

# Guide to the Asa Fitch Papers

MS 215



compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

July 1982

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 215

**CREATOR:** Fitch, Asa, 1809-1879

**TITLE:** Asa Fitch papers

**DATES:** 1807-1969

**BULK DATES:** 1807-1922

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Twenty-one diaries, 1821-1879, of Asa Fitch, scientist and entomologist. The diaries reflect in considerable detail Fitch's life and thoughts from early adolescence through his education at the Rensselaer School in Troy, New York and the Vermont Academy of Medicine in Castleton, his career as a scientist and state entomologist in New York, and his retirement. Also included are papers and genealogical materials relating to other members of the Fitch family.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0215>

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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.0215>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](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

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of the estate of Julian M. Sturtevant, 1952.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research. The entire collection is available on microfilm. Patrons must use HM 141 instead of the originals.

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### Conditions Governing Use

Unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by the creator(s) of this collection are in the public domain. There are no restrictions on use. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

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### Preferred Citation

Asa Fitch Papers (MS 215). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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### Existence and Location of Copies

The entire collection is available on microfilm (2,802 frames on 4 reels, 35mm.) from Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, at cost. Order no. HM141.

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## Biographical / Historical

Practiced medicine, 1831-1838; studied economic entomology and agriculture, and began publishing articles on the subject in 1845; in 1854 appointed state entomologist of New York, remaining until 1871.

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## Scope and Contents

The Asa Fitch Papers consist of fifty items. Twenty-one of these are diaries kept by Asa Fitch from 1821 through 1879 in various places in New York State and elsewhere. Notations for several years are lacking. Six volumes, 1821-1828, were lettered A through G, with B missing. To the remaining fifteen volumes numbers have arbitrarily been assigned, although entries are not always consecutive by date.

The remainder of the collection is made up of Fitch family genealogical material copied from the notes of the father of Abbie M. (Fitch) Andrews (1840-) and notes taken from her own research.

A detailed description of the contents of the diaries and other papers follows.

## Collection Contents

### Inventory, 1807-1969, bulk 1807-1922

#### Diaries of Asa Fitch

b. 1reel 1U	Volume "A": Kept in Bennington, VT, places in Connecticut, including New Haven, in Salem, Cambridge, Jackson, Saratoga Springs, Albany, New York City, and Troy.	1821 November 6-1826 February 10
	Volume "B" [no volume]	
b. 1reel 1U	Volume "C": An account of a scientific tour to Lake Erie under the direction of Prof. Amos Eaton. The entire company is listed in entry for May 2, 1826. For another account of this trip, see written description (April 26, 1826), box 3.	1826 April 25- July 17
b. 1reel 1U	Volume "D": Diary of his first term at Rensselaer School (later Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) in Troy; also 6 p. of expense accounts.	1826 July 18- October 31
b. 1reel 1U	Volume "E": School life in Troy and sojourns in Salem, Greenwich, Albany, Watervliet, Whitecreek, and places in VT, including Bennington; also 2 p. of expense accounts.	1826 November 1-1827 July 23
b. 1reel 1U	Volume "F": Diary of his first year at Castleton Medical School, Castleton, N.Y.; and sojourn in Salem, Greenwich, Granville, and Troy; also 6 p. of expense accounts.	1827 July 27-1828 July 24
b. 1reel 1U	Volume "G": Kept in Whitecreek, Hoosick, Lanesboro, Williamstown, Salem, Greenwich and New York City; also 6 p. of expense accounts.	1828 July 24- December 31
b. 1reel 1U	Volume 1: Kept in New York City, Harlem, Manhattanville, Fort Washington, Tarrytown, Singing, Peekskill, Poughkeepsie, Albany, Whitecreek, Salem, Greenwich, etc.; also 5 p. of expense accounts.	1829 January 1- April 30
b. 1reel 1U	Volume 2: Kept in Salem, Greenwich, Albany, Troy, Castleton, VT, etc.; also 6 p. of expense accounts.	1829 May 1- November 20
b. 1reel 2U	Volume 3: Kept in Castleton, Vt., Salem, Granville, Hebron, Cambridge, Albany, Troy, Jackson.	1829 November 23-1830 May 23
b. 1reel 2U	Volume 4: Kept in Bennington, VT, and Salem, but mostly a scientific expedition with Rensselaer students, a list of whom is given, under Prof. Amos Eaton up the Hudson from New York to Troy, on the Mohawk to Rome, thence to New Boston and Green Lake; meeting with Daniel Cady Eaton in New York, 1830 Jun 23.	1830 May 25- August 4
b. 1reel 2U	Volume 5: Kept in Jordan. Remainder cut out.	1830 August 4
b. 1reel 2U	Volume 6: Kept in Greenville and Vandalia, IL.	1830 December 1-1831 February 20
b. 1reel 2U	Volume 7: Kept in Salem, Jackson, Point Penninsula, Union, Whitecreek, Cambridge, places in VT (particularly Brandon) and Argyle and Ft. Miller, NY.	1831 May 6-1832 January 25

## Diaries of Asa Fitch (continued)

b. 2reel 2U	Volume 8: First part explains lapse in time since previous entries. Latter part written over penciled lecture notes, 1829, few of which are legible. This volume is mainly a letter book, interspersed among diary entries, consisting of letters to members of his family, a few to others on matters of business, but most to Henry Bleecher, George F. Horton, or Wm. S. Robertson. Diary entries recorded in Salem, Albany (where he attended an abolition convention 1839 Aug 1), Stillwater, Saratoga Springs, Warrensburg.	1839 August 16-1842 October 17
b. 2reel 2U	Volume 9: Kept in Albany, New York City, Granville, Salem and places in NY on scientific expeditions and at various meetings. Lacking entries for 1848-1867.	1847 August 10, 1868 August 28-1869 May 31
b. 2, f. 10reel 2U	Volume 10: Kept mainly in Salem with accounts of weather observations and scientific experiments; in Albany, where on Apr 25, 1865 he watched the funeral procession of Pres. Abraham Lincoln's remains; in New York City, where on Oct. 29, 1865 he heard Henry Ward Beecher speak in Plymouth Church Flatbush; and in Troy.	1865 January 1-1867 February 11
b. 2reel 2U	Volume 11: Kept in Albany, Wallingford, CT, Salem, and places in NY and VT where he attended agricultural meetings.	1867 February 12-1869 August 27
b. 2reel 3U	Volume 12: Kept in Salem, Manchester, VT, Albany and Troy.	1869 June 1-1871 January 23
b. 2reel 3U	Volume 13. Kept in Troy, where on Jun 28, 1871, he heard Prof. Hall speak at the Rensselaer Institute Alumni Meeting and where on Jun 16, 1871 he attended the 48th Annual Commencement of the Rensselaer Institute, a program of which is enclosed; in Salem and Albany.	1871 June 24-1875 June 7
b. 2reel 3U	Volume 14: Kept in Salem, Saratoga Springs, Albany, Utica, Verona, and New York City.	1875 June 8-1878 March 23
b. 3reel 3U	Volume 15: Kept in Castleton and Argyle, but mainly Salem; contains an alphabetical list of persons mentioned in the diaries.	1878 March 2-1879 March 12
Asa Fitch: other volumes		
b. 3reel 3U	<a href="#">Autograph album, containing biographical material for many of the signers</a>	1866
b. 3reel 3U	Written description, Apr 26, 1826, of commencement at Rensselaer School [later Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute], followed by an account of a scientific tour to Lake Erie, May 2 - Jun 10, by the school under the direction of Prof. Amos Eaton. (Four folders of letter-paper numbered 2-5, lacking number 1, plus one fragment.) With these are two more unnumbered folders giving an account of commencement in 1828 and a geological tour up the Erie Canal to Rochester where "the most marked courtesies" were shown them by Thurlow Weed. Laid in is an amusing account of Prof. Rafinesque as a member of one of these expeditions.	1826-1828
b. 3reel 3U	Commonplace book of conundrums, maxims, proverbs, etc.	Undated
b. 3reel 3U	"Memorandum book" of his farm activities at Salem, lv. English	1842 January 1-1843 September 30
Family members		
b. 3reel 3U	Andrews, Abbie M. (Fitch). Genealogical data on the Fitch family	Undated

## Family members (continued)

b. 3reel 3U	Fitch, Elizabeth (McNeil), (1812-). Autograph Album, 1 v.	1829-1836
b. 3reel 4U	Fitch, Martin, (1793-1816). Latin composition book [Began Jun 11, 1807] at Lansingburgh, N.Y., 1 v.	1807
b. 3reel 4U	Rider, Benjamin W, (1844-1871). "A journal for wayside jottings in this journey of life" [i.e. his reminiscences, 17 p. numbered 5-21. Remainder of volume by his wife, Anna Olivia (Fitch) Rider Skinner	1867-1919
	Skinner, Anna Olivia (Fitch) Rider, (1844-1925)	
b. 3reel 4U	Genealogical notes on her family and that of her second husband, Lemuel Sherman Skinner, and their children. Written in volume of Benjamin W. Rider's reminiscences, 1 v.	
b. 3reel 4U	"My Anthology" ; A combination scrapbook and commonplace book compiled by her. 1 v. English	1904-1918, undated
b. 3reel 4U	Paper entitled "Our Blessings" [6 p.].	Undated
b. 3reel 4U	Photograph-autograph album. 1 v.	1863-1871
b. 3reel 4U	Genealogy and miscellaneous material consisting mainly of newspaper clippings, postcard views, etc., removed from the various volumes	1909-1922, undated
b. 3reel 4U	Reprints of articles by Samuel Rezneck relating to Asa Fitch's journals	1968-1969

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## 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

Abolitionists  
Entomology  
Genealogy  
Science  
Scientific expeditions -- New York (State)

### Corporate Bodies

Castleton Medical College (Castleton, Vt.)  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

### Geographic Names

Illinois -- Description and travel  
New York (State) -- Description and travel  
New York (State) -- History  
Vermont -- Description and travel

### Genres / Formats

Autographs  
Commonplace books  
Diaries

### Occupations

Entomologists  
Zoologists

### Names

Andrews, Abbie M. Fitch, b. 1840  
Beecher, Henry Ward, 1813-1887  
Bleecher, Henry  
Eaton, Amos, 1776-1842  
Eaton, Daniel Cady, 1834-1895  
Fitch, Asa, 1809-1879  
Fitch, Elizabeth McNeil, b. 1812  
Horton, Geo. F. (George Firman), 1806-1886  
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865  
Rider, Benjamin W., 1844-1871  
Robertson, W. S. (William Schenck), 1820-1881  
Skinner, Anna Olivia Fitch Rider, 1844-1925

### Families

Fitch family