amended in 1843 to allow it to conduct banking business. Corning had dealings with the bank as early as 1843, but appears to have purchased his first stock in it in 1844, when 913 shares were offered to him (28 Dec. 1844). This bank was much used by Corning in his dealings with the Michigan Central Railroad; its cashier, H. Walker, often writes about the affairs of the road. Included in this folder is what appears to be a typical form for the purchase by Corning of stock in another's name, specifically M. I. Bank stock in the name of Walker (undated, Aug. 1846, for 834 shares).

1852.

The folder contains papers relative to banking affairs such as railroad investments and real-estate deals, among other things.

Duncan, Sherman, & Co., 1851-2.

Watts Sherman, originally cashier of the Herkimer County Bank, then Corning's trusted agent in the Albany City Bank, left the latter to become a partner in a private banking house in 1851. A circular, dated 13 August, describes the sort of business transacted by this sort of firm. This firm acted as agents for Corning in many transactions.

Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank, Detroit, 1836-51.

Corning bought 200 shares of stock in this bank in 1836, but seems to have had little to do with it for several years thereafter. The bank failed in 1845, but was reorganized the same year and reopened. This reopened bank had its charter renewed in 1848. Its affairs, as far as these papers go, were intimately bound up with those of the Michigan Insurance Bank. The letters are concerned with the general operation of the bank, its failure and rechartering, and its routine financial operations.

Chatauqua County Bank, 1831-6.

This is one of the earlier banking investments made by Corning, as well as some of his earliest dealings with Oliver Lee (3 Nov. 1831). By the end of 1831, Corning had 70 shares in the bank, and 140 as of January (there is a statement of shareholders as of then in this folder). The information about this bank is very detailed: on 14 March, for example, the bank had \$109,031 in bank-notes in circulation. Corning continued to buy stock in this bank in 1832 (another 95 shares in July, for example),

making 254 shares as of 1 August, paying \$762 in dividends that day. There are statements of the affairs of the bank as well (e. g. one dated 1 Feb. 1833, and another of 1 Dec. 1833). By 1835, however, Corning appears to have taken little further interest in the affairs of this bank, although it continued in operation well after 1850.

Box 3: Assorted banks.

Most of the banks filed in these folders are institutions in which Corning had some small interest. Most of these folders contain little of interest, with the following exceptions:

New York State Bank, 1833-52.

This bank, in which Corning was a stockholder, was reorganized in 1850, and the new stock distributed. Several papers exist in the folder describing the operation of the stock redistribution.

Cayuga County Bank, 1833-49.

This bank was located in Auburn, where Corning was to have an interest in land development. The papers include statements of the financial standing of the bank (e. g. \$206,980 in bank-notes circulating as of 19 July 1834), as well as the usual banking business.

Herkimer County Bank, 1833-6.

Watts Sherman, later Corning's man at the Albany City bank, was originally cashier at this bank. The papers include a complete statement of important accounts for 1833, as well as the usual business.

Salina Bank, 1832-5.

This bank was organized in 1832, and these papers consist largely of documents relative to stock subscriptions and other organizational matters.

Box 4: Assorted banks.

As in the case of the previous box, most of the folders contain little of importance, with the following exceptions:

Bank of Genesee, 1829-35.

These documents are of interest because of their dates, among other things. The bank organized itself in 1829, and Corning was sufficiently important in it to receive letters such as one concerning samples of bank-notes sent to Corning for examination (23 Dec. 1829).

Detroit Bank, 1835

It is uncertain what this bank is, but it is likely to be the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank, before it had been organized and chartered.

"Bank of Erastus Corning", 1851.

This folder contains two letters regarding the founding of a bank in Westfield, to be known as the "Bank of Erastus Corning, Albany", hoping thereby to attract Corning's patronage. Corning decided not to cooperate with this venture.

Box 5: Insurance and related business.

Farmers' Loan and Trust Co., 1835-52.

This firm was originally incorporated as the "Farmers Fire Insurance and Loan Company", and founded in 1833. Corning initially bought stock in it in its expansion of 1835. Corning appears to have speculated initially; much of the earlier letters involve buying and selling the stock rather than the affairs of the company. Later papers, on the other hand, deal mainly with the business of the company, which provided funds for some of Corning's business.

Other files: various insurance companies, with which Corning was connected, either as a stockholder, or policyholder, or both. Most files contain little of interest, with the following exceptions:

Southern Life Insurance and Trust Co., 1836-44.

This firm was based in Tallahassee, Fla., and as such is an early Florida business concern. Corning was involved as a shareholder.

Box 6: Assorted business enterprises.

Blossburg/Arbon Coal Company: 1836-48 (4 folders).

Corning had interests in coal lands in Pennsylvania from the 1830s. The coal thus mined was eventually to be transported to the village of Corning via rail, and distributed from there. The mines were mainly located in the area of Blossburg, but the land was originally property of the Arbon Land Co. The first folder contains various sorts of items, including statements concerning excavations, statements of account, and a map of the coalfields and the railroads serving them. Much of the coal from the company went to feed the fires at the Albany Iron Works; the second folder is largely concerned with the arrangements. The latter also includes a list of employees at the coalfield, and their accounts, as of 1 March 1842.

Most of the other folders are of little interest, with the following exceptions:

Steam Boats, 1836-52.

Corning used water transport as an integral part of his transportation network. He preferred, when possible, to ship goods by the Hudson River rather than by parallel railroads, for example. Corning had considerable interest in boat lines. The folder contains much of interest, including a description of all steamboats on Lake Erie in 1848, with comments: e. g. "Has been

burned, sunk, & broke her engine in pieces" (the "New Orleans"), as well as correspondent regarding the operation of boats connecting the Michigan and New York Central Railroads.

Plank Roads, 1849-52.

Plank roads, roads paved with planks for the convenience of travelers who paid tolls to use them, were a popular investment in this period. Corning had some minor interest in some few of them. Most of the roads noted in this folder were local, in particular in Schenectady or around Albany.

Emigrant Business, 1844-52.

Corning, as a controller of transportation, was involved in the business of transporting immigrants from their port of arrival to points west. This was generally done in such a manner as to allow large numbers to travel cheaply, on the railroads or boats. The passengers typically traveled in groups of 20-80, as a statement for 1847 shows. There was money to be made, and competition could be fierce: one correspondent complains of being assaulted by thugs who resented his competition (3 May 1848).

Clyde Glass Works, 1849-50.

The three letters in this folder involve the expansion of the firm, setting up a factory in Corning.

Loans: City of Detroit, 1850.

Corning and some of his associates loaned money to, by purchasing bonds from, the city of Detroit in 1850. The folder contains, among other things, a statement of the finances of that city,

Wynants Kill, 1846.

As waterpower was important to the operation of machinery in Troy, various parties including Corning's firm attempted to improve their ability to obtain energy from it.

Expeditions to California, 1848-52.

The gold rush had its impact in Albany as well as elsewhere. Corning desired to get in on this. The folder includes papers relating to someone to serve as an agent there, and others are related to various persons needing money to go. One of the latter was a nephew of Mrs. Corning, Y. C. Weld. Of particular interest is the letter from J. Bell (21 Jan. 1851) describing his activities there, first as an unlucky or unsuccessful miner, and later as someone down on his luck in San Francisco.

Box 7. Assorted investments.

This box contains folders for many assorted stock firms, as

well as papers of other companies. Some of the papers are in miscellaneous folders. There is little of interest in these papers; however, the following should be noted:

Mount Savage Iron Works, 1847-52.

Corning held 550 shares of stock in this firm in Maryland, as of June 1848. It seems to have been closely associated to the firm in Troy; Corning's man Winslow was installed as its president.

Camman and Whitehouse, 1849-52.

Corning bought many bonds, as well as some stock, through this firm. The papers include two circulars noting stock quotes, as well as the usual brokerage business.

Box 8. Land companies.

American Land Co., 1835-52.

Corning had large interests in land speculation and land companies. The most important of these was the American Land Co. The firm was organized in 1834/5, mainly to purchase Indian lands and resell them to settlers. Corning was a trustee of this company, as well as a shareholder, being responsible for 2/32 of the company's debts (24 July 1838). Most of the early correspondence is in relation to various meetings. The lands were scattered all over the country, from New York to Georgia and west to Illinois and Michigan.

Later papers include considerable detail about the operation of the company. Land was examined by agents and bought at auction (10 Oct. 1844); agents were appointed for various places (19 June 1845).

Misc. land companies.

These are papers relating to land purchases, mainly by corporations, which are not apparently attributable to specifically named corporations. They include the North American Land Co. never specifically named, the "Half Breed Land Co.", and various smaller concerns.

Box 9. Various land speculations.

The important folders are:

Corning, village and company, 1836-52.

The village of Corning, officially named Painted Post up to 1848, was an important land speculation. Despite the official name, the company referred to the place as "Corning" at least from 1836. The activities of the company helped to develop the place from a neglected village to a thriving settlement by encouraging industries and settlement, as well as by building railroads to places like Blossburg. These papers describe the

activities of the company in some detail.

Auburn Lands, 1844-52.

In Auburn, Corning had a good deal to do with the running of the operation. Thus many of the letters in this folder are concerned with getting Corning to draw up deeds to particular plots of land. The property in Auburn was also near the lines of the Auburn railroads.

Irving lands, 1845-52.

In Irving, Corning was less successful than in other ventures. As in the last case, much of the correspondence is involved with the production of deeds to land purchased by the lot.

Real Estate, 1831-52.

Corning, in his many businesses, loaned out money secured by land as collateral. As some of the debts were unpaid, Corning had often to deal with foreclosures and tax sales of real property. Many of the papers are writs of foreclosure, and similar legal documents, as well as the occasional deed. Corning also bought land at various auction sales, and often sold it again quickly, and much of this is described in some of the papers in the later folders.

Box 10. Misc. railroads.

Corning, as a railroad investor and as the president of the Utica and Schenectady road, had dealings with numerous railroads. This box contains papers regarding many, but most of the papers are unimportant. The following are noteworthy:

Saratoga and Schenectady, 1832-45.

Corning was a director of this railroad. There are papers relating mainly to the stock of the company in this folder.

Saratoga and Washington, 1834-42.

Corning was a director, with 200 shares of stock, in this railroad (1 Sept. 1855). The papers in this folder relate mainly to stock transactions and meetings.

Troy and Ballston, 1833.

The folder contains one letter, noting that this road forfeited their charter since the railroad had not done anything to organize itself.

Box 11. Misc. railroads.

The only railroad of importance in this box is the Great Western, of Canada.

This railroad has left much evidence in two folders. The papers are mostly concerned with financing the project through stock purchases by various individuals and companies. The papers, covering 1850-2, tell little or nothing about the operation of the road, but rather describe attempts to raise the capital for it.

J. M. Forbes, railroad business, 1851-2.

Forbes, a Boston financier, was involved in many of the same projects as Corning, and the western railroads in particular. There is considerable correspondence between the two. The primary topics of interest were the Michigan Central and the Great Western railroads.

Boxes 12 and 13. Michigan Central Railroad, 1842-58.

Corning's first business with this railroad was as supplier of iron to the Board of Internal Improvements, up to 1846. For the earlier part of 1846, the papers are mainly concerned with the financing of the purchase of the railroad by the consortium of which Corning was a member. Other items include a series of letters involving the purchase of land for a station in Detroit, in Dec. 1846. Later papers continue mainly financial, but there are other topics as well, such as relations with competition, and connecting lines, passenger agents and service, land purchases, and the like. There are some papers relating to the steamboat lines as well, as the railroad and lakes Erie and Michigan boat lines were intimately related. Thus we find such items as a schedule of fares on the lake boats for 1849, among others. One curious set of papers concerns an attempt by one A. S. Nichols in 1850 to claim a reward due for apprehending persons obstructing the track: the culprit was caught, but jumped bail, and thus escaped conviction. There exists a list of problems (19 April 1855), which notes: cattle killed, accidents, and baggage handlers who took "savagely delight in flinging packages violently about boats or cars". Further folders contain papers such as a general account of the finances of the company as of 1 Dec. 1856.

Corning appears to have also had interests in the road's main competitor, the Michigan Southern; a letter (31 Mar. 1858) complains that the N.Y. Central was a routing goods there rather than via the Michigan Central, among other things.

Separate folders exist for papers relating to the activities of Joy and Forbes with regard to the railroad.

Box 14. Hudson River Railroad, 1842-55,

Corning held stock in this railroad for many years, but in general preferred to ship goods from Albany to New York by steamboats. The papers include a letter regarding the original survey of the route in 1842, and others concerning attempts to get such a road chartered, done finally in 1846. After the

railroad was completed, one important question was that of the best means of crossing the river. This could either be done by means of a bridge or a tunnel, both of which are discussed at length in papers of 1851. Also of note is a map of proposals for track and terminals in Albany, for this road.

Box 15. "Central Lines": 1831-53.

This box contains papers of all of the railroads, with the exception of the Utica and Schenectady, which were merged to form the New York Central. As it was, the idea of a railroad from Albany to Buffalo was already evident in 1831 (letter of 20 Oct.), when an attempt was made to obtain support for the purpose of chartering a road between those points. Corning was elected as director in 1833 (letter of 4 April). Other papers include notices of difficulties with turnpike companies and canals, and with the Albany Common Council.

Other folders contain correspondence relating to the formation of the other railroads. After around 1842, the affairs of the railroads became so interconnected that it becomes difficult to separate them, and thus they are filed as "Central Lines", up to the merger of 1853.

Boxes 16-19: Utica and Schenectady, 1833-53.

This railroad, organized in 1833, was the one most associated with Corning. The first papers appear in July 1833; by 20 July Corning was already listed as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners. By August, Corning was receiving notice of all sorts of details of operation, down to what sort of wood was being used for cross ties (24 Aug.). Other correspondence relates to such topics as possible damages payable for loss of value of property caused by track built on land owned by someone (2 Dec. 1833), or the technical details of strap-rails (29 Apr. 1834), correspondence relating to the attempts by the railroad to petition for a change in the law prohibiting the road from carrying freight in competition with the Erie Canal (25 Jan. 1837 et. al.), or acts of vandalism (1 Apr. 1838), or complaints by the Post Office Department about persons "in the habit of carrying and delivering letters along the line" (28 Feb. 1838), and similar details. Other details include a list of the salaries paid to the officers, from the general superintendent down to the locomotive firemen (at \$1 per day as of 4 Sept. 1840); there were 8 engine drivers and 12 firemen in employment, and a large number of letters requesting some sort of employment on the road. Much of the later correspondence, both on this road and the Central, consists of requests for employment or letters in relation to free or reduced-price tickets.

Box 20. New York Central Consolidation, 1843-50.

The consolidation of the railroads grew out of operating arrangements first proposed in 1842. These arrangements gradually developed into a full-fledged merger in 1853. These

papers are those of the various railroads relative to the consolidation; those papers in general relating thus, especially in that period when the railroad was considered to be consolidated in fact, if not officially, are found in the following box.

Boxes 21-28. New York Central, 1848-72.

The papers relating to this railroad consist of various sorts of correspondence. Most of the letters are concerned with the management of the road, and its major financial matters. There is in addition a considerable amount of information about the technical aspects as well; the letters include circulars from manufacturers, both of track parts and rolling stock, as well as reports from engineers or summaries of such reports. Many of the letters relate to board meetings, and the arrangement of financing, as well as stock transactions, notably votes for directors and attempts to gain stock proxies.

Many of the letters found here are from persons writing about some problem, which they expected that Corning, as president of the railroad, could solve. There are letters from employees complaining about their supervisors, persons seeking jobs, others seeking promotions, and others claiming that they had been unjustly fired. Also common are letters from employees seeking rises in salary.

Other matters include reports of fires involving railroad property, accidents, and legal matters such as suits for damages with regard to livestock killed or passengers injured.

Routine railroad matters noted in the letters include summary statements of revenues, scheduling of trains, operating procedures (e. g., the circular of 16 Nov. 1857 regarding the marking of certain trains with white flags or green lights), and rates of fares; these latter often involved setting rates in conjunction with other railroads. Also of note are letters to do with the carrying of mail, the operation of the road with regard to the operations of the Civil War, and the "proxy fight" of Nov.-Dec. 1863, in which Corning and associates defeated an attempt by others to take control. The letters occasionally enclose ephemera, such as newspaper clippings, expired tickets, and handbills (the latter notably connected with a letter of 19 June 1856).

Box 29. Misc. railroad correspondence.

The correspondence in this box relates either to railroads in general, or to some unspecified road or roads. Most of the letters relate to financial matters, or the buying or selling of iron, either for use or as scrap, or the buying and selling of various stocks. One item of note in this series of files is a letter from W. H. Brown, silhouette artist, regarding the reprinting of his silhouette of the first run of the engine "DeWitt Clinton" in 1830 (Oct.-Nov. 1859).

Some boxes and folders contain detailed listings of the papers contained therein; these are clipped to their respective

folders.

Box 30. Political activities.

To be filed with the other files of this sort of correspondence.

Box 31. Misc. activities.

These letters consist of correspondence on a variety of subjects. The activities involved causes in which Corning either was involved, or his involvement was desired. Most are minor. The following are notable: letters notifying Corning of art exhibits in Albany; meetings of the officers of the Albany Gallery of Fine Arts; notice by W. C. Young that he was going to work on the railroad in Panama; petitions for help from the Indians in Stockbridge; notices of activities of various temperance societies and lecturers; meetings of the State Board of Regents; a case involving a man accused of forging drafts in Buffalo on 1836; and various letters relating to various sorts of construction and architecture, some with details of construction (e. g. the filtering cistern, described in a letter of 17 July 1834). Misc. social activities include a notice about the Albany Institute (18 Dec. 1851), and letters relating to fairs and hospitals. Artistic papers include a letter from Lydia Frazer (16 Dec. 1852) regarding a subscription for a sculptured bust, and notice of an "Art Lottery" in a letter dated 24 Sept. 1841. In the Temperance Unions file is a request for Corning to provide a daguerreotype portrait of himself for advertising purposes.

Boxes 32-4. Corning and Norton/ Corning and Horner/ E. Corning & Co., 1827-52.

Most of the correspondence in these files is concerned with the routine running of the various branches of the business. The letters are concerning such topics as the purchasing of both raw materials and finished goods, attempts at collecting delinquent accounts, the management of the Nail Factory, the partnership agreements, new product specifications (e. g. cast-iron stoves or new brands of axes); the usual requests for situations; and some letters complaining about the working conditions in the business.

Also of interest are various letters which are concerned with lawsuits from Burden, the Nail Factory's competitor, because of alleged patent infringements, and a lawsuit brought by Heartt over the settlement of Benjamin Smith's business affairs following the latter's death.

Boxes 35-40: General business, 1827-52.

The majority of these papers are letters relating to routine business transactions, specifically loans by or to Corning, or payments relating to such loans. In addition, there are more interesting items, such as a letter from C. McCormack requesting aid in relation to getting his reaper patented in England (1849),

or a letter of introduction to Corning for Audoubon (24 June 1844); or notice of a libel action in relation to the Albany Morning Express and the "anti-rent difficulties" (1852), and the arrangements involved with Corning's trip to England in 1840-1; most of the papers involved are letters of introduction or assorted financial arrangements. Also of note is a series of letters in 1834, showing how Corning was in financial difficulties; his firm was for a while rumored to have failed by stopping payment on its debts.

Box 41. Personal.

These papers are to be integrated into the other personal material.

Some of these papers are relating to farm business. Some have to do with the routine maintenance of the farm, while others deal with the importation either of trees or livestock. Others involve the selling of cattle, or the progress of breeds of cattle in shows, or the advantages and disadvantages of the varieties.

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- 6 Family loans and business, 1831-52.
- 7 Farm business, 1827-52.
- 8 Strays.

8/3/90 - David Sorenson