

## Guide to the Cannon/Canning Family Papers

This collection consists of letters, documents, and diaries created by members of the Rev. Josiah Weeks Canning (1780-1854) family of Gill, Mass. The Reverend legally changed his name from Cannon to Canning in 1831; letters in the collection include both surnames. A graduate of Williams College, Canning was ordained minister of the Congregational Church of Gill in 1806. He was dismissed, apparently at his own request, in 1827 whereupon he returned to Williamstown, Mass., and taught at the academy there until 1831. He next went to Canajoharie, NY, where he taught for one year before returning to Gill and being resettled as minister. In 1806, he married Almira Smith of New Marlboro, Mass.; the couple had five sons, four of whom are mentioned below.

Rev. Josiah Weeks Canning (1780-1854) is represented by several letters to his son, Ebenezer Smith Canning, filled with the latter's papers, letters to him and his wife, and a gathering of religious notes, numbered "No 143<sup>d</sup>" in upper right corner.

Ebenezer Smith Canning (1809-1834) was the eldest son of Josiah W. and Almira Canning. Born in Gill, he attended Sanderson Academy in Ashfield, Mass., and Williams College from which he was graduated in 1830. After graduating he taught school in Egremont, Mass., then joined his father in Canajoharie, NY, where he taught at the academy there. He eventually relocated to Detroit, MI, and served as associate editor of the *Detroit Courier* until his death from cholera in Aug. 1834.

The majority of the collection consists of letters to him from family members, and a variety of his school writings. The latter are plays, poems, and essays. His papers also include a bound volume of poems, "The Medley. Or Snatches and Scraps, for the Elbow Chair of Ell Echo, Esq." and a diary kept on board the frigate *Brandywine* from Feb. to July 1833 while voyaging to Spain, Portugal, Madeira, and the Azores, then returning to New York.

Joseph Chauncey Canning (b. 1812) served as a ship's surgeon on the *USS Constellation* and later served as a paymaster on the *USS Cambridge*, and also served on the *Mohican* and the *Shawnee* during the Civil War. A journal kept on board the *Constellation* while visiting Port Mahon, Naples, Ravenna, and Turkey, 1830-1831, appears to be the work of Joseph Canning.

Edward Weeks Canning (b. 1813), described as an "historian and teacher," lived part of his life in Stockbridge, Mass. Several letters are addressed to both him and Ebenezer, and are filled with the latter's papers. He is also represented by a letter and poem sent to the "Rev. Dr. Hazen," possibly Rev. Allen Hazen, a foreign missionary associated with Williams College, and a poem printed in the *Franklin Mercury*.

Josiah Dean Canning (1816-1892), known as the "peasant bard of Gill," built a printing press at the age of 13 and issued *The Village Post*, a small weekly newspaper. Canning later worked for the *Greenfield Gazette and Mercury*. He was the author of five books of poetry. He is represented by several manuscript poems, "Register of a Journeyman Printer," 1834-1836, kept in Detroit, Wheeling [W.] Virginia, and Greenfield, and numerous issues of *The Village Post* which were photocopied in 1995.

**Container List:**

- Folder 1: Letters to Ebenezer Smith Canning while a student at Sanderson Academy and Williams College, 1820-1826 (21 items)
- Folder 2: Letters to Ebenezer Smith Canning while a student at Williams College and teaching in Egremont, Mass., and Canajoharie, NY, 1827-1832; letter to Ebenezer sent from Detroit, letters addressed to Ebenezer and his brother, Edward; a bound vol., "The Medley. Or Snatches and Scraps, for the Elbow Chair of Ell Echo, Esq." (26 items)
- Folder 3: Writings of Ebenezer Smith Canning, 1821-1825 (21 items)
- Folder 4: Writings of Ebenezer Smith Canning, 1826-1829 (30 items)
- Folder 5: Poems by Josiah D. Canning; "Register of a Journeyman Printer," letter and poem of Edward Weeks Canning; letters to Rev. Josiah W. Canning; Rev. Canning's religious notes; small journal dated Dec. 8, 1812; newspaper clippings; photocopies (18 items)
- Loose in box: Journals kept on board the *Constellation* and the *Brandywine*, and "The Medley. Or Snatches and Scraps, for the Elbow Chair of Ell Echo, Esq."