

Guide to the Colton Family Papers

MS 855



compiled by Thomas J. Connors

June 1979

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 855

CREATOR: Colton family

TITLE: Colton Family Papers

DATES: 1749-1879

BULK DATES: 1826-1879

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet (4 boxes)

LANGUAGE: French

SUMMARY: Correspondence, writings, sermons, diaries, account books, poems, and notes of George Colton of West Hartford, Connecticut and four of his sons. The principal figure in the papers is Henry Martyn Colton, who graduated from Yale College in 1848 and established schools in Middletown, Connecticut and New York City. Included in his papers are college lecture notes, sermons together with outlines and notes, poems, diaries, and travel writings.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Kenneth Maclise, 1940, Samuel H. Fisher and Perley M. Leighton. Also by purchase, 1940.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Colton Family Papers (MS 855). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

GEORGE COLTON, 1779-1858

GEORGE COLTON, the elder brother of the last-named graduate, was born in West Hartford on January 12, 1779. He united with the church in September, 1799, and then decided to devote himself to the ministry, and began to prepare for College with his pastor, the Rev. Dr. Nathan Perkins. Entering on his undergraduate career as a mature Christian, trained to the love of books, he gave his time greatly to reading in general theology, including especially the Latin fathers. He is said to have mastered the entire College Library of that day.

After graduation he joined his brother in the study of divinity under Dr. Perkins, and in 1806 began his career as a home missionary. His active life was mainly spent in Central and Western New York, his earliest commission being from the Connecticut Missionary Society to the Black River settlements.

In 1808 or '09 he was ordained and installed as pastor of a small Congregational Church in Westford, near Cherry Valley, where he remained until June 12, 1822, when he was installed over the Presbyterian Church in Royalton, Niagara County, from which he was dismissed on June 30, 1829. Later, his home was successively in Elba and East Bethany, Genesee County; in Wyoming, Wyoming County (1836-1839); and in Lockport, Niagara County.

About 1853 he returned to New England, and resided in Ware, Massachusetts, and Fair Haven, Connecticut. In the fall of 1857 he went to the house of his youngest son in Wethersfield, Connecticut, where he died suddenly on February 12, 1858, at the age of 79. He was buried in his native town.

He was a sound theologian and an interesting preacher, though a man of marked idiosyncrasies.

He married on November 5, 1808, Lucy Cowles, of Otisco, Onondaga County, New York. She was a native of Bristol, Connecticut, and a half-sister of Lewis Gaylord Clark and Willis Gaylord Clark. She died in Otisco, at the house of her brother-in-law, Jesse Gaylord, on July 31, 1838, in her 51st year.

He had seven sons and two daughters. Five of the sons were regularly graduated at Yale College (in 1832, 1840, 1844, 1848, and 1850, respectively), and a sixth received an honorary Master's degree (1850).

AUTHORITIES: J. Milton Colton, MS. Letter, October, 1910. Cothren, *Hist of Woodbury*, ii, 1481. Crosby, *Annual Obit. Notices*, 1858, 69-70. Hotchkiss, *Hist. of Western N. Y.*, 511. (F.B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Yale College*)

JOHN OWEN COLTON, 1810-1840

John Owen Colton, great grandson of Rev. Benjamin Colton (Y. C. 1710), grandson of Deacon Abijah Colton of West Hartford, Ct., and grand-nephew of Rev. George Colton (Y. C. 1756)—known as "high-priest Colton of Bolton," the eldest son of Rev. George (Y. C. 1804) and Lucy (Cowles) Colton, was born on the 14th of March, 1810, in Westford, Otsego Co., N. Y., where his father was at that time pastor of the Congregational church. The family removed to Royalton, Niagara Co., N. Y., in 1823. Up to the age of fifteen the son pursued the ordinary studies taught in the common schools, and, in the more important branches, under his father's tuition. In 1824 he entered the mercantile establishment of a distant relative in the village of Lockport, N. Y., where he united with the Presbyterian church. Now moved by a strong desire to devote his life to religious duties, and to enter the ministry, he commenced the requisite preparatory studies, under the instruction of his father, and was finally fitted for college at the academy in Homer, N. Y. His name first appears on the college-catalogue for 1829-1830, he having joined the Class after the first term of its Freshman-year. He was graduated with the highest honor, delivering an oration "On the Sentiments proper to be entertained at the Close of a Collegiate Life," with the valedictory address.

For two years after graduation he was engaged, first, as a teacher of languages in the Mount Hope College of Baltimore, and, afterwards, in the Hopkins Grammar School of New Haven. In 1834 he became a member of the Yale Theological Seminary, and in the spring of 1835 entered upon the duties of Tutor in Greek in Yale College. He held his tutorship till the spring of 1838, pursuing, meanwhile, in addition to other studies, the study of law, and preparing the first edition of his "Greek Reader," which was published a few months before his death, a work of which a second edition appeared in 1846, and a third in 1855—both edited by brothers of the author. In November, 1839, he was ordained pastor of the Chapel Street Congregational church in New Haven, in which office he remained, giving great promise of usefulness, until in March, 1840, death suddenly came to him as he was sitting in his chair, the seeds of a fatal disease having been laid in his system during his residence in Baltimore.

He was his father's pride and joy, and his early death was a great blow to parental affection, nor a less severe trial to that fraternal love, uniting him and several brothers together, which moved him first, and others of them after him, following his example, watchfully to initiate the younger ones in a liberal education, so that for about a quarter of a century this brotherhood was represented on the annual catalogues of Yale, and always honorably.* He never married.

* One of these brothers, George H. Colton, was the author of "Tecumseh;" and established the "Am. Whig Review," in which Poe's "Raven" first appeared.

He was in youth, as in his maturer years, of a very quiet and studious disposition, thoughtful, deeply conscientious and truthful, and possessed a most kind and affectionate nature. One of his brothers has appropriately summed up his character as follows: "He was eminently honest and straightforward; he hated shams. Pretended scholarship, sham goodness, shallowness and show of any sort he could not endure. He loved truth himself, and wanted, with all his soul, that others should do so likewise. He was a man of intense earnestness. He never went around a corner, if he could 'go across lots.' When he went down town from the College, he always jumped the fence, if he could; and that was characteristic of his life. Life, in his view, was too short, and too tremendous, to be wasted. Emphatically, he did with his might what his hands found to do. He had a singular love of justice. What was right was always the main thing with him. Those lines of Horace: 'Justum et tenacem propositi virum, etc.,' which are inscribed upon his monument, describe him exactly. He was, remarkably, a man of method, system and exact order in everything. Finish he must and would have, if possible. As a private Christian, and as a pastor, he was deeply devoted, a fully consecrated man." But with all his graver qualities he had a genuine love of playful humor, with a lively sense of the ludicrous.

[Mostly from a common. by two brothers.—E. E. S.]

(*Biographical Memoranda Respecting All Who Ever Were Members of the Class of 1832*, pages 79-81)

HORACE BENJAMIN COLTON, 1816-1862

Horace Benjamin Colton was born on September 29, 1816. He received an honorary degree from Yale in 1850. He was a member of the 139th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers during the Civil War. He died near Fredericksburg, Virginia on December 1, 1862.

(*Genealogy of the Colton Family* by George Woolworth Colton)

GEORGE HOOKER COLTON, 1818-1847

*GEORGE H. COLTON was born in Westford, N. Y., Oct. 15, 1818. Immediately after graduating, he taught school in Hartford, Conn.; and published his poem "Tecumseh," soon afterwards. He was engaged in literary pursuits until his death, which occurred at New York City, December 1, 1847. He established the *American (Whig) Review*, and was its able editor at the time of his death.

(*History of the Yale College Class of 1840*, page 15)

HENRY MARTYN COLTON, 1826-1872

HENRY MARTYN 'COLTON was born in Royalton, Niagara county, N. Y. Nov. 5, 1826. He was the fifth of six brothers who graduated at this College, the sons of Rev. George Colton (Y. C. 1804) and Lucy (Cowles) Colton. He remained at the College for one year after graduation, as Berkeley Scholar, pursuing a select course in philosophy and language. The next three years were spent in the Yale Theological Seminary, and in Nov. 1852, he was ordained pastor of the First Congregational Church in Woodstock, Conn. This charge he resigned in Jan., 1855, and he removed to East Avon, Conn, where he supplied the pulpit of the Congregational Church until April, 1857. In May, 1857, he established a classical school in Middletown, which he continued for eleven years. In Sept., 1858, he opened the "Yale School for Boys," in N. Y. City, which he was still conducting at the time of his death.

Mr. Colton died, after a short illness, in Middletown, June 2, 1872, aged 45½ years.

He married Lucy, daughter of Ezra Tuttle, of New Haven, Conn., Oct. 25, 1852. His wife survives him, with children.

(*Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale College*, 1872 Jul, page 60.)

THE COLTON FAMILY

George Colton was born in West Hartford, Connecticut, in 1779. He graduated from Yale College in 1804 and was ordained in 1808. In that year he began home missionary work in western and central New York State, where he met and married Lucy Cowles (1787-1838), formerly of Bristol, Connecticut. The Coltons' nine children were born in New York State; five sons attended Yale.

George Colton died in Wethersfield, Connecticut, in 1858, Lucy Colton at Otisco, New York, in 1838.

George Hooker Colton was born in Westford, New York, in 1818. He graduated from Yale in 1840, and in 1844 established *The American (Whig) Review*, which he edited until his death in 1847.

Henry Martyn Colton was born in Royalton, New York, in 1826. He graduated from Yale in 1848 and was ordained in 1852. In that year he married Lucy Tuttle of New Haven, Connecticut. In 1857 he established a classical school in Middletown, Connecticut, and in 1868 he opened Yale School for Boys in New York City. He died in 1872.

More information concerning these and other members of the Colton family can be found in the following: 1) George Colton: F. B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Yale College*, Vol. V. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1911). 2) John Owen Colton: *Biographical Memoranda Respecting All Who Ever Were Members of the Class of 1832*. (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor, Printers, 1880). 3) George Hooker Colton: *Statistics of the Class of 1840 - Yale College*. (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor, 1871); *The American Review: A Whig Journal*, Vol. III, No. I, 1848. 4) Henry Martyn Colton: *Statistics of the Class of 1848 - Yale College*, Henry M. Colton, editor. (New Haven: J. H. Benham and Son, 1869); *Obituary Record*

of *Graduates of Yale College, 1870-1880*. (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor). 5) Willis Strong Colton: *Biographical Record of the Class of 1850 of Yale College*. (Bridgeport, Conn.: Buckingham, Brewer and Platt Co., 1901); see also *Biographical Record of the Class of 1850* (1877). 6) Colton family: George W. Colton, *A Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Quartermaster George Colton*. (Philadelphia, 1912).

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More information concerning these and other members of the Colton family can be found in the following:

Scope and Contents

The Colton Family Papers consist of writings and correspondence of various members of the family of George Colton (1779-1858).

The writings, which comprise the main portion of the papers, consist of the sermons, poems, addresses, translations and notes of George Colton and four of his sons: John Owen (1810-1840), Horace Benjamin (1816-1862), George Hooker (1818-1847) and Henry Martyn (1826-1872).

Henry Martyn Colton's papers—compositions and translations from his Yale and pre-Yale education, a travel story written during his final year of college, poems written throughout his life, sermons that span his career in the ministry, addresses, lecture and sermon notes—form the bulk of the writings.

John Owen Colton is represented by orations, poems, sermons and other prose writings; George Hooker Colton by translations from the Greek, poems and notes, and by miscellaneous printed and manuscript materials related to his position as editor of the *American Review*, 1844-1847.

A poem by Horace Benjamin Colton, legal records pertaining to Lucy Tuttle Colton (1826-1897), Henry Martyn's wife, and other materials possibly by Lucy Tuttle and another brother, Willis Strong Colton (1828-1909), are also included among the writings.

The writings are arranged by author and generally by type of writing (sermons, poems, notes, etc.).

The correspondence consists of letters to family members from other Coltons, some of whom are not mentioned above, in particular, Lucy Cowles Colton (1787-1838), the wife of George Colton, Isaac Cowles Colton (b. 1812) and Theron Gaylord Colton (1820-1896), his sons, and from friends. A number of letters,

1857-1872, pertain to Henry Martyn Colton's personal and professional concerns such as the classical school he opened in Middletown, Connecticut, in 1857. A partial list of his correspondents, arranged alphabetically, follows the box listing.

The correspondence is arranged chronologically and is followed by a section of miscellaneous unidentified writings and notes.

Select Correspondents of Henry M. Colton

Day, H. N. 1867 Aug 28

Evarts, William M. 1859 Sep 10, 1863 Oct 26

Foster, Dwight 1860 Jul 10

Gibbs, Josiah W. (Y1809) 1858 Feb 5, Jul 8, 1859 Aug 6

Gibbs, Josiah W. (Y1858) 1861 Apr 7, 1864 Jan 18, Feb 10

Green, Horace, M.D. 1862 Oct 4, Nov 30, Dec 20, 1863 Mar 8, Apr 27, May 6, Jun 2, Jul 10, Sep 10, Oct 24

Hadley, James 1858 May 7, Nov 9, Mar 6, 1860 Jul 6, Dec 29, 1862 Feb 25, 1863 May 25, Sep 9, Sep 24, 1864 Mar 9

Herrick, Edward C. 1860 Aug 13

Jewell, Marshall 1864 Dec 2, Feb 13, 1866 Jul 16

Perkins, Samuel C. 1860 Sep 7

Pomeroy, S. C. 1864 Jun 22, Feb 13

Porter, John A. 1860 Jan 17

Porter, Noah (Y1831) 1858 Nov 23, 1863 Sep 6, 1865 Sep 19, 1867 Jul 8

Seymour, Thomas H. 1867 Jan 18, Apr 20, Jul 29

Sheffield, Joseph E. 1860 Aug 18, Sep 8, Sep 13, Sep 20, Dec 11, Dec 21, 1861 Aug 2

Shipman, Nathaniel 1864 Jan 1, Feb 14, Nov 17

Silliman, Benjamin (Y1796) 1858 Nov 29, Dec 3, 1859 Jun 20, 1860 Dec 24

Silliman, Benjamin (Y1837) 1866 Aug 3

Stowe, Harriet Beecher 1867 Sep 3

Thacher, Thomas 1859 Jun 4, 1861 Nov 23, 1862 Jan 4, Sep 5, 1863 Sep 2, Sep 21, 1865 Aug 26

Varnum, Joseph 1862 Apr 25, 1863 Jul 18, Jul 24

White, Henry 1860 Oct 30

Woolsey, Theodore Dwight 1852 Oct 3, 1858 Feb 5, 1863 Sep 10, 1867 Jun 17

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1749, 1826-1879, undated

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| [George Colton, 1736-1812?] | | |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Booklet on surveying | 1749 |
| George Colton, 1779-1858 | | |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Religious writings | 1855, 1857-1858 |
| John Owen Colton, 1810-1840 | | |
| b. 1, f. 3 | Orations and prose writings | 1827-1828 |
| b. 1, f. 4 | Addresses, essays and other writings | 1832-1835 |
| b. 1, f. 5 | Lecture notes, poems and other writings | Undated |
| b. 1, f. 6 | Notebook containing names of Yale freshmen | 1835 |
| [John Owen Colton, 1810-1840?] | | |
| b. 1, f. 7 | Sermons and notes | Undated |
| b. 1, f. 8 | "Dr. Nordheimer's Lectures to the Seminary" | Undated |
| Horace Benjamin Colton, 1816-1862 | | |
| b. 1, f. 9 | Account book, poem | 1829-1830, undated |
| George Hooker Colton, 1818-1847 | | |
| b. 1, f. 10 | Orations, poems, translations | 1840, [1846?], undated |
| b. 1, f. 11 | Notes | Undated |
| b. 1, f. 12 | Manuscript, contract and printed matter re: <i>The American Review</i> | 1844, 1849, Undated |
| Henry Martyn Colton, 1826-1872 | | |
| b. 1, f. 13 | Diaries | 1840, 1842-1843 |
| b. 1, f. 14 | Pre-college translations | [pre-1845] |
| b. 1, f. 15 | College disputes | Circa 1848 |
| b. 1, f. 16 | Translations and travel writings | 1842, 1848, undated |
| b. 2, f. 17 | College lecture notes | 1847, undated |
| b. 2, f. 18 | Poems | 1839-1848, undated |

Henry Martyn Colton, 1826-1872 (continued)

| | | |
|----------------|---|--------------------------|
| b. 2, f. 19 | Compositions and notes | 1839-1851 |
| b. 2, f. 20 | "Solemn covenant vows with Jehovah..." | 1840 |
| b. 2, f. 20 | Ministry recommendation | 1851 |
| b. 2, f. 21-23 | Sermons | 1851-1857 |
| b. 2, f. 24 | Sermons and sermon notes | 1852-1855, 1864, undated |
| b. 2, f. 25 | Sermon notes and outlines | 1855-1856 |
| b. 3, f. 26 | Sermon fragments | 1862, undated |
| b. 3, f. 27 | Addresses, translations, book list | 1868, undated |
| b. 3, f. 28 | Notes on religion and philosophy | Undated |
| b. 3, f. 29 | Miscellaneous notes | Undated |
| b. 3, f. 30 | Miscellaneous notes | Undated |
| b. 3, f. 31 | Notebook containing names of Yale students | 1848 |
| b. 3, f. 32 | "Notes on Rev. Dr. Fitch's Lectures on Homiletics," and notes on classmates | Undated |
| | [Henry Martyn Colton, 1826-1872?] | |
| b. 3, f. 33 | Miscellaneous notes and essays | Undated |
| | Lucy Tuttle (Mrs. Henry Martyn) Colton, 1826-1897 | |
| b. 3, f. 34 | Probate records | 1827-1850 |
| | [Lucy Tuttle (Mrs. Henry Martyn) Colton, 1826-1897?] | |
| b. 3, f. 35 | Recipe, poems and meditations | Undated |
| | [Willis Strong Colton, 1828-1908?] | |
| b. 3, f. 36 | Notebook containing names of Yale freshmen | 1850 |
| | Correspondence | |
| b. 3, f. 37 | 1795 | 1795 |
| b. 3, f. 38 | 1826-1831 | 1826-1831 |
| b. 3, f. 39 | 1832 | 1832 |
| b. 4, f. 40 | 1833-1834 | 1833-1834 |
| b. 4, f. 41 | 1835 | 1835 |
| b. 4, f. 42 | 1836-1839 | 1836-1839 |
| b. 4, f. 43 | 1843-1844, 1849 | 1843-1844, 1849 |
| b. 4, f. 44 | 1850-1854 | 1850-1854 |

Correspondence (continued)

| | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| b. 4, f. 45 | 1855-1859 | 1855-1859 |
| b. 4, f. 46 | 1860-1861 | 1860-1861 |
| b. 4, f. 47 | 1862-1863 | 1862-1863 |
| b. 4, f. 48 | 1864-1872 | 1864-1872 |
| b. 4, f. 49 | Undated | Undated |

Miscellany

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| b. 4, f. 50 | Invitations, calling cards and notes | 1859, 1860, 1866, undated |
| b. 4, f. 51 | Colton and Cowles family genealogies | Undated |
| b. 4, f. 52 | Poems by unidentified authors | 1843, undated |
| b. 4, f. 53 | Writings by unidentified authors | Undated |
| b. 4, f. 54 | Mathematics notes | Undated |
| b. 4, f. 55 | Miscellaneous printed matter | 1856, 1863, 1866, 1879 |

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
Education
Educators
Families

Genres / Formats

Diaries
Sermons

Names

Colton, George, 1736-1812?
Colton, George, 1779-1858
Colton, George H. (George Hooker), 1818-1847
Colton, Henry M. (Henry Martyn), 1826-1872
Colton, Horace, d. 1862
Colton, John Owen, 1810-1840
Colton, Lucy Tuttle, 1826-1897
Evarts, William Maxwell, 1818-1901
Gibbs, J. Willard (Josiah Willard), 1839-1903
Gibbs, Josiah W. (Josiah Willard), 1790-1861
Green, Horace, 1802-1866
Hadley, James, 1821-1872
Porter, Noah, 1811-1892
Sheffield, Joseph Earl, 1793-1882
Silliman, Benjamin, 1779-1864
Thacher, Thomas Anthony, 1815-1886
Woolsey, Theodore Dwight, 1801-1889

Families

Colton family
Cowles family

Corporate Bodies

Yale College (1718-1887). Class of 1848
Yale University -- Faculty
Yale University -- Students