

Guide to the Samuel Witt Eaton Papers

MS 972



compiled by Staff of Manuscripts and Archives

December 1982

Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
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Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Collection Overview | 3 |
| Requesting Instructions | 3 |
| Administrative Information | 3 |
| Immediate Source of Acquisition | 3 |
| Conditions Governing Access | 4 |
| Conditions Governing Use | 4 |
| Preferred Citation | 4 |
| Biographical / Historical | 4 |
| Scope and Contents | 5 |
| Collection Contents | 6 |
| Selected Search Terms | 7 |

Collection Overview

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CALL NUMBER: MS 972

CREATOR: Eaton, Samuel Witt, 1820-1905

TITLE: Samuel Witt Eaton papers

DATES: 1838-1905

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.25 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Samuel Witt Eaton Papers consist largely of correspondence from classmates at Yale College, among them Timothy Dwight, James Hadley, and John A. Porter. The letters discuss theology and the ministry as well as life at Yale College. Also in the papers are materials relating to the Civil War, during which Eaton served as chaplain. Included is his "Some sketches from a three year experience in the army."

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0972>

Requesting Instructions

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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

Gift of Mrs. Henry W. Hincks, 1947-1948.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Samuel Witt Eaton Papers (MS 972). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

Samuel Witt Eaton, son of Eben Eaton, for over half a century deacon of the Congregational church in Framingham, Mass., was born on the ancestral farm in that town December 25, 1820. His mother was Sally Chadwick (Spofford) Eaton, who was educated at Bradford (Mass.) Academy.

After graduation he studied theology one year in Union Seminary, two years in Yale Seminary, and one year in Andover Seminary. He was licensed to preach in September, 1844, and while at Andover was stated supply in Montgomery, Mass. Having determined to devote his life to work in the new West then opening up in the Mississippi valley, he settled at Lancaster, the county seat of Grant County, Wisc., a fertile region abounding in lead mines. He was ordained as an evangelist January 28, 1848. After several years of arduous pioneer work the failure of his health compelled him to return East for rest, and he spent most of the year 1857 in European travel. Returning to Lancaster, his work was again interrupted in the second year of the Civil War by his acceptance of the chaplaincy of the Seventh Wisconsin Volunteers, one of the regiments of the "Iron Brigade." In this service he continued to the close of the war and gained the devoted friendship of soldiers and officers. He was on duty at the battles of South Mountain, Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, before Petersburg, and at Appomattox Court House on the surrender of General Lee. After resuming his pastorate the church was enlarged, and then replaced by a new structure, but at the end of twenty years' further service, and forty from the beginning of his pastorate, the church yielded to his request for release, and in 1886 he accepted the call of the Congregational church at Roscoe, Ill. His service there was also notable in character and results and continued for sixteen years. In the autumn of 1903 he removed to Beloit, Wisc., the home of his son, President Eaton.

Since 1866 he had been a Trustee of Beloit College, from which he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1883. From 1881 to 1899 he was a Corporate Member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and was recognized as a wise leader in church councils. Two of his sermons -- one at the ordination of his eldest son in 1873 -- were published.

Dr. Eaton died after six months of extreme weakness, at the residence of his son, Dr. Samuel L. Eaton (Yale 1877), in Newton Highlands, Mass., February 9, 1905, at the age of 84 years.

He married, May 20, 1847, Catharine Elizabeth, daughter of Rev. James and Mary (Schoonmaker) Demarest, of Napanoch, Ulster County, N.Y. Their golden wedding was an occasion of unusual interest. They had four sons -- all living -- of whom the eldest, Rev. James D. Eaton, D.D. (Beloit 1869), has been for over twenty years a missionary in Mexico, the second, Rev. Edward D. Eaton, D.D., L.L.D. (Beloit 1872, B.D. Yale 1875), has been President of Beloit College since 1886, and the two younger are physicians. Mrs. Eaton died in February, 1904.

[Taken from the *Yale Obituary Record*.]

Scope and Contents

Approximately forty letters to Samuel Witt Eaton from friends of his Yale College days make up the bulk of this small collection. His correspondents include Timothy Dwight (1828-1916), James Hadley (1821-1872), and John A. Porter (1822-1866), author of almost half of the letters. There are, in addition, one letter from Eaton's wife, two from his brother Sereno, and one letter written by Eaton to John A. Porter. Topics discussed in these letters include theology and the ministry, education, and life at Yale and in New Haven.

Other materials in the collection deal with the Civil War. Among these are notes by Eaton on his service in the Union Army, letters from Samuel B. Morse and J.L. Pickard concerning his commission, a list of monies sent home by members of the 7th Wisconsin Infantry, and a clipping about pickets and chaplains. The remaining items in the collection are a list of appointments for the 1842 Yale commencement, a list of books by Eaton, and a sketch of Eaton.

These papers were donated to Yale University by Mrs. Henry W. Hincks in 1947 and 1948.

Collection Contents

Correspondence

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | Chandler, Joseph | 1842 |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Clark, Perkins K. | 1845 |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Dana, John A. | 1842-1843 |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Dwight, Timothy | 1875-1886 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Eaton, Catharine E. | 1866 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Eaton, Samuel W. | 1848 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Eaton, Sereno D. | 1839-1840 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Hadley, James | 1850-1851 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Long, Charles | undated |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Morse, Samuel B. | 1862 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Pickard, Josiah L. | 1862 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Porter, Henry C. | 1852 |
| b. 1, f. 3 | Porter, John A. | 1844-1866, undated |
| b. 1, f. 4 | Rice, J., Jr. | 1838 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Savage, George S.F. | 1847 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Turner, Sylvester W. | 1905 |
| b. 1, f. 5 | Unsigned | |
| b. 1, f. 5a | "Some sketches from a three year experience in the army," by Samuel Witt Eaton English | [1865?] |
| b. 1, f. 5b | List of sums of money sent home by members of the 7th Wisconsin infantry | 1864 September 27 |

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
Theology

Geographic Names

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

Names

Dwight, Timothy, 1828-1916
Eaton, Samuel Witt, 1820-1905
Eaton, Sereno
Hadley, James, 1821-1872
Morse, Samuel B.
Pickard, J. L. (Josiah Little), 1824-1914
Porter, Henry Clinton, d. 1877
Porter, John A. (John Addison), 1822-1866
Turner, Sylvester Wooster, 1822-1906

Corporate Bodies

Yale College (1718-1887). Class of 1842
Yale University -- Students