Guide to the Asa Fitch Papers

MS 215

compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

July 1982

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 215
CREATOR: Fitch, Asa, 1809-1879
TITLE: Asa Fitch papers
DATES: 1807–1969
BULK DATES: 1807–1922
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)
LANGUAGE: English
SUMMARY: Twenty-one diaries, 1821-1879, of Asa Fitch, scientist and entomologist. The diaries reflect in considerable detail Fitch’s life and thoughts from early adolescence through his education at the Rensselaer School in Troy, New York and the Vermont Academy of Medicine in Castleton, his career as a scientist and state entomologist in New York, and his retirement. Also included are papers and genealogical materials relating to other members of the Fitch family.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0215

Requesting Instructions
To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0215.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:
b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition
Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

The entire collection is available on microfilm. Patrons must use FILM HM 141 instead of the originals.

Conditions Governing Use

Unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by the creator(s) of this collection are in the public domain. There are no restrictions on use. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation

Asa Fitch Papers (MS 215). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Existence and Location of Copies

The entire collection is available on microfilm (2,802 frames on 4 reels, 35mm.) from Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, at cost. Order no. HM141.

Biographical / Historical

Practiced medicine, 1831-1838; studied economic entomology and agriculture, and began publishing articles on the subject in 1845; in 1854 appointed state entomologist of New York, remaining until 1871.

Scope and Contents

The Asa Fitch Papers consist of fifty items. Twenty-one of these are diaries kept by Asa Fitch from 1821 through 1879 in various places in New York State and elsewhere. Notations for several years are lacking. Six volumes, 1821-1828, were lettered A through G, with B missing. To the remaining fifteen volumes numbers have arbitrarily been assigned, although entries are not always consecutive by date.

The remainder of the collection is made up of Fitch family genealogical material copied from the notes of the father of Abbie M. (Fitch) Andrews (1840-) and notes taken from her own research.

A detailed description of the contents of the diaries and other papers follows.
### Collection Contents

#### Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diaries of Asa Fitch</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume &quot;B&quot; [no volume]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume &quot;C&quot;: An account of a scientific tour to Lake Erie under the direction of Prof. Amos Eaton. The entire company is listed in entry for May 2, 1826. For another account of this trip, see written description (April 26, 1826), box 3. 1826 April 25–July 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume &quot;D&quot;: Diary of his first term at Rensselaer School (later Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) in Troy; also 6 p. of expense accounts. 1826 July 18–October 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume &quot;E&quot;: School life in Troy and sojourns in Salem, Greenwich, Albany, Watervliet, Whitecreek, and places in VT, including Bennington; also 2 p. of expense accounts. 1826 November 1–1827 July 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume &quot;F&quot;: Diary of his first year at Castleton Medical School, Castleton, N.Y.; and sojourn in Salem, Greenwich, Granville, and Troy; also 6 p. of expense accounts. 1827 July 27–1828 July 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume &quot;G&quot;: Kept in Whitecreek, Hoosick, Lanesboro, Williamstown, Salem, Greenwich and New York City; also 6 p. of expense accounts. 1828 July 24–December 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume 1: Kept in New York City, Harlem, Manhattanville, Fort Washington, Tarrytown, Singsing, Peekskill, Poughkeepsie, Albany, Whitecreek, Salem, Greenwich, etc.; also 5 p. of expense accounts. 1829 January 1–April 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 1U</td>
<td>Volume 2: Kept in Salem, Greenwich, Albany, Troy, Castleton, VT, etc.; also 6 p. of expense accounts. 1829 May 1–November 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 3: Kept in Castleton, VT., Salem, Granville, Hebron, Cambridge, Albany, Troy, Jackson. 1829 November 23–1830 May 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 4: Kept in Bennington, VT, and Salem, but mostly a scientific expedition with Rensselaer students, a list of whom is given, under Prof. Amos Eaton up the Hudson from New York to Troy, on the Mohawk to Rome, thence to New Boston and Green Lake; meeting with Daniel Cady Eaton in New York, 1830 Jun 23. 1830 May 25–August 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 5: Kept in Jordan. Remainder cut out. 1830 August 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 6: Kept in Greenville and Vandalia, IL. 1830 December 1–1831 February 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 7: Kept in Salem, Jackson, Point Penninsula, Union, Whitecreek, Cambridge, places in VT (particularly Brandon) and Argyle and Ft. Miller, NY. 1831 May 6–1832 January 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Diaries of Asa Fitch (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 8: First part explains lapse in time since previous entries. Latter part written over penciled lecture notes, 1829, few of which are legible. This volume is mainly a letter book, interspersed among diary entries, consisting of letters to members of his family, a few to others on matters of business, but most to Henry Bleecher, George F. Horton, or Wm. S. Robertson. Diary entries recorded in Salem, Albany (where he attended an abolition convention 1839 Aug 1), Stillwater, Saratoga Springs, Warrensburg.</td>
<td>1839 August 16–1842 October 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 9: Kept in Albany, New York City, Granville, Salem and places in NY on scientific expeditions and at various meetings. Lacking entries for 1848-1867.</td>
<td>1847 August 10, 1868 August 28–1869 May 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 10 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 10: Kept mainly in Salem with accounts of weather observations and scientific experiments; in Albany, where on Apr 25, 1865 he watched the funeral procession of Pres. Abraham Lincoln's remains; in New York City, where on Oct. 29, 1865 he heard Henry Ward Beecher speak in Plymouth Church Flatbush; and in Troy.</td>
<td>1865 January 1–1867 February 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 reel 2U</td>
<td>Volume 11: Kept in Albany, Wallingford, CT, Salem, and places in NY and VT where he attended agricultural meetings.</td>
<td>1867 February 12–1869 August 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 reel 3U</td>
<td>Volume 12: Kept in Salem, Manchester, VT, Albany and Troy.</td>
<td>1869 June 1–1871 January 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 reel 3U</td>
<td>Volume 13. Kept in Troy, where on Jun 28, 1871, he heard Prof. Hall speak at the Rensselaer Institute Alumni Meeting and where on Jun 16, 1871 he attended the 48th Annual Commencement of the Rensselaer Institute, a program of which is enclosed; in Salem and Albany.</td>
<td>1871 June 24–1875 June 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 reel 3U</td>
<td>Volume 14: Kept in Salem, Saratoga Springs, Albany, Utica, Verona, and New York City.</td>
<td>1875 June 8–1878 March 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 3U</td>
<td>Volume 15: Kept in Castleton and Argyle, but mainly Salem; contains an alphabetical list of persons mentioned in the diaries.</td>
<td>1878 March 2–1879 March 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Asa Fitch: other volumes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 3U</td>
<td>Autograph album, containing biographical material for many of the signers</td>
<td>1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 3U</td>
<td>Written description, Apr 26, 1826, of commencement at Rensselaer School [later Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute], followed by an account of a scientific tour to Lake Erie, May 2 - Jun 10, by the school under the direction of Prof. Amos Eaton. (Four folders of letter-paper numbered 2-5, lacking number 1, plus one fragment.) With these are two more unnumbered folders giving an account of commencement in 1828 and a geological tour up the Erie Canal to Rochester where &quot;the most marked courtesies&quot; were shown them by Thurlow Weed. Laid in is an amusing account of Prof. Rafinesque as a member of one of these expeditions.</td>
<td>1826–1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 3U</td>
<td>Commonplace book of conundrums, maxims, proverbs, etc.</td>
<td>Undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 3U</td>
<td>&quot;Memorandum book&quot; of his farm activities at Salem, lv.</td>
<td>1842 January 1–1843 September 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Family members
Family members (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 3U</td>
<td>Andrews, Abbie M. (Fitch). Genealogical data on the Fitch family</td>
<td>Undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 3U</td>
<td>Fitch, Elizabeth (McNeil), (1812-). Autograph Album, 1 v.</td>
<td>1829–1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 4U</td>
<td>Skinner, Anna Olivia (Fitch) Rider, (1844-1925)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 4U</td>
<td>Genealogical notes on her family and that of her second husband, Lemuel Sherman Skinner, and their children. Written in volume of Benjamin W. Rider’s reminiscences, 1 v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 4U</td>
<td>“My Anthology”; A combination scrapbook and commonplace book compiled by her. 1 v.</td>
<td>1904–1918, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 4U</td>
<td>Paper entitled “Our Blessings” [6 p.].</td>
<td>Undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 4U</td>
<td>Photograph-autograph album. 1 v.</td>
<td>1863–1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 4U</td>
<td>Genealogy and miscellaneous material consisting mainly of newspaper clippings, postcard views, etc., removed from the various volumes</td>
<td>1909–1922, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 reel 4U</td>
<td>Reprints of articles by Samuel Rezneck relating to Asa Fitch’s journals</td>
<td>1968–1969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Abolitionists
Entomology
Genealogy
Science
Scientific expeditions -- New York (State)

Corporate Bodies
Castleton Medical College (Castleton, Vt.)
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Geographic Names
Illinois -- Description and travel
New York (State) -- Description and travel
New York (State) -- History
Vermont -- Description and travel

Genres / Formats
Autographs
Commonplace books
Diaries

Occupations
Entomologists
Zoologists

Names
Andrews, Abbie M. Fitch, b. 1840
Beecher, Henry Ward, 1813-1887
Bleecher, Henry
Eaton, Amos, 1776-1842
Eaton, Daniel Cady, 1834-1895
Fitch, Asa, 1809-1879
Fitch, Elizabeth McNeil, b. 1812
Horton, Geo. F. (George Firman), 1806-1886
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865
Rider, Benjamin W., 1844-1871
Robertson, W. S. (William Schenck), 1820-1881
Skinner, Anna Olivia Fitch Rider, 1844-1925

Families
Fitch family