

GUIDE TO THE ASHLEY FAMILY PAPERS PVMA Library

Scope and Content Note

The Ashley Family Papers were received by the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association from many sources. They are comprised of approximately 470 original manuscripts and a number of copies of material of and relating to descendants of Robert Ashley of Springfield, Massachusetts,* through his eldest son, David, who settled in the neighboring town of Westfield. Associated with these papers are three containers of research material assembled by Bruce McClellan for a proposed biography of the Rev. Jonathan Ashley, which he presented to the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association.

Biographical Notes and Descriptions of Series

The numbers that follow many of the names are those assigned by George Sheldon in the genealogical notes in the second volume of his *History of Deerfield*. Many of the biographical notes are taken from the same source.

Joseph Ashley, Jr. son of the Rev. Joseph⁸ and Anna Dewey Ashley and great-grandson of David Ashley², was born in 1738 in Winchester, New Hampshire. His family moved to Sunderland when he was nine years old, and he continued to live there until his Tory sentiments forced him to leave and settle in New York State, probably about 1774. He died there some time during the Revolutionary War. In Sunderland he was a farmer and blacksmith. His wife, Ruth Billings, whom he married in 1763, was a native of Sunderland.

The collection includes seven of his personal accounts, receipt and writs.

Jonathan Ashley⁶, son of David² and Hannah Glover Ashley, was born in Westfield and lived there his entire life. In 1700, he married Abigail Stebbins of Springfield. Jonathan owned considerable land in Westfield and held a number of town offices over the years. He died in 1749; his widow, in 1752 or 1753.

He is represented by a deed to land in Westfield, dated 1745, and a photocopy of a 1747 letter to Jean Baptiste de St. Pe.

Jonathan Ashley⁹, son of Jonathan⁶ and Abigail Stebbins, was born in 1712. He was graduated from Yale in 1730 and taught briefly in Suffield, Connecticut. His longtime ministry in Deerfield began in 1732. During the Revolutionary War he antagonized many of the townspeople by his pronounced Tory views, with a result that he had financial difficulties. He took an active part in the controversy involving Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, one of his cousins. About 1736, he married Dorothy, daughter of William Williams of Hatfield. They had nine children, three of whom are mentioned below. Jonathan died in 1780; his widow, in 1808.

The largest group of his papers in the collection is his manuscript sermons, which date between 1732 and 1773; photocopies of a few additional sermons located in other

* The towns mentioned below are in Massachusetts, unless otherwise noted.

repositories; and Ashley's notes on sermons by others. There is a mathematical exercise book, thought to have been kept about 1730, which includes in the later pages accounts and transactions relative to the settlement of his estate (formerly PVMA, N.pers.5035). A group of miscellaneous papers includes deeds, many to land in "Falltown," the six-mile square plat near Deerfield which was granted to officers and soldiers who took part in the Falls Fight; a letter of 1763 from William Williams asking for the hand of his daughter Dolly Ashley; the appointment of Joseph Stebbins, Jonathan Hart and John Williams, in 1780, to make an inventory of Ashley's estate.

Eleven manuscripts formerly filed with his papers have been transferred to records of the town of Deerfield. These are: a letter from Ashley to inhabitants of Deerfield, Dec. 9, 1745; a paper relating to a lot granted to him for use during his ministry and leased by him to Elijah Williams, Aug. 5, 1746; his computation of expenses of a family of man, woman, 4 children, and maid in 1751; his letters to Joseph Pynchon, constable, Jan. 9, 1758, Moses Nims, constable, Apr. 25, 1760, Inhabitants of Deerfield relating to his salary, Dec 1, 1760, and Major Williams, town treasurer, Mar. 4 and July 17, 1761; and his receipts for money received from Elijah Arms, Dec. 30, 1761, Eldad Bardwell, Sep. 26, 1763, and William Arms, Oct. 28, 1763, all constables.

Jonathan Ashley¹², son of Jonathan⁹ and Dorothy Williams Ashley, was born in 1739 and was graduated from Yale in 1758. He was a lawyer with a large practice, but he, like his father, had difficulties because of his Tory views. After the Revolutionary War he settled in Shelburne, where he died in 1787. His wife, the former Tirzah Field, survived him and, in 1792, married the Reverend Jonathan Leavitt of Heath. She died in 1797.

There are six of his papers, consisting entirely of legal or business documents, a deed to land in Deerfield; an account with Nathaniel Hawks for writing legal documents, including a sheriff's summons to Andrew Lucas on Ashley's behalf; and an account, stretching over many years, for the mending of shoes. Two papers, dated 1790 and 1793, relate to the settlement of his estate. The earlier is a summons to Eliphalet Graves of Colrain on behalf of the widow, Tirzah Ashley; the later, a receipt signed by David Dickinson, administrator of the estate.

Solomon Ashley, another son of Jonathan⁹ and Dorothy Ashley, was born in 1754. He was a potter and stonecutter who had a shop in Deerfield for a time but settled in Hinsdale, New Hampshire by 1774. He was drowned at Great River in 1823.

His seven papers include sheriff's summons to Ashley for payment of debts to Elijah Phelps of Lanesborough (also a stonecutter) and Ebenezer Wells of Deerfield, a trader; an account with Edward Ruggles, innkeeper of Montague, for a gravestone, and a sheriff's summons to Ruggles to pay Ashley for it.

Elihu Ashley¹³, a third son of Jonathan⁹ and Dorothy Ashley, was born in 1750. He studied medicine with Dr. Thomas Williams of Deerfield, whose daughter, Mary Cook Williams, he married in 1775. Ashley practiced in Worthington in 1774-1775, and returned to practice in Deerfield after Dr. Williams' death.

His correspondence consists of 33 papers, dated between 1769 and 1811. Included are letters he received from his brother Jonathan, his sister-in-law Cynthia Williams Leffingwell, his brothers-in-law William Stoddard Williams and Jeremiah West, Joseph Webb of Wethersfield, John Ruggles of Hardwick, William Williams and John Williams, Jr., both of Hatfield Betsy Buckminister of Rutland, and Milly Phipps of Hinsdale; also copies of

letters he wrote to Mrs. Joseph Stebbins and to "Miss ABCD" (Cynthia Williams). There is Correspondence with Nathaniel Dwight of Belchertown, who accused Ashley of causing smallpox in his family in 1775, a charge Ashley provided evidence to refute.

A file of 69 business papers, dated between 1779 and 1815, relate to land in Deerfield and West Springfield. Most of the early items are concerned with the division of property bequeathed by the Rev. Jonathan Ashley to his children. Elihu Ashley, David Dickinson, and Tirzah Ashley were administrators.

Mary (Polly) Williams Ashley, the daughter of Dr. Thomas and Esther Williams, was born in 1752; she married Elihu Ashley in 1775. The couple had four children, one of whom is mentioned below. Mary, whose husband died in 1817, lived until 1831.

She is represented by 33 papers, dated between 1772 and 1804. Most are letters she received from Elihu Ashley before their marriage. There are also letters from her sisters, Cynthia W. Leffingwell and Martha (Patty) W. West, and from Hepsibah Dickinson.

Thomas Williams Ashley¹⁵, son of Elihu¹³ and Polly Ashley, was born in 1776. He became a colonel of cavalry in the Massachusetts militia. He lived in the old family homestead. In 1814, he married Lydia Crosby of Enfield; they had eight children, one of whom is mentioned below. Thomas died in 1848; his widow, in 1861.

The first of 46 of his papers in the collection is a deed from his father to half of the old homestead, dated 1810. There is a letter from his brother Robert and a receipt (1841) for rent of a pew in the brick meeting house in Deerfield. Most of the material, however, concerns the financing of his farm, the loss of his barn by fire, and the subsequent renting from Isaac Abercrombie, Jr. Some of the later papers (1846-1861) relate to his estate.

Jonathan Ashley¹⁷, oldest son of Thomas W.¹⁵ and Lydia Crosby Ashley was born in 1816. He was a farmer, who lived in the old family homestead. He served for a time as selectman of the town. In 1844, he married Mary Smith of Whately. Their one child, a son, died in infancy. Jonathan died in 1895.

His papers consist of 25 items, dated between 1850 and 1891. There is an account for sawing wood; most of the material consists of tax and other receipts.

Charles Hart Ashley²⁰, son of Thomas W.¹⁹ and Lucinda Hart Larabee, was born on February 13, 1860 in Deerfield, Iowa. Moved back to Deerfield and married Gertrude Greenwood Porter on January 2, 1889. They had four children, two whom are listed below. At the age of 15, Charles lived with his Uncle Jonathan on the Ashley farm. He attended Deerfield Academy and Dickinson High School. Charles later helped manage the farm and inherited the estate of his uncle in 1895. In addition to being a tobacco farmer, Charles also served as State Representative, and was active in civil affairs. He died 1925 and is buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery in Deerfield.

His papers consists mainly of letters, especially regarding the loss of his son Thomas W., legal documents regarding his estate, deeds, receipts and two certificates of lodge membership.

Jonathan Porter Ashley²¹ son of Charles Hart and Gertrude Porter, born on April 5, 1890. Like his father, he was a farmer and managed the Ashley farm. During WWI he served with the American Red Cross in France. He married Esther Maude Williams on August 3, 1921. He was the first of his family to take pride in the family name and wrote an

Ashley genealogy which was later published. He also saved family papers and old furniture that still exist today. He died on October 29, 1948. In 1944, Frank Boyden purchased the house and moved it onto Deerfield Academy property. The Flynts bought the Ashley property in 1948, and moved the older house in the rear to its present place on The Street.

His papers consist of correspondence, documents relating to his service in France, postcards, deeds, receipts, and legal documents. In addition, manuscripts of Ashley's writings on the First Church of Deerfield, George Washington, and Ashley genealogy are among his papers.

Thomas Williams Ashley²² son of Charles and Gertrude Porter, born on January 9, 1894. He was a student at Deerfield Academy and Dickinson High School in 1907, graduating in 1911. He entered Amherst College in 1912, graduating in 1916. He returned to Deerfield Academy to teach history and managed the athletic teams. In 1917, he enlisted in the marines and achieved the rank of second lieutenant. He was killed at Chateau-Thierry, France, on June 6, 1918, and is buried in Grave No. 88, Section M, Plot 2, American Cemetery, Belleau Wood, France.

His papers include correspondence, Amherst College publications, letters and documents relating to his death in France, five WW I related issues of the *New York Herald*, and photocopies of letters from Deerfield Academy.

The material in the eight folders that follow the personal papers are mainly copies of various kinds. Their nature is indicated in the container list that follows.

Container List

Box 1

- Folder 1: Joseph Ashley, Jr., Papers, 1771-177. (7 items)
- Folder 2: Jonathan Ashley⁶ Paper, 1745 (2 items)
- Folder 3: Jonathan Ashley⁹ Papers: Mathematical exercise book, c. 1730 (1 item)
- Folder 4: Jonathan Ashley⁹ Papers: Miscellaneous, 1739-1780 (31 items)
- Folder 5: Jonathan Ashley⁹ Papers: Manuscript sermons, and notes on sermons by others, 1732-1773 and undated (216 items)
- Folder 6: Jonathan Ashley⁹ Papers: Sermons (photocopies) (5 items)
- Folder 7: Jonathan Ashley⁹ Papers: Miscellany (photocopies, inc. estate inventory and will) (11 items)

Box 2

- Folder 1: Jonathan Ashley¹² Papers, 1769-1787 (11 items)
- Folder 2: Solomon Ashley Papers, 1787-1817(7 items)
- Folder 3: Elihu Ashley¹³ Papers, 1769-1811 (33 items)
- Folder 4: Elihu Ashley¹³ Papers, legal documents, 1779-1815 (69 items)
- Folder 5: Mary Williams Ashley Papers, 1772-1804 (34 items)
- Folder 6: Thomas Williams Ashley¹⁵ Papers, 1810-1861 (47 items)
- Folder 7: Jonathan Ashley¹⁷ Papers, 1850-1891 (25 items)
- Folder 8: Jonathan Ashley¹⁷ Papers, 1860-1894 (39 items)

Folder 9: Watercolor by Natalie Ashley Stebbins, 1904, birth certificate, wedding invitation (4 items)

Folder 10: Typescripts of warrant (1802) appointing William Baren, Paul Dewey, and Silas Kellogg to prepare an inventory of the estate of Col. John Ashley, late of Sheffield in Berkshire County; 1803 estate inventory (2 items)

Folder 11: Notes relating to Rebecca Kellogg Ashley (1695-1757); and to the Indian history of Old Onaquagua, N.Y.

NO Folder 12

Folder 13: Correspondence relating to the Ashley Family, 1877-2003, mostly George Sheldon

Folder 14: Photocopy of an Ashley coat of arms, as included in *Makers of Arkansas History*

Folder 15: *The Historical Magazine* for March and June 1867, containing articles about the controversy between Jonathan Ashley and Jonathan Edwards.

Box 3 *Bruce McClellan Gift*

Folders 1 and 2: Notes on and transcripts of Jonathan Ashley sermons in various repositories

Folder 3: Miscellany, including transcripts of Elihu Ashley correspondence, Williams and Dickinson papers, and printed PVMA material

Box 4 *Bruce McClellan Gift*

Folder 1: Transcripts of letters exchanged between Jean-Baptiste de Saint Pe, Jesuit of the Province of Aquitaine, and Jonathan Ashley, 1748-1753; and biographical notes on Saint-Po

Folder 2: Transcripts of various Jonathan Ashley papers, probate records of Phineas Ashley's estate, court records relating to Deerfield, and notes from the registry of deeds relating to Ashley transactions.

Folder 3: Bibliographical notes

Folder 4: "Grapes and Thorns..." Carbon copy (2 vols.)

Box 5 *Bruce McClellan Gift* (Two loose-leaf notebooks)

Folder 1: "Name and Topic Index."

Folder 2: Typescripts of Elihu Ashley and Jonathan Ashley papers, and chronology of Jonathan Ashley's life

Box 6 Folder 1: Charles Hart Ashley²⁰ Papers, correspondence, 1891-1924 (17 items)

Folder 2: Charles Hart Ashley²⁰ Papers, legal documents, 1887-1925 (15 items)

Folder 3: Charles Hart Ashley²⁰ Papers, receipts, 1888-1908 (28 items)

Folder 4: Charles Hart Ashley²⁰ Papers, appointments, 1917, 1922 (3 items); membership certificate, 1897 (stored in amp case); membership certificate, 1902

Folder 5: Thomas Williams Ashley²²Papers, correspondence, 1912-1918 and n.d. (23 items)

Folder 6: Thomas Williams Ashley²²Papers, Amherst College publications, 1872-1916 (5 items)

Folder 7: Thomas Williams Ashley²²Papers, letters relating to his death in France, 1918-1920 (31 items)

Folder 8: Thomas Williams Ashley ²²Papers, documents and printed items relating to his death in France, 1918-1985 (30 items)

Folder 9: Thomas Williams Ashley ²²Papers, copies of the *New York Herald*, 1918 (4 items)

Folder 10: Deerfield Academy Archives, copies regarding TW Ashley, 1910-1925 (18 items)

Box 7 Folder 1: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, correspondence, 1914-1927 (48 items)

Folder 2: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, correspondence, 1933-1940 (32 items)

Folder 3: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, correspondence, 1941-1948 (26 items)

Folder 4: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, postcards, cards, etc., 1917-1946 (50 items)

Folder 5: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, published Ashley genealogy; manuscripts of talks, articles (21 items)

Box 8 Folder 1: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, documents relating to YMCA service in France, 1917-1920 (13 items)

Folder 2: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, printed items, 1918-1920 (17 items)

Folder 3: Jonathan P. Ashley²¹ Papers, misc. documents and business papers, 1924-1940 (31 items)

Folder 4: Misc. non-Deerfield Ashley relatives, inc. copy prints of photographs, 1924-1990 (14 items)