

The John Aldrich Stephenson Collection of the Hand, Fiske, and Aldrich Families Papers

**A Register of the Collection in the Library of
Congress**

Prepared by Oliver H. Orr



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

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**Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress
Manuscript Division, 2008**

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Collection Summary

Title: John Aldrich Stephenson Collection of the Hand, Fiske, and Aldrich Families Papers

Span Dates: 1745-1966

ID No.: MSS65753

Collector: Stephenson, John Aldrich

Extent: 4,000 items; 19 containers; 8 linear feet

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Correspondence, diaries, journals, travel diaries, manuscripts of sermons, poems, essays, and other writings, business and financial records, printed works, biographical and genealogical materials, drawings and reproductions of paintings and photographs, and other papers collected by Stephenson relating to the Hand, Fiske, and Aldrich families.

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.

Personal Names

Aldridge family.

Chauncey family.

Fisk family.

Hand family.

Organizations

Amherst College.

Middlebury College--Faculty.

United States. Army--Chaplains.

United States. Army--Officers.

United States. Army. Connecticut Infantry Regiment, 14th (1862-1865)

United States. Army. Minnesota Infantry Regiment, 4th (1861-1865)

United States. Congress. Senate.

United States. Continental Army--Officers.

United States. Office of Indian Affairs.

United States. Patent Office.

United States. Post Office Dept.

Subjects

Authors.

Cherokee Indians--Government relations.

Congregational churches--Clergy.

Indian agents.

Indians of North America--Missions.

Locations

Ohio--Officials and employees.

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

United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.

United States--Social life and customs.

Washington (D.C.)--History.

Related Names

Aldrich, Morton Arnold, 1874-1956. Morton Arnold Aldrich papers.

Aldrich, Zoë Worthington Fiske, 1864-1942. Zoë Worthington Fiske Aldrich papers.

Chauncy, Elnathan, 1724-1796. Elnathan Chauncy sermons.

Fiske, Asa Severance, 1833-1925. Asa Severance Fiske papers.

Fiske, Elizabeth Worthington Hand, 1835-1919. Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske papers.

Fiske, Samuel Wheelock, 1828-1864. Samuel Wheelock Fiske papers.
Fowler, William Chauncey, 1793-1881. William Chauncey Fowler papers.
Hand, Catharine Worthington Fowler, 1801-1865. Catharine Worthington Fowler Hand papers.
Hand, Joseph Winborn, 1792-1844. Joseph Winborn Hand papers.
Meigs, Return Jonathan, 1740-1823. Return Jonathan Meigs papers.
Meigs, Return Jonathan, 1764-1825. Return Jonathan Meigs papers.
Stephenson, John Aldrich. John Aldrich Stephenson papers.

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The John Aldrich Stephenson Collection was placed in the Library of Congress by John Aldrich Stephenson, and his wife, Mary Sue Honaker Stephenson, in 1986, in part as a gift and in part as a deposit, which was later converted in stages to gift status.

Processing History:

The John Aldrich Stephenson Collection was arranged and described in 1993. The finding aid was revised in 2008.

Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of the John Aldrich Stephenson Collection is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John Aldrich Stephenson Collection of the Hand, Fiske, and Aldrich Families Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The John Aldrich Stephenson Collection, consisting of the papers of several generations of Stephenson's ancestors, spans the years 1745-1966. The central figures are Joseph Winborn Hand (1792-1844); his wife, the former Catharine Worthington Fowler (1801-1865); their children, principally Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske (1835-1919); Elizabeth's husband, Asa Severance Fiske (1833-1925); the Fiskes' daughter, Zoë Worthington Fiske Aldrich (1864-1942); and Zoë's husband, Morton Arnold Aldrich (1874-1956). The collection is organized into nine series: [Diaries, Journals, Notebooks, and Notes](#); [General Correspondence and Related Items](#); [Special Correspondence](#); [Speeches and Writings](#); [Biography and Genealogy](#); [Account Books and Financial Papers](#); [Travel File](#); [Pictorial Material](#); and [Miscellaneous Printed Material](#).

The earliest papers are chiefly those of relatives of Catharine Worthington Fowler Hand, especially persons with the surname Chauncy (later spelled Chauncey), including her grandfather, Elnathan Chauncy (1724-1796), a minister in Connecticut. Chauncy was possibly the author of a group of unsigned sermons, 1759-1798, more than half of which were written for congregations of Indians. In another handwriting are unsigned sermons dated 1799-1804. There are also a few early papers of Joseph Winborn Hand's ancestors, including his grandfather Return Jonathan Meigs (1740-1823), Continental army colonel and agent of the United States Office of Indian Affairs for the Cherokee Indians, and his uncle Return Jonathan Meigs (1764-1824), United States senator from Ohio, governor of the same state, and postmaster general.

Catharine Worthington Fowler Hand's brother, William Chauncey Fowler (1793-1881), an author and professor successively at Middlebury College and Amherst College, married Noah Webster's daughter Harriet. Fowler edited one edition of Webster's dictionary and wrote a widely used textbook on English grammar. He is represented by occasional letters dated 1811-1875 and by numerous letters from Catharine to him. The letters, 1821-1846, of Elisa Ann Fowler (d. 1849), sister of Catharine and William, are from East Guilford (renamed Madison in 1826), Connecticut, where she sometimes cared for Catharine's children, and from Durham, Connecticut, where she kept house for her parents. There are a few personal letters, 1802-1840, from her

mother, Catharine Chauncy Fowler (1765-1841), as well as letters, 1824-1826, from her father, Reuben Rose Fowler (1763-1844), who managed farm lands for his son-in-law, Joseph Winborn Hand.

The principal correspondents before the Civil War are Joseph Winborn Hand and his wife Catharine Worthington Fowler Hand. Joseph is represented by almost three hundred letters, 1816-1844, complemented by four diaries, 1814-1817; Catharine by more than four hundred letters, 1820-1860. Most of Joseph's letters are addressed to Catharine from Washington, D.C., where he rose from clerical assistant to solicitor in the Post Office Department. Beginning in 1835, he served as chief clerk in the Patent Office until he died in 1844. In his letters he offered advice about rearing the children, passed along news of friends and neighbors in Washington, and commented upon political leaders and events.

For the years 1844-1860, the correspondence consists largely of letters exchanged among Catharine and four of the five Hand children who survived infancy. Chauncey Meigs Hand (d. 1865), the oldest child, wrote chiefly from Yale College, where he graduated; from Oxford, Maryland, and Alexandria, Virginia, where he taught school; and from the city of New York, where he struggled unsuccessfully to establish himself as a lawyer. Catharine Chauncey Hand, who died in 1854, wrote from schools she attended in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and the city of New York; her letters are complemented by drawings, verses, school essays, and a small diary, 1846. Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske's letters are chiefly from schools she attended with her sister Catharine, from places in Virginia and South Carolina where she taught, and from Madison, to which she often returned for short periods. Charles Fowler Hand (1837-1874) wrote to his family from several preparatory schools and from Williams College and Andover Theological Seminary.

There is also prewar correspondence of the Fiske (sometimes spelled Fisk) family, principally of Samuel Wheelock Fiske (1828-1864) as he prepared for the ministry and then as he served as pastor of the Congregational church in Madison, 1848-1860; his brother Asa Severance Fiske as he studied for the ministry, met and married Elizabeth Worthington Hand, and became pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, 1858-1860; and Laura Severance Fisk[e] (1795-1870), who wrote from Shelburne, Massachusetts, to her sons Samuel and Asa, 1850-1860. A bound volume contains letters, 1837-1856, between Richard Dennis Mowry and Lucy Morton Albee Mowry, chiefly before their marriage, while she lived and taught school in Oxford, Massachusetts, and he lived in Uxbridge. Their grandson, Morton Arnold Aldrich, later married Zoë Worthington Fiske, daughter of Asa Severance and Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske.

The most important wartime letters are from Samuel Wheelock Fiske, who commanded a company in the Fourteenth Connecticut Infantry and died from wounds received in the battle of the Wilderness, and Asa Severance Fiske, who wrote diaries as well as letters, 1862-1865, while serving as chaplain for the Fourth Minnesota Infantry and later as assistant superintendent of contrabands for the Department of West Tennessee. He built Camp Fiske at Memphis to house several thousand freedmen, toured northern cities to raise money for food, clothes, and medical supplies, and lobbied for the establishment of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in the War Department. There are also letters from Charles Fowler Hand, who was wounded at Beverly Ford (Brandy Station, Virginia) while serving as an enlisted man in the Second United States Cavalry and then had a relatively uneventful year as a captain in the Sixty-third United States Colored Infantry, and Chauncey Meigs Hand, who enlisted in the Second New York Cavalry and was twice wounded in battle. Neither Charles nor Chauncey recovered from their wartime experiences. Chauncey died in Madison in 1865 and Charles in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., in 1874. Letters from Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske were written from Memphis when she was with her husband and from boarding houses and relatives' homes when she could not be with him.

After the Civil War, Asa Severance Fiske held pastorates successively in Rockville, Connecticut; Rochester, New York; San Francisco, California; and Ithaca, New York. He held pastorates until he was eighty-four, retiring at last in New Orleans. The collection includes his letters from various locations, a report he wrote in 1871 for the United States Bureau of Education on the relation between education and crime in New England, and numerous manuscripts of sermons and articles, along with books, pamphlets, and clipped articles. Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske is represented by manuscript poems, essays, and stories, as well as a scrapbook of clippings of her poems as published in periodicals. There are also postwar letters from David Fisk, Jane (Jeannie) Isabel Fiske Hawkes (Mrs. David B. Hawkes), Rebecca Wheelock Fiske Hart (Mrs. Burdett Hart), Morton Arnold Aldrich, Zoë Worthington Fiske Aldrich, and Morton Arnold Aldrich's parents, Charles Arnold Aldrich and Helen Francelia Mowry Aldrich. Helen Aldrich's cousin, William T. G. Morton, the dentist who discovered the anesthetic use of ether in surgery, is represented by letters of 20 September 1862 and 20 September 1866.

The Aldriches are further represented by account books and financial papers of Charles Arnold Aldrich's dry goods business in Boston; diaries kept by Morton Arnold Aldrich in 1887 and 1888 while traveling with his parents in the Azores, Portugal, France, Switzerland, Italy, Holland, and England; letters written by Morton and his mother on a trip around the world, 1895-1897; and letters from Morton while he camped in the mountains of North Carolina during several summers in the 1920s.

Genealogical charts showing selected family members are available with the paper finding aid in the Reading Room of the Manuscript Division

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in nine series:

- [Diaries, Journals, Notebooks and Notes, 1814-1931](#)
- [General Correspondence and Related Items, 1745-1955](#)
- [Special Correspondence, 1837-1856](#)
- [Speeches and Writings, 1759-1966](#)
- [Biography and Genealogy, 1848-1956](#)
- [Account Books and Financial Papers, 1850-1882](#)
- [Travel File, 1866-1897](#)
- [Pictorial Material, undated](#)
- [Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1842-1935](#)

Description of Series

Container

Series

BOX 1-2

Diaries, Journals, Notebooks and Notes, 1814-1931

Diaries and journals kept by Joseph Winborn Hand and Catharine Worthington Fowler Hand in the early nineteenth century; by Catharine Chauncey Hand and Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske in the mid-nineteenth century; by Asa Severance Fiske during the Civil War; and by Helen Francelia Mowry Aldrich and Morton Arnold Aldrich in the late nineteenth century; along with other records.

Arranged by author.

BOX 2-13

General Correspondence and Related Items, 1745-1955

Chiefly letters to and from Joseph Winborn Hand and his wife, Catharine Worthington Fowler Hand; Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske and her husband, Asa Severance Fiske; and Zoë Worthington Fiske Aldrich and her husband, Morton Arnold Aldrich.

Arranged chronologically except for undated items, which are arranged alphabetically by writer.

BOX 14

Special Correspondence, 1837-1856

Letters exchanged between Richard Dennis Mowry and his wife, the former Lucy Morton Albee, chiefly before their marriage.

Arranged chronologically.

BOX 14-17

Speeches and Writings, 1759-1966

Manuscripts and printed works, principally of Asa Severance Fiske; his wife, Elizabeth Worthington Hand Fiske; and their daughters, Zoë Worthington Fiske Aldrich and Christabel Forsyth Fiske.

Divided into two categories, manuscripts and printed works, and arranged thereunder by author.

BOX 18

Biography and Genealogy, 1848-1956

Genealogical notes and charts and published obituaries, histories, and biographical sketches.

Divided into two categories, manuscripts and printed works.

BOX 18

Account Books and Financial Papers, 1850-1882

Chiefly related to Charles Arnold Aldrich.

Arranged alphabetically by topic.

BOX 18

Travel File, 1866-1897

Scrapbook and correspondence relating to the travels of Charles Arnold Aldrich; his wife, Helen Francelia Mowry Aldrich; and his son, Morton Arnold Aldrich

Arranged alphabetically by name.

BOX 18

Pictorial Material, undated

Drawings and reproductions of photographs and paintings.

Arranged alphabetically by name.

BOX 19

Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1842-1935

Chiefly clippings, pamphlets, and periodicals related to members of the Hand, Fiske, and Aldrich families.

Arranged by type of material and therein by chronology where possible.

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General Correspondence and Related Items, 1745-1955

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
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Special Correspondence, 1837-1856

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