

# **Ernest Hebert Papers**

## **MS.104**

**Finding aid prepared by Taelour Cornett**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

January 24, 2022

College Archives & Special Collections / Wallace E. Mason Library / Keene State College  
2019  
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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	College Archives & Special Collections / Wallace E. Mason Library / Keene State College
<b>Creator - Author</b>	Hebert, Ernie
<b>Title</b>	Ernest Hebert Papers
<b>Date</b>	1992, 1998-2018
<b>Extent</b>	1.5 Linear feet 1 Record Carton
<b>Language</b>	English

## Biographical/Historical note

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Ernest Hebert was born in Keene, New Hampshire, on May 4th, 1941. He attended Keene State College in the late 1960s, which is where he met Medora Lavoie, whom he married on March 22, 1969. After graduating with his bachelor's degree, Hebert was accepted into Stanford University to study creative writing with a concentration in poetry. However, he soon found that his passion was not in poetry and turned his focus instead toward fiction writing. Although Hebert learned a great deal during his time at Stanford, he realized before finishing his program that graduate school wasn't for him and instead left to return home to New Hampshire so that his wife could finish college.

Once he returned to New Hampshire, Hebert worked at a gas station for several years before being hired as a reporter with The Keene Sentinel Newspaper. He also worked for several other newspapers during this time period including Business NH Magazine, the New Hampshire Times, and The Boston Globe.

Several years later in 1979, Hebert published *The Dogs of March*. This novel marked the beginning of Hebert's well known seven-book series, *The Darby Series*. Although the protagonist of the first book was a man named Howard Elman, Hebert decided quickly that the focus of the series was to be more on the fictional town of Darby, New Hampshire, and the lives of all the people who lived there rather than a single person. A major focal point of the novels was the differences in economic class within Darby. The series has spanned 7 novels so far, and Hebert has said that the series will never be complete in much the same way that towns are never complete. The most recent entry in the series is *Howard Elman's Farewell*, which was published in 2014.

Hebert worked as a creative writing professor at Dartmouth College for more than 25 years before retiring. He has also been awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Keene State College and received the Sara Josepha Hale Award for Literary Achievement.

In addition to his other achievements, Hebert has written several stand-alone novels, the most recent of which was in 2017 with *The Contrarian Voice: And Other Poems*. Currently, Ernest Hebert is the first member of faculty at Dartmouth College to be tenured as a fiction writer.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The Ernest Hebert Papers consists of 9 series pertaining to Ernest Hebert's career as a writer. There is 1.5 feet of archival material within the collection. The items within this collection span the most recent years of Hebert's writing career. For those interested in accessing materials related to his earlier career, Dartmouth College houses a collection of Hebert's older writings.

The first series within this collection is correspondence. The only item in this series is a letter from the writer addressed to Tom Sleigh.

The second series is a collection of manuscripts from Hebert's most recent works. There are ten sub series, each consisting of a different manuscript's drafts as well as critiques from editors and other writers. Sub series 1 is comprised of two drafted versions of *Darby and the Quest for Common Ground*. The second sub series consists of several drafts of *One Way to Write a Novel*. Sub series 3 is four versions of *The Contrarian Voice and Other Poems*, each varying in length and content- several items within this sub series consist of an almost completed version of the manuscript while others are only a single page. Also included within this sub series is a critique of the work by Terry Pindell.

The fourth item in the series is a draft of the manuscript *Recycling Reality*. The fifth item within the series is *Keepers of the Flame*. The sixth item in the series is a draft of *The Darby Chronicles*. The seventh item within the series is *The Old American, A Personal Journey*. The eighth sub series within the manuscript series is *Nurse Lucy*, which is comprised of four different drafts of the manuscript. Also included in this sub series is a critique of the draft by Murray McClellan. The ninth sub series consists of an early and second draft of *Island Pond*.

Sub series 10 is comprised of multiple short pieces of Hebert's work. Included within this sub series is *Angela Whiteman*, *Darby Chronicles* and the *KSC Collection*, *DC Slideshow*, *Freedom and Unity: The Vermont Movie Notes*, *Historical Writing for Creatings*, *How Women Influenced My Career as a Writer*, *WRJ*, *On the Road with Kerouac's Daughter*, *Plow Guy's Lament*, *Writings That Changed My Life*, and *My Art, If That's What it Is*. A sub series is also included within this collection entitled *Sweet Sad Story About a Typewriter*. This sub series consists of two different drafted versions of *Sweet Sad Story About a Typewriter*.

Series 3 consists of four folders of Hebert's artwork. The first folder includes Hebert's artwork that has his comments included to help contextualize the pieces. The second folder of Hebert's artwork consists of artwork that does not have any comments included. The final two folders of this series compile Hebert's artwork that was printed on photo paper and created digitally.

The fourth series of this collection consists of Hebert's photographs in both negative and print form.

The fifth series is comprised of Hebert's notes. This series is an amalgamation of Hebert's notes for writing ideas, manuscript notes, and personal notes. The items within this collection range from notes printed from a computer using a word processor and notes written on legal pads. There are 6 folders in this series, with a date range of 2015-2017.

The sixth series within this collection includes several fliers, booklets, and invitations from events that Hebert attended relating to his writing career. There are fliers from Hebert's book tour for *The Contrarian Voice and Other Poems* as well as *Darby and the Magic Moment at Park Hill Meeting House*. Within this series is also an invitation from 1998 for the University of the West Indies' Presentation of Graduates. The final item within this series is a booklet from the film *Freedom and Unity: The Vermont Movie* to which Hebert contributed an essay.

The seventh series consists of materials Hebert collected pertaining to his wife, friends, colleagues, and former students. Notable people represented include Medora Hebert, Terry Pindell, David Benioff,

Margaret Langford, and Steve Taylor. The format of the items ranges from published editions of magazines to short pieces of poetry printed on computer paper.

The eighth series is a collection of legal documents pertaining to Hebert's writing career. The documents included are from the University Press of New England, Keene State College, and Dartmouth College. The items include a deed of gift, an assignment of copyright, and an electronic publication permission agreement.

The ninth and final series in the collection includes several items of memorabilia derived from either gifts from friends of Hebert or personal items from Hebert himself. These consist of a greeting card, two of Hebert's business cards, and several blank sheets of stationery from Dartmouth college.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

College Archives & Special Collections / Wallace E. Mason Library / Keene State College 2019

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## Provenance

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I was born May 4, 1941, in Elliot Community Hospital, which at this writing has been converted to Elliot Hall, a Keene State College building in Keene, New Hampshire. I attended Keene schools, including Keene State College, where I graduated in 1969, and where I met my future wife of more than fifty years, Medora Lavoie, originally of Dover, New Hampshire. When we married I was a 27-year-old senior and she was a 19-year-old sophomore. I was a reporter for The Keene Sentinel for nine years (1972-1981), and I worked for Keene businesses: Ideal Taxi, West Street Texaco, Markem Corp., Cheshire Landscape, Top Gas, International Narrow Fabric Inc., Miller Brothers Newton, and New England Telephone and Telegraph Co. I also have roots of one kind or another in surrounding towns of Keene--Dublin, Harrisville, Nelson, Stoddard, Sullivan, Swanzey, and Westmoreland.

It was during the Sentinel years--when Medora and I were raising kids, and where I wrote a news story for the paper that won me a UPI journalism award about a bull moose that wandered down Main Street in Keene--that it struck me that home for me was and always would be the Monadnock Region.

Unlike many writers--perhaps even most--I was never eager to leave the place of my origins. But I did leave. I was gone for more than two decades when I took a tenure track position in the Creative Writing program of the English Department at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.

It's only 67 miles from Keene to Hanover and both communities are in the same state. Even so, Hanover was never home for me. I yearned to "go home again" to the Monadnock Region, and I did. I think it's an interesting story, too, how I did come back that has a bearing on my decision to house some of my papers at Keene State. After Medora and I married in March of 1969, we lived in the town of Nelson, New Hampshire, until late August when we set out for Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, where I was enrolled in the Master of Arts program for creative writing.

I only stayed at Stanford for two terms. Medora worked a full-time job as a telephone company operator; I was a student by day and a gas pumper and janitor from 5 to 11 pm at Commuter Shell gas station on Lytton Avenue. I was only at Stanford for two terms, but they were hugely valuable to me. I was accepted as a poet by English poet Donald Davie, but in the second term I switched to fiction where I studied with novelist Wallace Stegner. The main reason I chose fiction over poetry as my specialty was my realization that all my poems had a narrative and that the novel form was better suited for the enterprise of story-telling than poetry. I knew the kind of writer I wanted to be and what I had to do to learn the craft--write and read regularly--so I saw no reason to stay in school.

But there was another reason to leave Stanford. I did not like the San Francisco Bay area of California. It was too crowded and too citified for my taste. Deep down Medora and I were terribly homesick, a fact we didn't realize for a while. When we left Stanford, our grand plan was to move to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where I would get a job and Medora would enroll at the University of New Mexico to finish her undergraduate work. It was our arrival in New Mexico where homesickness hit us hard. We pretty much raced to New Hampshire where Medora re-enrolled at Keene State and I worked for a couple years at Top Gas, a one-man gas station. In 1972 at age 31 I started my first middle-class job, sports writer for the Keene Sentinel. We were home, and we were going to stay.

The first place we rented upon our return was a somewhat run-down little three-room house in the Park Hill Village of Westmoreland, NH. We fell in love with the house, the neighborhood, the town and its people, history, and landscape: river bottom land, rugged wooded hills with outcroppings of ledge, and just about everywhere you looked stonewalls that had their origins in centuries before the 20th.

There was a particular lot that we coveted--two wooded acres of up and down land that included an abandoned artist studio. One night it burned. I covered that fire for the Sentinel. We had a yearning to live on this property, but we didn't have any money and it wasn't for sale. Later we rented an apartment in Swanzy, New Hampshire, then bought our first house on 52 Elliot Street in Keene, a block from where I was born. When I got the job on the tenure track at Dartmouth, we bought a house in West Lebanon, NH, only five or six miles from the English Department at Dartmouth.

I never lost touch with Westmoreland, though. Indeed, in two important ways I never left. We owned a small wood lot where periodically I cut firewood. Sometimes I would take an afternoon for myself, drive to my lot on Daggett Hill, build a camp fire, have a cup of coffee, and just enjoy being home. This connection to the land went on for decades.

The other connection was literary. In the novels I was writing, the fictional town of Darby assumed greater and greater importance in the themes of social class I was trying to get across. Indeed, I started to think of Darby as a character; the town was a living presence in my mind. But Darby was not entirely a product of my imagination. It was a synthesis in literary form of towns in the Monadnock Region that I loved. A map of Darby looks very much like the real town of Westmoreland. The rural underclass Jordan clan of Darby Depot is based on a section of the town of Sullivan, New Hampshire, where I built

a cabin back in the 1970s. The cabin inhabited by Cooty Patterson, Darby's hermit, is a near clone to the structure I whacked together. Cooty is roughly based on Perely Swett, a real self-described hermit in Stoddard, New Hampshire. Upper Darby, where the old rich reside, is based on a wealthy section of Dublin, New Hampshire, where my mother, Jeannette Vaccarest, was a nanny for a wealthy family before she met Elphege Hebert, my future dad. These real towns--Westmoreland, Sullivan, Stoddard, Dublin--are satellite towns circling the little city of my hometown of Keene.

Flash ahead to 2008. That was the year that Medora found the dream lot of our 1970s youthful years in Westmoreland for sale on the Internet. We scoffed it up and built a house, moving in late in 2009. It took us 38 years to get back to the place where we wanted to live. At this writing in March of 2019, we have no plans to leave. Let me add that I plotted my semi-autobiographical novel *Never Back Down*, published in 2012, while driving back and forth between Westmoreland and Hanover. In other words, I plotted the book in an interstice between my work world and my home world.

On July 31, 2015, I officially retired from Dartmouth College and donated my papers with the Dartmouth archival library where I had made yearly drops over the years. Let me add that Dartmouth archivists Stanley Brown and Philip Cronwnwett had approached me long before I joined the faculty, offering to house my papers on loan. I had warm relations with these two classy librarians until they left Dartmouth and also with their successors at Rauner Library. I wanted very much for Dartmouth to accept my donation of my papers. And they did.

Though I was retired from teaching, I was not retired from my creative life. I continued to write and took off in another direction, a life-long desire to draw. I decided to draw images from my books. What to do with the new material I was producing--fiction, essays, poems, digital artwork? The author Thomas Wolfe famously said, "You can't go home again." In my case, he was wrong. I felt born-again in my home region. With that realization I concluded any new material I produced upon leaving Dartmouth belonged in Keene. The logical place for those papers to reside would be at my alma mater, Keene State College. When I met Rodney Obien, the Keene State archivist, and saw that Keene had the facilities to house my papers I decided that all my new work--material produced within my born-again creative life--needed to be separated from the old life at Dartmouth. It needed to be in the Monadnock Region. What better locale than Keene State College, close to the geographical center of the region I call home?

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## Bibliography

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Darby and the Quest for Common ground

One Way to Write a Novel

The Contrarian Voice and Other Poems

Nurse Lucy

Never Back Down



The Dogs of March

The Kinship

Whisper My Name

Live Free or Die

Mad Boys

The Old American

Origins of the Darby Series

Origins: Darby Names and My Name

How John Gardner Kicked My Ass and Saved My Soul

Spoonwood

A Little More Than Kin

The Passion of Estelle Jordan

Howard Elman's Farewell

Whisper My Name

Correspondence

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## Collection Inventory

**Series 1 Correspondence**

Letter to Tom Sleigh from Ernest Hebert

**Series 2 Manuscripts****Series 2.1 1 Darby and the Quest for Common Ground**

Version 3

Version 4.3

**Series 2.2 2 One Way to Write a Novel**

Vision and Revision: One Way to Write a Novel

Workflowy Before Edits

Workflowy After Edits

**Series 2.3 3 The Contrarian Voice and Other Poems**

## 8 Nurse Lucy

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Draft

Critique by Terry Pindell

Hypothermia Draft

October 2015

4 Recycling Reality

5 Keepers of the Flame

6 Darby Chronicles

7 The Old American, A Personal Journey

**Series 2.8 8 Nurse Lucy**

The Woodpecker Unedited Draft

The Woodpecker Edited Draft

Nurse Lucy Workflowy

Nurse Lucy Critique by Murray McClellan

## 9 Island Pond

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### **Series 2.9 9 Island Pond**

Island Pond Early Draft 2017

Island Pond Second Draft

### **Series 2.10 10 Short Pieces**

1 Angela Whiteman

Workflowy

2 Darby Chronicles and the KSC Connection

Workflowy

3 DC Slideshow

Workflowy

4 Freedom and Unity: The Vermont Movie Notes

Workflowy

5 Historical Writing for Creatives

## 10 Sweet Sad Story About a Typewriter

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### 6 How Women Influenced My Career as a Writer

Workflowy

7 WRJ

Workflowy

### 8 On the Road with Kerouac's Daughter

Workflowy

9 My Art, If That's What it Is

Workflowy

## **2.10.10 10 Sweet Sad Story About a Typewriter**

2.10.1 This is a Sweet Sad Story About a Typewriter Typewritten

A Sweet Sad Story About a Typewriter Workflowy

11 Plow Guy's Lament

Draft

### 12 Writings That Changed My Life

## Artwork

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Workflowy

### **Series 3 Artwork**

1 Artwork with Comments

Birch Latour Desktop

Birch Latour in His Office

Path Logo

Working People

Howard Elman

Matchbox

Estelle Wall

Beech Tree in Winter

Some Drawings Never Work

Darby Bulletin Board

What's My Name

## Artwork

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Curmudgeons

Cooty's Reminders

Cooty's Reminders Copy

Scrabble Tiles Done Cowreckly

Darby Sign with Motto

Cooty Patterson and Stew Pot

Darby Sign with Motto

Elman Place, Darby, NH, 1970 Something

Tess Jordan Studio

The Swing

2 Artwork without Comments

Trail Bikes and All Terrain Vehicles Prohibited

Trail Bikes and All Terrain Vehicles Prohibited Copy 1

Trail Bikes and All Terrain Vehicles Prohibited Copy 2

## Artwork

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Still Life with Champagne and Wine Bottles

Warning! All Book Agents & Editors...

A Little More than Kin

A Little More than Kin Alternate Version

A Little More than Kin Alternate Version Copy

A Little More than Kin Photorealistic Version

Whisper My Name

The Passion of Estelle Jordan

The Passion of Estelle Jordan Alternate Version

Live Free or Die Copy 1

Live Free or Die Copy 2

Live Free or Die Copy 3

Live Free or Die Alternate Version

Spoonwood Copy 1



## Artwork

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Spoonwood Copy 2

Spoonwood Copy 3

Howard Elman's Farewell Copy 1

Howard Elman's Farewell Copy 2

Howard Elman's Farewell Copy 3

Still Life with Champagne and Wine Large Print

Father Vac's Typewriter Source Photograph

Father Vac's Typewriter

The Dogs of March Copy 1

The Dogs of March Copy 2

The Dogs of March Copy 3

The Dogs of March Without Title Copy 1

The Dogs of March Without Title Copy 2

The Dogs of March Without Title Copy 3

## Artwork

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Hick Lit

If You Post Your Land Stay the Hell off Mine

Free Super Cute! Kittens

Free Super Cute! Kittens Copy

Free Super Cute! Kittens Rough Draft

Free Super Cute! Kittens Rough Draft Copy

Augmented Reality

Darby Town Map

Darby Town Map Copy

The Dogs of March

The Dogs of March Copy

Path StudI/O

Path StudI/O Copy

Darby Chronicles: Poems in the Books

## Artwork

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Wall of Quotes

Wall of Quotes

The Darby Chronicles: Life Death and Laughs in a Small Town

The Darby Chronicles: Life Death and Laughs in a Small Town Copy

The Darby Chronicles: Life Death and Laughs in a Small Town Finished Version October 2015

Guide to Darby Chronicles

Whisper My Name

Whisper My Name Copy

Save This World Before Ourselves

Save This World Before Ourselves Copy

The Woodpecker With Title

The Woodpecker Without Title

The Woodpecker Without Title Copy

Darby NH Town Hall Billboard

## Artwork

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Ike's Auction Barn and Flea Market

Ike's Auction Barn and Flea Market Copy

Geek Chorus Software

Holiday Greetings from Darby

Holiday Greetings from Darby Stamped Version

Elenore's Rosary Beads Found in the Driveway

Writings that Changed My Life Copy 1

Writings that Changed My Life Copy 2

Writings that Changed My Life Copy 3

Writings that Changed My Life Copy 4

Writings that Changed My Life Copy 5

Stay Loose Copy 1

Stay Loose Copy 2

Stay Loose Copy 3

## Artwork

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Darby New Hampshire Town Meeting Spirit

Branch Hanging from Wall Rough Draft

Branch Hanging from Wall

Branch Hanging from Wall Copy 1

Branch Hanging from Wall Copy 2

Branch Hanging from Wall Greyscale Painting

The Mike and Ernie Detective Agency Photograph Version

The Mike and Ernie Detective Agency Photograph Version Copy June 3, 2017

The Mike and Ernie Detective Agency Lineart Version

Flowers in Vase on Countertop

What's My Name?

Writers Beware of Literary Theory

Salmon Nature Conservancy on the Trail

Granite State Sweepstakes

## Artwork

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When the Child Learns to Pump the Male Parent is No Longer Needed Original

When the Child Learns to Pump the Male Parent is No Longer Needed

Fishing Hook

Hand-Made Wooden Spoons by F. Latour

Welcome to Re In Car Nation

Cooty Pattersion TIME Person of the Year

The Passion of Estelle Jordan Version 1

The Passion of Estelle Jordan Version 2

Park Hill Meeting House Summer Lectures

Gravestone of Joseph Ernest Vaccarest Hebert Copy 1

Gravestone of Joseph Ernest Vaccarest Hebert Copy 2

Gravestone of Joseph Ernest Vaccarest Hebert Copy 3

Darby and the Magic Moment

Darby Chronicles

## Artwork

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Cooty Patterson's Hatchet

Single bit "Indestructible" Fiberglass Handle

Hatchet on Wall

Bowl and Spoon on Table

C3 Door

Cooty's Buck Saw

Part 1 - Poems Inspired by a Novel I Never Wrote

Part 3 - Personal Poems

Part 4 - Darby Chronicles: Poems Inspired by the Characters

Scrabble Points

Squire on for 8 PM

Bat and Ball: Our National Pastime

Elenore's Rosary Beads Found in the Driveway

3 Artwork Printed on Photo Paper

## Artwork

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Cooty's Cabin

The Woodpecker

The Woodpecker without Clock

C3 Door

4 Digital Artwork

When the Child Learns to Pump the Male Parent is No Longer Needed Original

When the Child Learns to Pump the Male Parent is No Longer Needed

When the Child Learns to Pump the Male Parent is No Longer Needed Copy

Woman Stepping over Broken Vase of Flowers

Wooden Spoon

Pen New England North Summer Symposium Version 1

Pen New England North Summer Symposium Version 2

Robert Creeley

The Darby Chronicles: Life Death and Laughs in a Small Town



## Photographs

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Cabin in the Woods

Pulpit in Lavish Living Room

Child's Hand Holding Wooden Spoon

Tree Sickle

Tree Debarker

Woodworker's Bench

January 2001 Calendar

March 2001 Calendar

Painted Green Trees

MadBoys Car

Freshman Bon Fire 1992 1992

### **Series 4 Photographs**

1 Photograph Negatives

1301

## Notes

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### 2 Photograph Prints

Bicycle

Go with "Big Red"

Elphege Hebert

Ernest Hebert with his Father, Elphege J. Hebert, in West Lebanon, New Hampshire 1999-2000

### Series 5 Notes

1 Handwritten Notes 2015

Yellow Legal Pad 2015

2 Handwritten Notes 2016

Yellow Legal Pad 2016

Handwritten Notes 2016 and 2017

3 Handwritten Notes 2017

Yellow Legal Pad 2017

4 Handwritten Notes Second Half of 2017

**Events**

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Yellow Legal Pad 2017

The Code Notes

**Series 6 Events****Series 6.1 Book Tours**

University Press of New England

Keene State College

Dartmouth College

**Series 6.2 Invitations**

Series 5.2.1 The University of the West Indies' Presentation of Graduates 1998

**Series 6.3 Films**

Series 6.3.1 Freedom and Unity: The Vermont Movie Booklet

**Series 7 Associated Materials**

1 Medora Hebert

## Legal Documents

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Historic Harrisville Gallery Postcard

Two Rivers Print Making Studio Gallery Postcard

2 Terry Pindell

Sonnets 2011-2012 Red Spiral Notebook 2011-2012

3 David Benioff

Dartmouth Alumni Magazine May/June 2017

4 Margaret Langford

Still Life with Champagne and Wine Bottles

5 Steve Taylor

Poor Farms and County Almshouses Poster

### **Series 8 Legal Documents**

1 University Press of New England

Assignment of Copyright

2 Keene State College

## Memorabilia

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Deed of Gift

3 Dartmouth College

Electronic Publication Permission Agreement

### **Series 9 Memorabilia**

1 Gifts to Ernest Hebert

Star of Wonder Greeting Card

Rad Dike Artwork

2 Personal Items

Christmas Card

Two Business Cards

Blank Stationary from Dartmouth College