

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Abbot, Ephraim, Papers, 1801-1904

LOCATION(S):

Octavo vols. "A"
Mss. boxes "A"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

10 octavo volumes; 2 manuscript boxes

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

For biographical information on Abbot, see the New England Historic and Genealogical Register, vol. I (1847), p. 250; vol. XXVII (1873), p. 88; and the New Hampshire Repository, vol. II, no. 2 (1847), p. 103.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Abbot's sermons, gift of Charles Knowles Bolton, 1937; Abbot's correspondence, gift of Mrs. Lawrence Park, 1940

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Ephraim Abbot (1779-1870) was born in Newcastle, Me., the eldest son of Benjamin and Sarah Brown Abbot. After being tutored by Rev. Asa McFarland and studying at the Phillips Exeter Academy, he attended Harvard College from 1802 to 1806. He served as preceptor at Charlestown Academy, 1806 to 1808, and later entered Andover Theological Seminary, graduating with the first class in 1810. Abbot served as a missionary and agent of the Massachusetts Bible Society in several New England areas (Maine from June 1811 to May 1812; Connecticut for three months; and Rhode Island and New Hampshire until early 1813), until his ordination as pastor in Greenland, N.H., in October 1813. In 1814, he married his first wife, Mary Holyoke Pearson (1782-1829).

Abbot remained in Greenland until 1828, serving first as minister and later as both minister and preceptor of the town's newly established Brackett Academy. In 1828, he resigned both positions because of ill health and moved to Westford, Mass., to become principal of Westford Academy, a position he held for nine years. In 1830, he married his second wife, Abigail Whiting Bancroft (1797-) and had six children by her, three of whom survived him. Besides serving as principal at the Academy, Abbot also preached at the First Congregational Church (Unitarian) in Westford for two periods: 1831 to 1835 and 1840 to 1845. In addition, he was a Justice of the Peace, a member of the School Committee, and, in 1839, he represented Westford in the state legislature. He moved to Harvard, Mass., in 1848, but returned to Westford in 1850, where he cultivated a small farm.

The diaries trace Abbot's daily activities, visits to friends and relatives, preaching duties, and letter writing. The sermons deal with various scriptural subjects and each contains a listing on the outside leaf of when and where it was delivered.

The majority of letters were written by Abbot, his first fiancée, and her family. His relationship with Mary Pearson came about through Abbot's connection with her father, Rev. Eliphalet Pearson (1752-1826), who was one of his teachers at the Seminary. Rev. Pearson's advice, usually channeled through his daughter to Abbot, is a common characteristic of many letters. All correspondence from May 1808 to June 1811 was between Abbot and Mary Pearson. He was devoted to her in these letters and declared his ardent love for her, but refused to force her into a permanent relationship due to his financial insecurity. Abbot also wrote about his activities as a missionary in Robbinstown and Denneysville in eastern Maine, describing in many letters the sinful state of the congregation and his discouragement because of the lack of moral character he encountered in the region. In one letter, dated 10 and 11 July 1811, Abbot described the Indian settlement at Pleasant Point. Other letters recount his activities in Greenland, N.H., including a letter dated 27 October 1813, which detailed his ordination ceremony.

Later correspondence is widely scattered and reveals Abbot's role as head of the Abbot family. Several younger family members wrote to him for advice, or simply to register their activities with him. There is also evidence in these later letters of his business and agricultural interests: bank and investment statements, student boarding fees, and letters asking advice on planting and harvesting. Abbot's last letter, dated 27 March 1868, is unique in that he commented on a national issue: the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson. Letters after this date were written by family members, most often by Abbot's daughter, Lucy (1832-) or her friends.

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American Antiquarian Society
MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT

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