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Guide to the George Waldo Papers

YCAL MSS 9



by Karen V. Peltier

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 9

CREATOR: Waldo, George, 1816-1886

TITLE: George Waldo papers

DATES: 1732-1910 (inclusive)

BULK DATES: 1872-1884

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1 linear foot (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain family correspondence, commonplace books, diaries, poetry and sermons of eighteenth-century Waldo ancestors, including the Reverends Ebenezer Devotion (1714-1771) and James Cogswell (1720-1807).

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.waldo>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.waldo>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The papers were donated by George Waldo's granddaughter, Mrs. Andrew R. Morehouse, to The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library from 1963-65.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The George Waldo Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

George Waldo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

GEORGE WALDO, 1816-1886

George Waldo, the youngest son of Ebenezer and Eunice Devotion Waldo, was born in Scotland, then a parish of Windham, Connecticut, on April 14, 1816. Giles, his closest sibling, was two years his senior. Following his brother's footsteps, George was apprenticed to a Norwich printer at age fourteen. In 1832 he attended the Academy at Plainfield and two years later he and Giles went on to Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, where they became friends with Theodore D. Weld, William Tappan, and William Smith. When the school was broken up by anti-slavery agitation, the brothers went to Oneida Institute in New York and then to Amherst College, where George prepared for the ministry. George left Amherst in his junior year; worked briefly in the printing office of a New York daily paper; taught at the school in Southold, Long Island where his brother Giles was principal; and returned in 1842 to the Waldo homestead in the Shetucket River valley of Scotland, Connecticut, where he spent most of his remaining years.

George ran the family farm after his father died on July 7, 1843. In the fall of 1848, he married Sarah Ellen Jagger of West Hampton, Long Island and lived briefly in Brooklyn, New York and in William Tappan's house in Lenox, Massachusetts. The couple built a house on the Waldo property in 1857 and converted the old farm house into a dairy works in 1877.

George's health began to fail in 1860, as a slow paralysis attacked his body, affecting his speech and finally reducing him to an invalid. He died on the last day of 1886 at the age of seventy-one, and his wife died twelve years later. They were survived by seven children: Genevieve, Ernest, Hubert, Margaret Mabelle, Melvine, Gerald, and Jessie. Ebenezer Waldo (-1843) m. Eunice Devotion

Eliza Waldo

Giles Waldo (-1849)

George Waldo (1816-1886) m. 1848 *Sarah Ellen Jagger* (-1898)

Genevieve Waldo

Ernest Waldo

Hubert Waldo

Margaret Mabelle Waldo m. 1877 George Cyrus Thomas

George Thomas (stepson)

Waldo Thomas

Margaret Thomas

Dorothea Thomas m. Andrew R. Morehouse

Melvine Waldo m. 1884 Ralph A. Weston

Gerald Waldo m. 1885 Mary

Jessie Waldo

May Waldo (-1868) Note: The names of important correspondents are underlined. Ebenezer and Eunice Waldo had six other children. The children of George and Sarah Ellen Waldo are arranged in approximate birth order.

Scope and Contents

The George Waldo Papers contain family correspondence documenting the life of George Waldo, a nineteenth-century New England farmer. The papers also contain eighteenth-century commonplace books, diaries, poetry, and sermons probably written by ancestors of George Waldo's mother, Eunice Devotion Waldo. The papers span the dates 1732-1910, but the bulk of the material covers the years 1872-84.

The [Correspondence](#) series begins with a July 27, 1810 letter from Hetty Tuttle to her brother Benjamin Tuthill, probably relatives of Waldo's wife. The rest of the chronologically arranged letters with their original stamped envelopes cover the latter part of the nineteenth century and were written by three groups of correspondents: Giles Waldo, George Waldo, and the Waldo children.

Giles's letters to George, written while he was in Washington D.C. in 1842-43, are housed in folders 2-4. Giles assisted James Pollard Espy "in arranging his meteorological results" and also became acquainted with Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose writings were much admired and quoted by the Waldo family. In a July 18, 1843 letter from Concord, Massachusetts, Giles describes Emerson's neighbors, Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Ellery Channing, and mentions Bronson Alcott's cooperative farm near Harvard.

The other two groups of correspondence cover the period 1865-88. The bulk of George Waldo's letters were written to Carrie M. Otis, a friend from Willimantic who moved to Boston to serve as companion for Mrs. H. B. Emerson and Dr. Caroline E. Hastings. He also wrote to his daughter Margaret Mabelle, called Belle, who married widower George Cyrus Thomas, superintendent at Scoville Manufacturing Company. In letters to Miss Otis, George discussed family news such as the death of his daughter May in January 1868; forwarded letters from such mutual friends as Stuart Weld; thanked her for a piano sent in 1872; and consoled her when Mrs. Emerson went insane and was committed (Box 2, folder 35). Mrs. Waldo, who was kept busy managing her large family, tending her invalid husband, and taking in boarders to supplement the family's income, usually added hastily scrawled postscripts to her husband's letters. Waldo also discussed his reading, which included *Popular Science Monthly*, Carlyle, Emerson, and the Bible, and described the New England seasons, farming, local travel by train and steamer, and rural customs. His letters to Belle are filled with fatherly concern over such things as her failing eyesight and the health of her children, Georgie, Waldo, and Margaret. On November 28, 1881, he encouraged her to visit Concord "and greet there Mr. Alcott and Mr. Emerson."

The third major segment of correspondence is among the Waldo children and Belle was the recipient of most of these letters. Genevieve, her elder sister, wrote about college life at Mount Holyoke in 1871-72, the lectures she attended at Cornell from 1873-75, and teaching primary school in New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey. A May 27, 1874 letter from Ithaca, New York, discusses her ascension in a Donaldson hot-air balloon. Ernest and Hubert, who also attended Cornell like most of the Waldo family, wrote a few letters from Ulysses, Nebraska, where they went in 1883 to practice law and farm. Gerald, who married and stayed in Scotland to run the family farm, wrote during the 1880s about business matters and his rheumatism. Belle's younger sister Melvine, called Mellie, who joined the "emigrants" in 1884, wrote from Alliance, Nebraska after her marriage to Ralph A. Weston, a loan agent. While the youngest sister, Jessie, was still at home, she wrote to Belle in 1877 about gathering wild flowers and making May baskets which "are all the rage in Scotland this spring" and later in 1883 from Ithaca about college life at Cornell. An occasional letter from Belle's friends and children complete the collection, with Aunt Eliza Waldo writing the last letter nearly two years after her brother George's death: "Oh Belle, I don't want to go to Neb[raska], not one bit, and leave you and the children and Gennie . . . , but I must go where my Shepherd is leading."

[Series II, Family Papers](#), is housed in Box 3. It begins with a folder of three unidentified commonplace books, at least one of which may have been written by the Reverend Ebenezer Devotion (1714-1771), first pastor of the Congregational Church in Scotland, Connecticut and grandfather of Eunice Devotion Waldo. The series

also includes sermons and a diary of the Reverend James Cogswell (1720-1807), minister in Canterbury and Scotland, who married Ebenezer Devotion's widow. According to one entry in Cogswell's diary, he traveled to Stamford, Connecticut, to a religious convention chaired by Dr. Witherspoon, attended the Yale commencement of September 8, 1773 at which "a Doctorate was conferred on Mr. Williams of Lebanon," and spent the following evening in Hartford with Governor Griswold. Nearly ten unpublished poems from the same period, in an unknown hand, are also part of the *Family Papers*.

Between 1905 and 1910, Genevieve Waldo compiled the "Letters of George Waldo," a typescript which was intended for publication. It includes excerpts of untraced letters written by George Waldo to family and friends from 1843-71, a memoir of her father, and an appendix of letters from friends of George Waldo written to his family after his death (Box 3, folders 58-66). In his January 5, 1887 letter, Theodore D. Weld wrote "Truth was George's breath of life, Right his pole star, Love his heart-beat, and his tongue's vernacular."

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1810-88

0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)

Boxes 1-2 contain chronologically arranged correspondence.

b. 1, f. 1	Correspondence	1810 Jul 27
b. 1, f. 2	Correspondence	1842
b. 1, f. 3-4	Correspondence	1843
b. 1, f. 5	Correspondence	1865
b. 1, f. 6	Correspondence	1866
b. 1, f. 7	Correspondence	1867
b. 1, f. 8	Correspondence	1868
b. 1, f. 9	Correspondence	1869
b. 1, f. 10	Correspondence	1870
b. 1, f. 11	Correspondence	1871
b. 1, f. 12-13	Correspondence	1872
b. 1, f. 14-16	Correspondence	1873
b. 1, f. 17-21	Correspondence	1874
b. 1, f. 22	Correspondence	1875
b. 1, f. 23-27	Correspondence	1876
b. 1, f. 28-31	Correspondence	1877 Jan-Jul
b. 2, f. 32-34	Correspondence	1877 Aug-Dec
b. 2, f. 35-38	Correspondence	1878
b. 2, f. 39	Correspondence	1879
b. 2, f. 40	Correspondence	1880
b. 2, f. 41	Correspondence	1881
b. 2, f. 42-44	Correspondence	1882
b. 2, f. 45-49	Correspondence	1883
b. 2, f. 50-51	Correspondence	1884
b. 2, f. 52	Correspondence	1885
b. 2, f. 53	Correspondence	1886

b. 2, f. 54	Correspondence	1887
b. 2, f. 55	Correspondence	1888

Series II: Family Papers, 1732-1910*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*Box 3 contains Series II, *Family Papers*, which is arranged alphabetically by type of material.

b. 3, f. 56	Commonplace books	1732-37, n.d.
b. 3, f. 57	Diary of [James Cogswell?]	1773-75
b. 3, f. 58-67	"Letters of George Waldo" (1843-1871): xerox of typescript	[1905-10?]
b. 3, f. 68	Poetry	n.d.
b. 3, f. 69	Sermons of [James Cogswell?]	1754-68

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

Agriculture -- Connecticut
Child care
Children -- Health and hygiene
Eye -- Diseases
Families
Sermons, American
Single women
Teachers -- United States

Corporate Body

Cornell University

Geographic Names

Connecticut -- Description and travel
Connecticut -- Social life and customs
Scotland (Conn.)
Ulysses (Neb.)

Genres / Formats

Commonplace books
Diaries -- United States
Sermons

Occupations

Farmers -- Connecticut

Names

Cogswell, James, 1720-1807
Devotion, Ebenezer, 1714-1771
Otis, Carrie M.
Thomas, George Cyrus
Thomas, Margaret Mabella Waldo
Waldo, Genevieve
Waldo, George, 1816-1886
Waldo, Geraldo
Waldo, Giles
Waldo, Hubert
Waldo, Melvine
Waldo, Sarah Ellen Jagger, -1898

Families

Waldo family