

Seward Family Digital Archive

Annotation Guidelines

Introduction

We annotate the names of people, places, and books mentioned in a letter. An annotator's first resource will be the People, Places, and Library Databases housed on the Seward Family Digital Archive.

Annotating Names

Our goal for each individual mentioned in a letter is to develop an entry in the People Database with their full name (i.e. first, last, and middle and maiden, if applicable), birth date, death date, and relationship to the Seward family (e.g. sister in-law of Will, office seeker, friend of Fanny, etc.).

In your transcriptions, the name of each individual will receive a footnote except the sender or recipient because their information is already included in the header of the letter. This footnote will contain the individual's first name, last name, and birth and death dates.¹

If you are familiar and comfortable with TEI, you may also include the individual's TEI ID.² For immediate family members and frequently mentioned friends of the Swards, you may use our shortened three-letter IDs.³ (These are included in the parentheses behind an individual's name in the public database's alphabetical listing. The ones we use are already established; do not create a new ID if one isn't listed.)

All persons mentioned in the letter will be noted in this way. This includes authors of books, whether classical (e.g. Homer) or modern (e.g. Charles Dickens), and characters in novels, plays, and poems. Obviously, the characters will not have birth and death dates but will need to be identified nonetheless.⁴

Any version of proper names are annotated (e.g., Frances, Debby Woods, Mrs. Masse, Beardsley). If Will writes to Gus that "our sister is ill," he is referring to Fanny. You would annotate this reference, "our sister⁵ is ill." All people referred to by their relationship (e.g. mother⁶; the boys⁷) or title (e.g. Ambassador to Belgium⁸), who we are able to identify, are identified and tagged by name.

¹ John Bell (02181796-09101869)

² John Bell (1796-1869),BELj_5926

³ FMS

⁴ Santa Claus

⁵ FAS

⁶ FMS

⁷ AHS, WSJ

⁸ Henry Shelton Sanford (06151823-05211891)

Locating Database Entries

In many cases, previous Seward Team members have found an individual's name and created a basic biographical sketch for that person, all of which is available in the People Database. If you find a matching name, ensure the details of the person's life match the context of your letter (e.g. was he or she the correct age, in the correct place, correct social circle, etc).

The database list is a good place to start if you know the last name of the person. If there is no last name entered in the database for a person, they are at the top of the "All" section. Seward pets are grouped together under Seward Pet, and some individuals are found under their titles, such as Pope and King.

The public view of the database (accessible through the Resources menu at sewardproject.org) includes links to the letters in which an individual's name has been tagged in a letter that is already in the archive. This is a useful tool when you are attempting to confirm if the person in the database fits the context of your letter.

When you log into the website and use the Person List link at the top of the page, the internal view may contain additional information that does not appear in the public view.

The XML databases at the bottom of the Databases page have the same information but provide a different search function that is particularly useful if you only have a first name or nickname of someone mentioned in a letter. These lists are also sortable by all the fields. Clicking on a node link will bring up the biographical profile in the internal view of the database.

The search function on the archive is another wonderful resource to see if the individual you are trying to locate has been mentioned in other transcribed letters even if he or she has not been identified or tagged yet. There may be a clue that coupled with the details in your letter gives you a good lead on identifying the person.

Annotation Resources

When you are logged into the archive, the Annotation Resources link at the bottom of the page provides a list of helpful sites and databases to consult when you are searching for information about an unknown individual.

Unknowns

In general, do your best to identify everyone you encounter in your letters. Always note the existence of a person, even if you are forced to leave it tagged, "Unknown⁹."

Editing partners and managers are all excellent resources in helping you identify persistent unknowns.

⁹ Unknown

Additional Databases

There are additional databases for Seward pets, servants, and unknowns. These are located in the Annotations Resources folder in Box. We have less information about animals and people in these categories, and we use these spreadsheets to better track what we do know.

For someone without enough known information to create a database entry, but who seems to have been mentioned a few times, add them and any information you have discovered to the spreadsheet labeled "Unknown People."

Annotating Places

We identify four levels of places: village/town/cities, counties, states, and nations. Forts (e.g. Fort Monroe¹⁰) and islands (e.g. Long Island,¹¹ Tortola¹²) are exceptions to this rule that are annotated.

All places in these categories that are mentioned in the letter will be footnoted except the location of the sender and recipient, which is already included in the header of the transcription.

Specific places such as Lazette's home, the American Hotel, and U. S. Military Academy at West Point will not be annotated.

When a place is footnoted, provide enough information for the location to be clear. In the case of a town (e.g. Auburn¹³) or county (e.g. Orange¹⁴) include the state in the footnote. For a state (e.g. Ohio¹⁵), the state name or abbreviation is sufficient if it is in the United States, but if it is a state, province, or territory in another country (Ontario¹⁶), include the name of the country in the note. The country's name (e.g. Brazil¹⁷) is sufficient for the mention of a nation.

If the author of the letter misspelled the name of the place (e.g. Painesville¹⁸), preserve the incorrect spelling in the transcription, but footnote the location with the correct modern spelling, and if previously unentered, enter it into the Place Database with the modern spelling.

Ensure that the location you selected to identify the place mentioned in the letter fits to context of the letter, and be particularly careful and clear with New York annotations

¹⁰ Fort Monroe, VA

¹¹ Long Island, NY

¹² Tortola, British Virgin Islands

¹³ Auburn, NY

¹⁴ Orange County, NY

¹⁵ Ohio or OH

¹⁶ Ontario, Canada

¹⁷ Brazil

¹⁸ Painesville, OH

because this could refer to the City of New York¹⁹ or the State of New York²⁰.

When entering a new place into the Place Database, follow the instructions at the top of the page.

Annotating Works of Literature

We are also creating a database with a full citation for every work of literature mentioned in the Seward Family Digital Archive.

A book will be annotated when the title is mentioned directly (e.g. *Cecil Dreeme*²¹) or if we can determine the specific work based on the context (e.g. Lister's most recent novel²² mentioned in 1827 would refer to *Granby*).

First consult the database, and footnote the author, title, and publication date if there is already a record of the work. Remember that you will also annotate the author of a book if he or she is mentioned in the letter.

If there is not an entry for the work of literature, try to determine the full title through Google and WorldCat searches. Look for an edition that seems the most likely. It is more likely the letter's author would have read an edition that was published in New York closely preceding the mention in the letter rather than one published in Boston, Philadelphia, or London. Editions published after the date of the letter can also be eliminated from consideration.

If you locate an acceptable edition, email the project manager who is entering books into the database and include the author, title, and date of the publication along with any relevant links you located. This would primarily be the WorldCat record and if you found a digitized copy of the work in the Internet Archive at archive.org include that as well. If you were unable to make a clear determination, include where you have looked and what options you have considered in your email.

Do not enter new books to the Literature Database. Once you email the manager, be sure to footnote the publication information, and make any adjustments he or she directs you to. Otherwise, he or she will enter the necessary information into the database.

We do not annotate newspapers, pamphlets, or the mentions of plays that were attended rather than read. Additionally, we do not annotate quotes that do not make reference directly to the author or work of literature.

¹⁹ New York City, NY

²⁰ NY

²¹ Theodore Winthrop, *Cecil Dreeme*, 1862

²² Thomas Henry Lister, *Granby*, 1826