

# Guide to the John Pitkin Norton Papers

MS 367



compiled by Barbara Mathews

February 1971

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 367

**CREATOR:** Norton, John Pitkin, 1822-1852

**TITLE:** John Pitkin Norton papers

**DATES:** 1837-1852

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 4.29 linear feet (8 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Correspondence, diaries, writings and other papers of John Pitkin Norton, professor of agricultural chemistry at Yale from 1846-1852. Norton's diaries contain among other topics Norton's observations on slavery and abolition, the Amistad case, the Liberty Party, religion and temperance. Professor Norton was also closely associated with the early days of the Sheffield Scientific School and was a pioneer in the application of scientific principles and methods to agriculture.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0367>

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## 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 <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0367>.

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

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

John Pitkin Norton Papers (MS 367). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

John Pitkin Norton was born July 19, 1822, in Albany, New York, the son of John Treadwell Norton, a successful farmer, and Mary Hubbard (Pitkin) Norton. He decided at an early age that he, too, would become a farmer. His father agreed to this idea on condition that he receive a thorough education to prepare him for this pursuit. Norton therefore spent winters studying with some of the best teachers in Albany, New York City, New Haven, and Boston. It was apparently his study of mineralogy which first awakened his interest in natural science. In 1844, he went abroad to study, spending two years at Edinburgh and nine months at Utrecht.

In 1846, Norton was appointed professor of agricultural chemistry at Yale and, together with the younger Benjamin Silliman, founded the department of scientific education which later became the Sheffield Scientific School. When Silliman left Yale for another institution, Norton assumed full responsibility for the new venture.

Despite the strenuous labors involved in directing the new school, Norton's educational influence was not confined to the college classroom. Motivated by a genuine interest in the public welfare and a sympathetic concern for the practical problems of the farmer, he constantly sought to convince the general public of the great practical value of applying scientific methods to agriculture. He contributed numerous articles of a popular nature to the agricultural press, especially to the Albany *Cultivator*, and he addressed many agricultural societies on various aspects of scientific agriculture.

Norton also wrote a number of scientific papers including: "On the Analysis of the Oat", a prize study made in 1845 while he was still a student and published in 1846; "The Potato Disease" (1846); "Account of Some Researches on the Protein Bodies of Peas and Almonds, and a Body of Somewhat Similar Nature Existing in Oats" (1848); and an essay published in 1850 under the title *Elements of Scientific Agriculture*, used as a textbook for schools. He also assisted Henry Stephens with additions to *The Book of the Farm* (published in the U. S. in 1850-1851 as *The Farmer's Guide*), a detailed description of the labors of the farmer as related to the seasons of the year.

With his promising career scarcely begun, Norton was stricken with illness. The burden of his many activities left him too weak to resist and he died in Farmington, Connecticut, on September 5, 1852, at the age of thirty.

The John Pitkin Norton Papers are divided into three series: CORRESPONDENCE, WRITINGS, and SPECIAL FILES. CORRESPONDENCE contains three subsections. The first, "General Correspondence," contains approximately 85 letters received by John Pitkin Norton from 1848 to 1851. Many of these concern details of the publication of Norton's works, especially his additions to Henry Stephens' *Book of the Farm*. There are numerous other letters requesting Norton to address various organizations.

The second subsection, "Invoices", consists of one volume containing approximately 135 invoices received by Norton from 1850 to 1852. A list of persons from whom the invoices were received is in the back of the book.

The third subsection, "Letters Written by John Pitkin Norton", consists of one letterbook containing letterpress copies of approximately 75 letters written by Norton in 1851-1852. There are also several letter-essays written for the agricultural press. A list of persons to whom his letters were addressed is in the front of the book.

WRITINGS makes up the bulk of the papers and is divided into: "Addresses," "Articles," "Diaries," "Lectures," and "Notes." "Addresses" consists primarily of printed copies of Norton's addresses on scientific agriculture to various agricultural societies. There is also one speech given before the Connecticut Legislature. "Articles" consists of Norton's scientific papers, his additions to Stephens' *Book of the Farm* ("Winter," "Spring," "Summer," and "Autumn"), and numerous articles contributed to the agricultural press, especially to the Albany *Cultivator*. "Diaries" is composed of ten manuscript volumes covering the years 1838-1847 and 1851-1852, and contain among other topics Norton's observations on slavery and abolition, the Amistad case, the Liberty Party, religion and temperance. "Lectures" consists primarily of a series of 33 lectures used in courses at Yale College from 1847 to 1851. "Notes" contains a catalogue of minerals, a volume containing a subject guide to his readings, and a sheet with notes about various soils.

SPECIAL FILES, contains a daguerreotype, an agricultural and geological map of New York State (1844), a volume containing manuscript copies of poems by various authors, and a scrapbook of newspaper clippings (mostly poems, anecdotes, and short stories.) [For a biographical sketch of John Norton Pitkin see the William Henry Brewer Papers, MS 100.]

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## Scope and Contents

Correspondence, diaries, writings and other papers of John Pitkin Norton, professor of agricultural chemistry at Yale from 1846-1852. Norton's diaries contain among other topics Norton's observations on slavery and abolition, the Amistad case, the Liberty Party, religion and temperance. Professor Norton was also closely associated with the early days of the Sheffield Scientific School and was a pioneer in the application of scientific principles and methods to agriculture.

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## Arrangement

Arranged in three series: I. Correspondence. II. Writings. III. Special Files.

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence, 1848-1852

CORRESPONDENCE is divided into three subsections, as follows:

"General Correspondence," consisting of letters received by John Pitkin Norton is arranged alphabetically by the name of the writer.

"Invoices," consists of one volume containing invoices received by John Pitkin Norton. A list prepared by Norton of persons from whom invoices were received is at the back of the book.

"Letters by John Pitkin Norton," consists of one letterbook containing letterpress copies of letters written by Norton. A list prepared by Norton of persons to whom his letters were addressed is in the front of the book. (A small number of letters sent by Norton are in bound letter-books in the "Articles" section of Series II. The correspondence folders are cross referenced to indicate where this material may be found.)

#### General Correspondence,

	A	1849, 1851, undated
b. 1, f. 1	Allen, A. A.	
b. 1, f. 1	Allen, A. B.	
b. 1, f. 1	Alsof, Charles	
	B	1848-1851, undated
b. 1, f. 2	Ball, L. Chandler	
b. 1, f. 2	Blackwood, R. W.	
b. 1, f. 2	Blackwood and Sons	
b. 1, f. 2	Book of the Farm (memorandum)	
b. 1, f. 2	Bosquit, A. E. Dudock	
b. 1, f. 2	Brown, Harvey	
b. 1, f. 2	Buckland, George	
	C	1849, 1851
b. 1, f. 3	Calhoun, W. B.	
b. 1, f. 3	Campbell, William H.	
b. 1, f. 3	Chambers, William H.	
b. 1, f. 3	Chandler, Adoniram	
b. 1, f. 3	Chickering, J.	
b. 1, f. 3	Clark, William	

## General Correspondence, (continued)

	D-F	1848-1851
b. 1, f. 4	Delafield, I.	
b. 1, f. 4	Elwyn, A. L.	
b. 1, f. 4	Evans, Gurdon	
b. 1, f. 4	Field, Maunsell B.	
	G-H	1849, 1851, undated
b. 1, f. 5	Goadby, Henry	
b. 1, f. 5	Gott and Palmer	
b. 1, f. 5	Gould, Augustus A.	
b. 1, f. 5	Henry, Joseph	
b. 1, f. 5	Hickson, Caleb S.	
b. 1, f. 5	Holbrook, F.	
	J-L	1849
b. 1, f. 6	Jay, John	
b. 1, f. 6	Johnson, B. P.	
b. 1, f. 6	Johnston, James	
b. 1, f. 6	Kirby, E.	
b. 1, f. 6	Lincoln, John W.	
b. 1, f. 6	Lowell, John A.	
	M-O	1851
b. 1, f. 7	Meads, Orlando	
b. 1, f. 7	Moffat, Daniel	
b. 1, f. 7	Olcott, Thomas W.	
	P	
b. 1, f. 8	Paine, N. E.	
b. 1, f. 8	Pardee, R. G.	
b. 1, f. 8	Pease, E. H. and Co.	
b. 1, f. 8	Phelps, Oliver	
b. 1, f. 8	Putnam, George P.	1850-1851, undated

## General Correspondence, (continued)

b. 1, f. 9	R Rockwell, Charles H.	1849
	Sc-Si	1849-1851
b. 1, f. 10	Scott, Leonard and Co.	
b. 1, f. 10	Sheffrey, P.	
b. 1, f. 10	Sherwood, John W.	
b. 1, f. 10	Sibbs, Wolcott	
b. 1, f. 10	Silliman, Benjamin, Jr.	
	Sk-St	1848, 1849, 1851
b. 1, f. 11	Skinner, I. S.	
b. 1, f. 11	Slight, James	
b. 1, f. 11	Smith, I. Lawrence	
b. 1, f. 11	Sprangler, A. M.	
b. 1, f. 11	Stabler, Edward	
b. 1, f. 11	Stafford, James R.	
b. 1, f. 11	Stephens, Henrh	
	T-W	1849-1851, undated
b. 1, f. 12	Tinson, R. U. and Co.	
b. 1, f. 12	Tucker, Luther	
b. 1, f. 12	Völcker, August	
b. 1, f. 12	Wendell, Herman	
b. 1, f. 12	Wurter, Henry	
b. 1, f. 12	Wyman, Morrill	
	<u>Invoices</u>	
b. 1, f. 13	A list of persons from whom invoices are received is in the back of the book	1850-1852
	<u>Correspondence From:</u>	
b. 8, f. 1	Norton, John Pitkin	1851-1852



**Series II: Writings, 1837-1852**

WRITINGS is divided into: "Addresses," "Articles," "Diaries," "Lectures," and "Notes."

"Articles" are arranged alphabetically by title. Included in this section, under the title "Agricultural Press," are numerous articles written in letter form to agricultural periodicals. (Several additional "Agricultural Press" articles are contained in the bound volume of "Letters by John Pitkin Norton" in Series I). These articles are bound into two volumes, each of which has an index in the front, and one unindexed volume. These three volumes also contain other material; one contains drafts of Norton's additions to Stephens *Book of the Farm*: "Winter," "Spring," "Summer," and "Autumn." A list of the material in each volume appears on the front of the folders, and folders are cross referenced to indicate where other drafts or complementary material may be found.

"Diaries" consists of ten manuscript volumes covering the years 1838-1852.

"Lectures" are also arranged chronologically.

"Notes" contains three folders arranged alphabetically by category.

Addresses

b. 2, f. 1	1. Hartford County Agricultural Society	1847
b. 2, f. 1	2. New York State Agricultural Society	1848
b. 2, f. 1	3. Connecticut Legislature	1848
b. 2, f. 1	4. New Haven County Agricultural Society	1849
b. 2, f. 1	5. Hampshire, Franklin, and Hampden, Agricultural Society	1849
b. 2, f. 1	6. Ontario Co. Agricultural Society	1850
b. 2, f. 1	7. Hampden County Agricultural Society	1851
b. 2, f. 1	8. Unidentified Audience	undated

Articles

b. 2, f. 2	"Account of Some Researches on the Protein Bodies of Peas and Almonds and a Body of Somewhat Similar Nature Existing in Oats" English	1848
b. 2, f. 3-5	Agricultural Press	1844-1852
b. 8, f. 2	Agricultural Press	1851-1852
b. 2, f. 6	"Autumn" (pp. 1-63) English	undated
b. 2, f. 7	"Description of a New Sand-Bath" English	1851
b. 3, f. 8	"Observations on Soil Analyses" English	undated
b. 3, f. 9	"On the Analysis of the Oat" English	1845

## Articles (continued)

b. 3, f. 10	"On the Value of Soil Analyses" English	undated
b. 3, f. 11	"Potato Disease" English	1846
b. 3, f. 12	"Spring" (plus incomplete second draft) English	
b. 3, f. 13	"Summer" English	undated
b. 8, f. 2	["Winter"] English	
b. 3, f. 15	Unidentified fragments	undated
<u>Diaries</u>		
b. 3, f. 16	Volume I, Apr 26 - Jun 11	1838-1839
b. 3, f. 17	Volume II, Jun 11 - Jun 28 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1839-1840
b. 3, f. 18	Volume III, Jun 29 - Sep 15 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1840-1841
b. 4, f. 19	Volume IV, Sep 16 - Oct 20 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1841-1842
b. 4, f. 20	Volume V, Oct 21 - Apr 11	1842-1844
b. 4, f. 21	Volume VI, Apr 12 - May 8	1844-1845
b. 4, f. 22	Volume VII, May 8 - Aug 29	1845-1846
b. 4, f. 23	Volume VIII, Aug 30 - Jun 30	1846-1847
b. 5, f. 24	Jan 1 - Dec 31	1851
b. 5, f. 25	Jan 1 - Aug	1852
<u>Lectures</u>		
b. 5, f. 26	On Ornithology	1841
b. 5, f. 27	Yale College, No. 1, Introductory	1847-1848
b. 5, f. 28	Yale College	1847-1851
b. 5, f. 28	II. Distinction Between Organic and Inorganic Bodies	

## Lectures &gt; Yale College (continued)

b. 5, f. 28	III. Characteristic Properties of Organic Substances
b. 5, f. 28	IV. The Atmosphere and Water
b. 5, f. 28	V. Compounds of Organic Elements
b. 5, f. 29	VI. Compounds of Organic Elements
b. 5, f. 29	VII. Source of Organic Elements of Plants
b. 5, f. 29	VIII. Structure and Functions of the Plant
b. 5, f. 29	IX. Structure and Functions of the Plant
b. 5, f. 29	X. Substances of Which Plants Consist
b. 5, f. 30	XI. Substances of Which Plants Consist
b. 5, f. 30	XII. Nitrogenous Substances of Plants
b. 5, f. 30	XIII. How the Supply of Organic Food Is Retained
b. 5, f. 30	XIV. Inorganic Constituents of Plants
b. 5, f. 30	XV. Inorganic Constituents of Plants
b. 5, f. 31	XVI. Relative Proportions of the Inorganic Substances of Plants
b. 5, f. 31	XVII. Theories of Rotation of Crops
b. 5, f. 31	XVIII. Nature of the Soil
b. 5, f. 31	XIX. Composition of Principal Rocks and Soils
b. 5, f. 31	XX. Mechanical Improvement of Soils
b. 5, f. 31	XXI. Subsoiling and Chemical Improvements
b. 5, f. 31	XXII. Mineral Manures
b. 5, f. 31	XXIII. Inorganic Manures; Lime
b. 5, f. 31	XXIV. Lime; Organic Manures
b. 5, f. 31	XXV. Organic Manures
b. 6, f. 33	XXVI. Organic Manures
b. 6, f. 33	XXVII. Animal Manures
b. 6, f. 33	XXVIII. Products of the Soil
b. 6, f. 33	XIX. Products of the Soil
b. 6, f. 33	XXX. Products of the Soil
b. 6, f. 34	XXXI. Casein and Cheese
b. 6, f. 34	XXXII. Feeding, Fattening, and [Cheese]

## Lectures &gt; Yale College (continued)

b. 6, f. 34	XXXIII. Recapitulation and Conclusion	
b. 6, f. 35	Yale College	1850
b. 6, f. 36	University of Albany	undated
<u>Notes</u>		
b. 6, f. 37	Catalogue of Minerals	1841-1842
b. 6, f. 38	Index of Subjects (Notes on Readings)	1837-?
b. 6, f. 39	Soil Notes, Albany, New Haven, Farmington	undated

**Series III: Special Files, 1844, undated**

SPECIAL FILES contains four folders arranged alphabetically by category.

b. 7, f. 1	Daguerreotype	undated
b. 7, f. 2	Map of New York State, Agricultural and Geological	1844
b. 7, f. 3	Poems	undated
b. 7, f. 4	Scrapbook	

## **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  
Science

### **Geographic Names**

Europe -- Description and travel

### **Occupations**

Agriculturists  
Chemists  
Scientists

### **Names**

Norton, John Pitkin, 1822-1852

### **Corporate Bodies**

Amistad (Schooner)  
Yale University. Sheffield Scientific School  
Yale University -- Faculty