



**THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS
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Guide to

**Brook Farm Papers
1834-1900**

FM.MS.T.4

by Jane E. Ward

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Box	Folder	Contents	Date
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Extent: 10 folders

Linear feet: 2 in.

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

PROVENANCE

Transcendental manuscript materials were first acquired by Clara Endicott Sears beginning in 1914 for her Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, Massachusetts. Sears became interested in the Transcendentalists after acquiring land in Harvard and restoring the Fruitlands Farmhouse.

Materials continued to be collected by the museum throughout the 20th century. In 2016, Fruitlands Museum became The Trustees' 116th reservation, and these manuscript materials were relocated to the Archives & Research Center in Sharon, Massachusetts.

In Harvard, the Fruitlands Museum site continues to display the objects that Sears collected. The museum features four separate collections of significant Shaker, Native American, Transcendentalist, and American art and artifacts. The property features a late 18th century farmhouse that was once home to the writer Louisa May Alcott and her family. Today it is a National Historic Landmark.

The materials in this collection were originally collected by H.S. Borneman and were purchased by Fruitlands Museum.

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CITE AS

Brook Farm Papers, Fruitlands Museum. The Trustees of Reservations, Archives & Research Center.

RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
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This collection is open for research. Restricted Fragile Material may only be consulted with permission of the archivist.

BROOK FARM HISTORY

Brook Farm, formally The Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education (1841-1847), was founded in West Roxbury, Mass., by George and Sophia Ripley in 1841. The purpose of this intellectual and social experiment was to restore man's harmonious relations with nature and to reconcile intellectual creation with manual labor. Brook Farm was one of the first secular experiments in social living in the United States, built on the ideals of self-reliance, egalitarianism, and progressive political action.

The 192-acre farm was owned by a joint stock company consisting of 24 shares of stock costing \$500 each. Each member was to share in the manual labor that was to make the group self-sufficient. Each member would also share in the intellectual and cultural advantages provided. The intellectual life provided at Brook Farm was stimulating. Members included Nathaniel Hawthorne (briefly), John S. Dwight, Charles Dana, and Isaac Hecker. Many intellectuals of the time supported the association and though they did not become members they frequently visited the community. Visitors included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, W. H. Channing, and Orestes Brownson.

Economically, the community's excellent school was its most successful venture. The agricultural endeavors of the community showed little profit due to the sandy soil and inexperience of the farmers. Interest in Fourierism resulted in Brook Farm's conversion to a phalanx in 1844. (Fourierism was a philosophy of social reform developed by the French social theorist Charles Fourier that advocated the transformation of society into self-sufficient, independent "phalanges" or "phalanxes.") This conversion further inspired the community into becoming a forum for social reformers. The group invested heavily in building a phalanstery, a community building for the phalanx. In 1846, the uninsured and uncompleted building was completely destroyed by fire. This contributed heavily to the existing financial problems of the group. Brook Farm slowly began to dissolve due to these financial difficulties and poor crop yields. In 1847, the last members left, the experiment was closed, and the farm was sold.

[Sources: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Brook-Farm>; <http://uudb.org/articles/brookfarm.html>]

DESCRIPTION OF THE PAPERS

The Brook Farm Papers, 1834-1900, consist of letters, manuscripts, and memorabilia created by the participants and supporters of the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education. The papers are arranged in four series according to the type of document and arranged chronologically within each series. Only a few letters have transcriptions. An earlier version of this finding aid was found within "The Guide to the Transcendentalist Manuscript Collection,"

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
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and was shared with The Trustees at the time of the Fruitlands Museum acquisition. It was used as a resource.

The strength of this collection is that most of it was created between 1843 and 1849, during the years that Brook Farm was operational and just following its demise. The fact that the materials are written by several participants provides a more objective view of the community. There is no material from the first two years of the community's existence. The manuscripts in the collection that describe Brook Farm were created fifty years after the closing of the farm.

Series I, Brook Farm Letters, consists of letters written by both members and supporters of the Brook Farm community. The bulk of the material was written between 1843 and 1849. Many of the letters are addressed to John S. Dwight, who was the director of the school at Brook Farm, where he also taught music. Of interest is a letter written by George Ripley, the founder of the association, describing the problems of living at Brook Farm and urging Minot Pratt to stay there (22 Jul 1843). A letter from John Allen of 15 Jan 1846 discusses a rather unsuccessful recruiting trip through Cape Cod and the South Shore. Amelia E. Russell's letter of 11 Jul 1845 discusses her doubts about her faith in the Brook Farm experiment. Other topics covered in the letters include literary activities, financial contributions, visiting plans, and the speaking tours that generated interest in the community and raised funds. These letters are arranged chronologically. There is also a name index to track the authors.

Series II, Brook Farm Manuscripts, consists of three manuscripts. The first manuscript is the original longhand copy of a review (1894) written by Thomas Higginson of John Codman's *Brook Farm: Historic & Personal Memoirs*. The second is the original typescript of a lecture given by Franklin B. Sanborn in 1900 describing the men and women involved in the Brook Farm Association, and a brief history of Brook Farm. The third manuscript is Frederick Pratt's account of Brook Farm, given as a lecture in 1900, consisting of Pratt's memories of his life at Brook Farm.

Series III, Brook Farm Memorabilia, consists of one item, a handmade book of paintings of flowers. The book and paintings were created by Maryann Dwight Orvis for her friend Ellen Allen. The inscription in the book reads "Ellen Lazarus Allen, in memory of Brook Farm."

Series IV, Brook Farm Pamphlet, consists of a pamphlet, "Brook Farm," by Annie M. Salisbury, which was published in Marlborough, Mass., in 1898. Salisbury was a pupil at Brook Farm in the summer of 1843 and her brother was a member of the association from 1842 until its end.

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
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Series I. Brook Farm Letters

Extent: 5 folders
 Dates: 1834-1896

Series I consists of letters written by members and supporters of the Brook Farm community. An alphabetical index of correspondents follows the folder listing.

1	1	Correspondence.	1834-1837
1	2	Correspondence.	1843-1847
1	3	Correspondence.	1848-1853
1	4	Correspondence.	1854-1875
1	5	Correspondence.	1884-1896

NAME INDEX FOR BROOK FARM LETTERS

<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>	<u>DATE</u>
ALLEN, John	Maryann Dwight	Jan. 15, 1846 – with typed transcript
ALLEN, M. Catherine	H. S. Borneman	1921 (2 letters, 1 card) MISSING
BRISBANE, Albert	John Dwight	Aug. 4, 1849
CALVERT, G. H.	John Dwight	Aug. 26, 1855
CHANNING, William H.	John Dwight	April 30, 1847; Dec. 22, 1847
CHANNING, William F.	John Dwight	Sept. 22, 1858 (typed transcript only)
CLARKE, James F.	Mrs. Orvis	Jan. 19, 1885
COOKE, Joseph	John Dwight	Jan. 13, 1848
CRANCH, Christopher P.	John Dwight	Dec. 31, 1890
CURTIS, George W.	John [Dwight]	July 19, 1853; Jan. 20, 1875; April 10, 1884
“ “ “	“Miss Carrie”	Sept. 29, 1864
DANA, Charles A.	Mrs. Orvis	Dec. 31, 1895
FOSTER, Galen	John Dwight	Mar. 18, 1834
GODWIN, Parke	John Dwight	July 12, 1851
HEDGE, Frederick H.	John Dwight	Mar. 21, 1837
HIGGINSON, Thomas W.	--	Jan. 11, 1862
“ “ “	F. Sanborn	Aug. 10, 1875
IVES, E. Jr.	--	Sept. 26, 1846
JAMES, Henry	John Dwight	July 21, 1847; 1849; April 23, ? [no later than 1882]
MULLER, William H.	John Dwight	Sept. 28, 1849; Nov. 10, 1849

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
ORVIS, John		Marianne Dwight Orvis	Feb. 1, 1847
"	"	John Dwight	Aug. 31, 1848
PARKER, Theodore		Alfred Wilkinson	April 21, 1850; Jan. 17, 1854
PARSONS, Anna Q.T.		--	Mar. 8, 1891
PEABODY, Elizabeth		John Dwight	May 23, 1843
RIPLEY, George		Minot Pratt	July 22, 1843
"	"	John Dwight	April 2 [1848]; April 10, 1849; Mar. 19, 1863
ROBBINS, E. O.		John Dwight	Mar. 19, 1856
ROBBINS, S. D.		John Dwight	Aug. 1837
RUSSELL, Amelia E.		Maryann Dwight	July 11, 1845
SCHERB, Emmanuel V.		John Dwight	Aug. 3, 1849
SELLERS, Jas. Jr.		--	April 21, 1848
SHAW, Frank George		John Orvis	Dec. 24, 1846
STORY, W.W.		--	May 23, 1893
TWEEDY, Edmund		John Dwight	Aug. 23, 1847; Oct. 1, 1847
"	"	"My Dear Madam"	Jan. 2, 1896 [possibly to Mrs. Orvis?]
WILKINSON, J.		John Dwight	Oct. 11, 1849

Series II. Brook Farm Manuscripts

Extent: 3 folders

Dates: 1894-1900

1	6	Thomas Higginson's review of John Colman's <i>Brook Farm: Historic & Personal Memoirs</i> . 7 pp. Original. Published in Harvard Graduate's Magazine, 3 [March 1895]: 433-34.	1894
1	7	Franklin B. Sanborn's Lecture on Brook Farm. [MISSING] The lecture describes the men and women involved in the Brook Farm Association, and a brief history of Brook Farm. Published in Joel Myerson's, "An Ungathered Sanborn Lecture on Brook Farm," <i>American Transcendental Quarterly</i> , no. 26 [Spring 1975]: supplement 1-11.	1900

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	8	Frederick Pratt's account of Brook Farm. 9 pp. Original. Also given as a lecture in 1900, it consists of Pratt's memories of his life at Brook Farm. Published in Myerson, "Two Unpublished Reminiscences of Brook Farm," <i>New England Quarterly</i> , 48 [June 1975]: 254-58.	1900

Series III. Brook Farm Memorabilia

Extent: 1 folder

Date: [ca. 1850]

1	9	Book of flowers, Marianne Dwight Orvis.	[ca. 1850]
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Series IV. Brook Farm Pamphlet

Extent: 1 folder

Date: 1898

1	10	Salisbury, Annie M., "Brook Farm" (Marlborough, Mass.: Press of W. B. Smith, 1898).	1898
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