Guide to the George Jacob Abbot Papers

MS 28

Adapted by Thomas J. Connors

May 1979

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 28

CREATOR: Abbot, George Jacob, 1812-1879

TITLE: George Jacob Abbot papers

DATES: 1811–1901

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.5 linear feet (4 boxes, 1 folio)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Minister and diplomat. Correspondence largely relating to Abbot’s service as secretary to Daniel Webster and as an agent of the State Department in England and Canada. Included are 104 letters by Daniel Webster as well as copies of several of his speeches. State Department papers concerning controversies with England (1837-1852), newspaper clippings about Daniel Webster and miscellaneous receipts, inventories and photographs make up the remainder of the papers.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0028

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

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of Wilkie Bushby in 1955.
Biographical / Historical

George Jacob Abbot, son of the Rev. Jacob Abbot, a Unitarian minister, was born in Windham, N.H. He graduated from Harvard College in 1835, after which he opened a boys’ school in Washington, D.C. After a clerkship in the State Department, he became private secretary to Daniel Webster, this during Webster’s second term as Secretary of State (1850-1852).

Abbot served as United States consul at Bradford and Sheffield, England, from 1864 to 1870 and, returning to the U.S., was for several years a professor at the Theological School at Meadville, P.A. In 1877 he took another diplomatic position at Goderich and Windsor, Canada, which he maintained until his death.

More information as to Abbot and family may be found in Leonard A. Morrison’s History of Windham in New Hampshire, 1719-1883 (Boston: Cupples, Upham and Co., 1883).

Scope and Contents

The George Jacob Abbot Papers consist mainly of correspondence, drafts of speeches, unfinished drafts of U.S. State Department papers, newspaper clippings and other materials related to Abbot’s employment as secretary to Daniel Webster and to his diplomatic service. There are some Abbot family materials among the papers as well.

The correspondence consists of approximately 700 letters, of which 104 (1811-1852) are by Webster and 74 are to him, and 247 (1842-1878) are by Abbot and 175 to him. Nearly half of Abbot’s letters were written during his diplomatic service in England and Canada. Among the important correspondents are Thomas Stephenson, U.S. Consular Agent; Emory McClintock, Vice-consul at Sheffield; Prentiss Mellen, first Chief Justice of Maine; and judges Charles Jackson, James Kent, and Joseph Story. The correspondence is arranged chronologically, but the letters are individually catalogued in the Department’s manuscript catalogue, and a list of correspondents follow the folder listing.

The speeches include copies of Webster’s Fourth of July speech of 1851 and a speech delivered before the New York Historical Society in 1852. There are several copies of other speeches as well as notes and fragments pertaining to them. These are untitled and undated.

The State Department drafts relate to the British attack on the American steamer Caroline in 1837, to the fisheries dispute with England in 1851, and to the case of John S. Thrasher, and American being held in Cuba, 1851-1852.

The newspaper clippings are mainly reviews of Webster’s speeches and reports of his political activities.
Other materials, presumably related to Abbot’s secretarial duties, include receipts, inventories, lists of names and photographs. A folio contains a certificate of appointment, signed by Millard Fillmore and Daniel Webster, of George King Rogers to the U.S. Consulate in France and a chart of the square mileage of each state and territory of the United States.

Not directly related to Abbot’s employment is a draft deposition (ca. 1776) by Peter Green concerning loyalist activities in the colonies.

Abbot’s family is represented by a manuscript sermon of his father, Rev. Jacob Abbot (1768-1834); “A Record of the Last Days of Daniel Webster,” an unpublished manuscript by Mary J. C. Throop, Abbot’s daughter (b. 1842); and by school examination papers of Anna Abbot Throop, Abbot’s granddaughter (b. 1869). A printed sermon, Discourse Delivered in Windham, N.H., November 5, 1834, at the Internment of Rev. Jacob Abbot, (Nashua, N.H.: Alfred Beard, 1835), has been transferred to the Yale Divinity Library.

The Daniel Webster materials were presumably gathered by Abbot for use in preparing the six volumes of the Works of Daniel Webster (Boston, 1851). Most of Edward Everett’s letters to Abbot refer to the editing and production of the Works. Apparently the Webster papers were also used by Mrs. Throop in preparing her manuscript.

The George Jacob Abbot Papers were given to Yale University Library by Wilkie Bushby in September 1955.

**Arrangement**

Arranged in five sections: Correspondence, Writings, Photographs, Printed Matter, and Newspaper Clippings.
**Collection Contents**

**Inventory**

*1.5 linear feet (4 boxes, 1 folio)*

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<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 1-16</td>
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<td>1811–1865 May</td>
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<td>Drafts of Daniel Webster’s Fourth of July speech</td>
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<td>b. 2, f. 29</td>
<td>Drafts of Daniel Webster’s Fourth of July speech</td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 34</td>
<td>Drafts of U.S. Department of State papers re: the <em>Caroline</em> affair</td>
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<td>Drafts of U.S. Department of State papers re: the John S. Thrasher case</td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 36</td>
<td>Drafts of U.S. Department of State papers re: the fisheries dispute with England</td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 40</td>
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<td>School examination papers and printed matter of Anna A. Throop and Mary J. C. Throop</td>
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<td>b. 5</td>
<td>Certificate of appointment, signed by Millard Fillmore and Daniel Webster, of George King Rogers to the U.S. Consulate in France</td>
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<td>b. 5</td>
<td>Chart of the square mileage of each state and territory of the United States in 1793 and 1851</td>
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List of Correspondents

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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
Clergy
Diplomats
Fisheries -- United States

Geographic Names
Canada
Canada -- Foreign relations -- United States
Cuba -- Foreign relations -- United States
Europe
Great Britain -- Foreign relations -- United States
New England
United States -- Foreign relations
United States -- Foreign relations -- Canada
United States -- Foreign relations -- Cuba
United States -- Foreign relations -- Great Britain
United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783
United States -- Politics and government

Genres / Formats
Photoprints

Names
Abbot, George Jacob, 1812-1879
Everett, Edward, 1794-1865
Fillmore, Millard, 1800-1874
Fuller, Hiram, 1814-1880
Jackson, Charles, 1775-1855
Jewett, Charles C. (Charles Coffin), 1816-1868
Kent, James, 1763-1847
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Mellen, Prentiss, 1764-1840
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Corporate Body
United States. Department of State