

Guide to the Abbott and Straw Family Papers, 1795-1867, bulk 1809-1867

Administrative Information

Title and Dates:

Abbott and Straw Family Papers, 1795-1867, bulk 1809-1867

Repository:

New Hampshire Historical Society
30 Park Street
Concord, NH 03301
603-228-6688
<http://www.nhhistory.org/>

Collection Number:

2015.058

Author of Finding Aid:

Sandra L. Wheeler

Creator:

Straw, Charlotte Abbott, 1790-1865

Language:

The materials in this collection are in English.

Extent:

1 box ; 0.21 linear feet

Abstract:

The Abbott and Straw Family Papers consist of correspondence within the family. Most were written to Charlotte Abbott Straw (1790-1865) by her siblings. The earlier letters (to about 1830) comment especially on religion, commitment, illnesses, and deaths of children and friends. The later ones relate visits to each other, memories of the past, and activities of children and relatives. Religion is a constant subtheme in this correspondence.

Access and Use

Acquisition Information and Provenance:

The Abbott and Straw Family Papers were purchased by the New Hampshire Historical Society in July 2015.

Processing Information:

This collection was processed by Sandra L. Wheeler in September 2015. The finding aid was written by Sandra L. Wheeler in September 2015. This finding aid follows the standards set forth by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Access Restrictions:

Available for research.

Location:

The collection is housed at the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord, New Hampshire.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements:

This collection is on paper and there are no technical requirements for its use. Some of the letters are quite fragile, however, and care will need to be taken in handling them. Many were mended long ago with scotch tape which is now discolored and brittle.

Copyright/Conditions Governing Use:

For permission to reproduce or publish materials from this collection, please contact the New Hampshire Historical Society. Users are responsible for following all copyright and intellectual property laws.

Preferred Citation:

Item title, Abbott and Straw Family Papers, 2015.058. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH. Date accessed.

Collection Overview

Biographical Information

Charlotte Abbott (1790-1865) was the daughter of Elias and Elizabeth Abbott (1761-1832). She married William Straw (1787-1856) on September 29, 1808 at Canterbury. He was a farmer in Hopkinton, NH. They had six children: Milton (1809-1882), Mary (1813-1816), Eliza (born and died 1816), Elias (1817-1834), Edmund (1819-1901), and Rufus (1822-1894).

Important in the context of the letters in this collection, Charlotte Abbott Straw grew up on a farm in Northfield, NH, with her siblings: Abigail (1783-1864), Elias (1786-), Betsey (1788-1847), and James (1799-1870). Abigail later married Jeremiah Hall (1778-1867). James became a physician and practiced in Sanbornton, NH.

Collection Scope and Content Note:

Charlotte Abbott Straw's siblings (Abigail, Elias, Betsey, and James) wrote her with news, especially about illnesses and deaths of family and friends in Northfield, NH, where she grew up and they still lived. The single most common thread among the letters is religion and the need to believe as the Congregational and Methodist Churches of which they were members.

Abigail (1783-1864) was even more interested in religion than her siblings; her letters (1809-1830) contain long expositions about how revivals are progressing, visits of itinerant missionaries, who in town has been saved and who not, her feelings when she cannot believe as she thinks she should. There are condolences to Charlotte in the aftermath of the deaths of her children with many reassurances about their places in Heaven.

James (1799-1870) studied medicine at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH, and became a physician who practiced in various localities before settling in Sanbornton, NH. Some of his letters are nostalgic and describe memories of childhood. He, too, was religious and his letters contain spiritual as well as medical advice. His grief at the death of his 21-year-old son and namesake in 1865 was somewhat lessened because the young man died peacefully, reconciled to his death and his God.

There are also a few letters from Charlotte's oldest son, Milton Straw (1809-1882), who married and moved to Boston, MA. He sometimes relates the state of his spiritual life, but also affectionately tells her what good parents Charlotte and William were, reports on his children, inquires about what will happen to family land holdings in New Hampshire, and other mundane matters.

The War of 1812 goes unnoticed in these letters, while the Civil War is only noted in passing.

Of particular interest among these letters is an 1841 account of an unidentified writer describing a stagecoach trip from Massachusetts to Pembroke, NH. Also on the coach was a runaway slave girl who was traveling north to Canada and riding on the roof of the coach, the least expensive seat. There is also an 1861 nostalgic letter from James to his sister Charlotte after he visited the farm on which they grew up, now owned by a nephew. He recalls their childhood including the furnishings of the kitchen, what trees were in the orchard, how the barn was organized, and what their mother cooked.

Arrangement:

The Abbott and Straw Family Papers are in chronological order.

Contents List**Box 1**

Folder 1	Joseph Bartlett, Last Will and Testament, note to a town selectman, 1795, 1797
Folder 2	Correspondence, 1809
Folder 3	Correspondence, 1810
Folder 4	Correspondence, 1811-1812
Folder 5	Correspondence, 1814

Folder 6 Correspondence, 1816-1817
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Folder 12 Correspondence, 1827-1829
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Folder 17 Correspondence, 1865-1867, undated

Subject Terms

People:

Abbott, James A., 1799-1870
Straw, Charlotte Abbott, 1790-1865
Straw, Milton A., 1809-1882
Straw, William, 1787-1856

Organizations:

General Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches of the United States

Subjects:

Condolence notes
Correspondence
Death
Farm life
Fugitive slaves
Material culture
Medicine--Practice
Methodist Church
Religion
Religious thought

Locations:

Boston, MA
Hopkinton, NH
Northfield, NH

Occupations:

Farmers
Physicians