

# Thaddeus Clark Noble of Claysville (Pa.), Business Correspondence, 1856-1860 A&M 3718

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## Abstract

Thaddeus Clark Noble (b. 1818) of Washington County, Pennsylvania, operated a general store in Claysville, Pennsylvania, from 1849 to the mid-1870s. Approximately 290 letters written in the late 1850s document the operations of Noble's store in western Pennsylvania and his relationship with frequent customers and wholesale dealers. Business correspondence is chiefly from other grocers and merchants. Letters primarily concern goods purchased from Noble and sold to him (flour, salt, molasses, wool, hogs, barley, sugar, oats, wheat, lard, coffee, salt, clothing, hats, etc.); the prices of goods; account balances; freight charges; the shipping and packing of goods, and errors or problems with shipments. Regular correspondents include: Ohio River Salt Company; List, Morrison and Company; List and Howell; Baker and Hopkins; William Albright; Sam McFarland; A. Howell; O. D. Thompson; and A. Goldsmith. Most of Noble's business correspondents were from Wheeling, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania, but some were also from Philadelphia.

## Creator

Noble, Thaddeus Clark

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# Biographical / Historical

Thaddeus Clark Noble was born on December 29, 1818, in Washington County, Pennsylvania, and raised in nearby Claysville. He was a cabinet maker, teacher, and store clerk before opening a general store in Claysville in 1849 that he operated for twenty-five years. He had several partners during this time, including Chester B. Abercrombie, who was his partner from 1857 to 1862. Most of Noble's business correspondents were from Wheeling, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania, but some were also from Philadelphia. In 1874, Noble retired from his business.

In 1849, Noble married to Sarah Truesdell, daughter of Josiah and Mary Truesdell; they had ten children. Thaddeus Clark Noble died at his home near Claysville on November 29, 1882.

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Portions of following information were taken from "Commemorative Biographical Record of Washington County: Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens, and of Many of the Early Settled Families", published in Chicago by J.H. Beers in 1893.

Thaddeus Clark Noble was born Dec. 29th, 1818. He was born at Amwell Township, Washington County, PA, but spent most of his life in the nearby town of Claysville. Mr. Noble opened a general store in Claysville in the year 1849, in which business he continued without interruption for a period of twenty-five years, commanding a large patronage, and in which he was quite successful. Claysville is located on the National Road, 18 miles east of Wheeling, WV. He had had at different times as partners, L.C. Truesdell (his brother-in-law), Chester B. Abercrombie and M.L. Stillwagon.

This collection of incoming correspondence to Noble is from the period when he was partners with Abercrombie. In 1857 he entered into a partnership with Abercrombie and continued for four years, at which time they took in as a partner M.L. Stillwagen, the business being carried on under the style of T.C. Noble & Co. In 1874, when Noble retired, the firm then became Abercrombie & Stillwagen. In 1876 Mr. Abercrombie sold out and engaged in the grain business.

The company appears to have received some of its goods from Philadelphia via the Philadelphia, Wilmington, & Baltimore Railroad, connected with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad through Wheeling, (West) Virginia. The goods would then be carried to Claysville via the Hempfield Railroad.

A good deal of the correspondents, Noble's business associates, were from Wheeling, (West) Virginia, as well as the Washington and West Alexander, Pennsylvania areas. The whole southeast corner of Pennsylvania from Pittsburgh down to East Finley fell within Noble's business sphere, and the counties of Washington and Greene in Pennsylvania, as well as across the state's border into Belmont County, Ohio and today's Marshall County in West Virginia. The collection offers an interesting and informative look at the local economy of pre-Civil War southwest Pennsylvania and adjacent areas.

In the year 1849 he was married to Miss Sarah M. Truesdell, whose parents had come to Washington county from Bristol, Conn. They had ten children, three of whom are deceased: Thomas J., Charlotte J., and Elizabeth M. Of those surviving, his daughters Frances M., Harriet W. and Eleanor I. are graduates of Steubenville (Ohio) Ladies Seminary. Of his sons, J.T. and T.C. are graduates of Washington and Jefferson College. J.H. obtained his education in the schools of Claysville, Trinity Hall, Washington, Penn., and Duff's College, Pittsburgh. Katherine M., on account of physical infirmities, has been unable to attend school.

Mr. Noble died at his home near Claysville, November 29, 1882, the Rev. James L. Leeper, then pastor of the Presbyterian Church at that place, Rev. William H. Lester, D.D., of West Alexander, Penn., and the Rev. Henry Woods, D.D., of Washington and Jefferson College officiated at his funeral.

Noble was active in the Young Men's Christian Association and a superintendent of the Claysville Presbyterian Sabbath-school.

### **Family Background**

The paternal ancestors of Thaddeus C. Noble were natives of Scotland, and resided at North Woodside, near the city of Glasgow, where they were comfortably situated. They were devout members of the Covenanter Church. The paternal grandfather, William Noble, was a soldier in the war of the Revolution, and took part in the battle of Brandywine. His wife was Miss Elizabeth Howe, a native of Lancaster county, where he located and lived on a farm. He died comparatively young in life, leaving two sons, the youngest of whom, James Noble, was the father of the subject of this sketch. After the death of the husband, the widow and her sons resided for a short time at York, Penn., and then removed to a farm in Buffalo township, Washington county, where she continued to reside the most of her life. She died in Canonsburg, Penn., in the year 1851, in the membership of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The maternal ancestors of our subject were natives of Ireland, and lived for the most part in County Tyrone. Most of the family resided in the town of Dennaughey, about thirty miles distant from Belfast; and in the latter place others of the family resided, and were generally engaged in mercantile pursuits. Robert Boyd, the maternal grandfather, was a man of business enterprise and influence. His wife was Margaret Latimer. The Boyds were members of an old established Presbyterian Church, of Stewartstown, with which the family had been for many years identified, and in which one of their kindred had been pastor, and others elders. Meeting with reverses in their native country, they decided to join the tide of emigration then coming westward, and accordingly embarked from Londonderry in June of 1801, in a sailing vessel, Capt. Blunt, commander; and after a voyage of seven weeks and three days they arrived at New Castle, Del., where they remained for a short time, and then permanently took up their residence in what is now Canton township, Washington county.

Jane Boyd, daughter of Robert and Margaret Latimer Boyd, was the mother of the subject of this sketch. She was born in Dennaughey, County Tyrone, Ireland, in the year 1793. Mrs. Dr. McCook, of Pittsburgh, and Mrs. Daniel McCook, of Steubenville, Ohio, whose family gained distinction in the Mexican and late Civil wars, were her full cousins. She was married to James Noble, March 25, 1817, and resided for two years thereafter on a farm in Amwell township, attending the Presbyterian Church at Lower Ten-Mile under the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Dodd; and afterward, about the year 1820, they removed to Claysville, where they continued to reside the remainder of their lives. James Noble, her husband, was born August 4, 1795, in that part of county, Penn., which now comprises Cumberland county, and died April 12, 1872. Mrs. Noble died October 16, 1872. Upon their removal to Claysville they united with the Methodist Episcopal Church, it being the only organized church there at that time, of which they continued members for upward of fifty years.

### **Biography of Thaddeus C. Noble**

T.C. Noble, the subject proper of this memoir, was well and favorably known throughout the county, and his name suggests a prominent example of an active and useful life, covering a period of more than forty years. He was born in Amwell township, December 29, 1818, and was the eldest of eleven children, the most of whom are now deceased. He was, physically, very strong and active, and of a placid and amiable disposition. He was the possessor of splendid mental qualities, and early manifested a taste for learning, taking particular delight in mathematics, drawing and in reading biography, and his hand-writing was excellent. It had been both the desire and design of the father to afford his son the advantages of a liberal education, but upon the arrival of the proper time for entering upon such a course, the father's circumstances were such as to render the undertaking impracticable. He worked for eighteen months at cabinet making, and then

commenced teaching school. He taught the Brown and McMillan District Schools near his home for several terms, and then taught a private school in Claysville, and in the year 1839 he went to Winchester, Scott Co., Ill., where he taught with success for a period of two years, when he returned to his home and accepted a clerkship in the store of George A. Cracraft, and subsequently filled a similar position in a store owned by his father and James Paden. While thus engaged he employed his leisure in studying higher mathematics and surveying under the direction of E. G. Cracraft, who had been a cadet at West Point. In the year 1846 he was appointed Deputy Surveyor in Washington county by Governor Francis R. Shunk, for a term of three years, and at the expiration of the term, was re-appointed for a like term of three years. The office then becoming elective, he was nominated by his party and elected for another term. In 1857, under appointment authorized by an Act of the Legislature, Mr. Noble transcribed from the official records at Harrisburg, for the use of the county, all the drafts of original surveys not found in the record books. The surveys thus transcribed numbered twelve hundred, filling two large volumes. A Harrisburg paper spoke of this work thus: "This work has been done with an accuracy of detail and skillful beauty that does great credit to Mr. Noble, and they are said by the Surveyor-General to be the best executed drafts of survey ever made in the State, and will ever be preserved as an attestation of his competency as a public servant."

He surveyed during his life upward of two thousand farms in Washington county and West Virginia, besides running many disputed lines and serving under appointment of the Court as a road or bridge viewer, and in dividing townships for nearly every term of court for thirty-three years. He possessed peculiar ability as an arbiter in the settlement of all manner of disputes, thus avoiding to those concerned much useless and expensive litigation. In the year 1855 he was defeated for the office of Prothonotary by a very few votes, while the opposing party was largely in the majority. On this occasion Mr. Noble received almost the unanimous vote of his home township, Donegal.

In the year 1879 he accepted the chairmanship of the Democratic County Vigilance Committee, and notwithstanding his party was greatly in the minority, he effected such a complete organization in the county as to elect the candidate for Sheriff, the only office of importance to be filled that year. He was twice commissioned a Justice of the Peace in the years 1874 and 1879. His standing in his party was such that he was at five different times nominated for offices by his party without any solicitation on his part, and had been urged at other times to become a candidate for the Legislature, but always declined. He always attended primary elections, and was an intense believer in the personal fitness of candidates; that they should be both capable and conscientious.

Mr. Noble opened a general store in Claysville in the year 1849, in which business he continued without interruption for a period of twenty-five years, commanding a large patronage, and in which he was quite successful. He had had at different times as partners, L.C. Truesdell, a brother-in-law, Chester B. Abercrombie, and M.L. Stillwagen. For thirty-five years he had been engaged extensively in many kinds of business in the purchase and sale of lands for himself and others, in buying of wool to the extent of from thirty thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars each year; having been the agent for the Harris Woolen Company, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, at different times, for upward of thirty years, and having bought for them continuously for twelve years previous to his death, enjoying the confidence and esteem of the company to an unusual degree. He had also bought at different times for many firms at Boston, New York, Brooklyn and other places. He had done much to foster the growth of the wool-growing industry in Washington county. His high standing and extensive acquaintance enabled him to perform an important work in the matter of inducing a goodly number of manufacturers to come into the county from time to time as purchasers of our wools, thus giving an impetus to the industry which did much in the way of creating a spirit of competition, having a tendency to maintain both reputation and prices. He was the first to introduce to any considerable extent the first improved light-running harvesting machines in his own as well as some of the neighboring counties. He dealt extensively in hay and grain for the use of the Government during the late war. Besides his private business he had often filled many positions of trust, such as executor, administrator, guardian, etc. And although so long engaged in many kinds of business involving multiplied and varied transaction, he had never been a party to a suit in court.

He was for sixteen years a school director, and was an ardent advocate of advanced education. In the year 1854, Mr. Noble realized the fulfillment of an early conceived purpose to become the owner of a tract of land lying immediately west of Claysville, which he so well improved as to make it one of the many desirable Washington county farms, upon which he resided for twenty years previous to his death. The improvement and beautification of the New Cemetery at Claysville was a matter to him of much concern, he having surveyed and superintended the work of laying it out, and was president of the Board of Directors from its opening up to the time of his death. He was for a good many years a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but afterward united with the Presbyterian Church during the pastorate of the Rev. Alexander McCarrell, D.D. He was, for ten years, superintendent of the M. E. Sabbath-school, and, for six years previous to his death, superintendent of the Presbyterian Sabbath-school. He took a deep interest in all Sabbath-school work, and possessed singular ability in the way of creating an interest in the matter of regular and prompt attendance, as well as in infusing a spirit of emulation into the routine exercises. He was foremost in every movement and enterprise which had for its object the advancement of the interests of his town and county; was active and efficient in every agency which had for its object the advancement of religion, morals

and education. His deep sense of integrity and regard for truth was the basis of that confidence so universally reposed in him. He was public spirited, ever considerate for the welfare of others and liberal in his giving. He enjoyed the pleasures of his home and comforts of his family. In the hallowed circle of his home he was the central object of uncommon reverence and affection.

## **Keywords**

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