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Guide to

**Martineau Family Papers
1836-1892**

FM.MS.10

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Extent: 3 folders

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

PROVENANCE

Transcendental manuscript materials were first acquired by Clara Endicott Sears beginning in 1918 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.

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HARRIET MARTINEAU (1802-1876) and JAMES MARTINEAU (1805-1900)

Harriet Martineau was the sixth child of Thomas Martineau (1764-1826) and his wife, Elizabeth (ca. 1771-1848). She was born on 12 June 1802 in Norwich, England. She was an essayist, novelist, journalist, and economic and historical writer who was prominent among English intellectuals of her time.

In 1821 she began writing anonymously for a Unitarian publication *The Monthly Repository*. In 1823 her first book was published: *Devotional Exercises and Addresses, Prayers and Hymns*. After her father's death in 1826, Harriet began to write for a living to help support her family. She became an enormously popular writer and literary figure. She achieved fame for her two series of talks interpreting political economy to the laymen: *Illustrations of Political Economy* (9 volumes 1832-1834) and *Illustrations of Taxation* in 1834.

In 1834 Harriet visited America, but her open support of the abolitionist party and her publication of two negative works on America offended Americans. Her best-known novels, including *Deerbrook* (1839) and *The Hour and the Man* (1841), were also written during this period. She helped to found the popular genre of the school story with *The Crofton Boys* (1841) and pioneered "back to the land" journalism with her writings about her garden in England's Lake District. Beginning in 1844, she moved to Ambleside in the Lake District of England, where she built her house, The Knoll, and where she spent most of the rest of her life.

She took a tour with friends to Egypt in 1846 and wrote a work on Eastern life. She contributed regularly to the *Daily News* from 1852 to 1866. In the early part of 1855, she found herself suffering from heart disease, and set to work on her autobiography. She continued to write for two more decades; her autobiography was published after her death. She died at The Knoll on 27 June 1876.

Her younger brother, **James Martineau**, was the seventh child of Thomas and Elizabeth. He was born on 12 April 1805, also in Norwich. He was an English Unitarian theologian and philosopher whose writings emphasized the individual human conscience as the primary guide for determining correct behavior. In 1828 James Martineau was ordained for a Unitarian church in Dublin, Ireland, but left the ministry in 1832 over differences concerning a payment to Nonconformist ministers.

In 1840, he was appointed a professor at Manchester New College, the principal training college for British Unitarianism, and remained there for 45 years, first as professor and then as principal (1869-1885). He wrote for numerous church and literary monthlies questioning the traditionally authoritative role of scripture and published a number of books during his lifetime: *Types of Ethical Theory* (1885), *A Study of Religion* (1888), and *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (1890). He died on 11 January 1900.

[Sources: An earlier version of this finding aid was found within “The Guide to the Transcendentalist Manuscript Collection” and was shared with The Trustees at the time of the Fruitlands Museum acquisition. It was used as a resource.

Also used: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Harriet-Martineau>

And <https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-Martineau>]

DESCRIPTION OF THE PAPERS

The Martineau Family Papers consist of three series: Correspondence of Harriet Martineau, Writings about Harriet Martineau, and Correspondence of James Martineau. **Series I, Correspondence of Harriet Martineau**, consists of seven letters written by Martineau to various people including “Mr.” Lane, in which she discusses her concerns, health, visits, travel, publications, and lectures. The letter to “Mr.” Lane is very unlikely to be Charles Lane of the Fruitlands experiment, as it refers to a book just published by this Mr. Lane. It may *possibly* refer to Rev. Charlton Lane, a minister at St. Mark’s in Kennington, London, who published several sermons in 1850 and 1851. It is probably because of this tenuous connection to Lane that Clara Endicott Sears collected these materials.

Series II, Writings about Harriet Martineau, consists of one manuscript written by (Thomas) De Quincy (1785-1859) regarding Martineau. De Quincy was a well-known English essayist and critic.

Series III, Correspondence of James Martineau, consists of three letters written by Martineau, two of them to Benjamin B. Wiley. Benjamin Wiley was a banker in Chicago, Ill., who had been in contact with Henry David Thoreau for many years and was an admirer of Thoreau. Letters to Wiley will also be found in the Alcott Family Papers.

Folder	Item	Contents	Date
Series I. Correspondence of Harriet Martineau			
Extent: 1 folder			
Dates: 1836-1876			
1	1	Letter to Rev. Ephraim Peabody. 4 pp. Original and typed transcript. Discusses Peabody's declining health and the threat to Martineau of lynching by people in Louisville, Ky., if they can catch her. She also refers to the Abolition [Abolition] cause.	1836 Mar 17
1	2	Letter to "Mr." Lane. 4 pp. Original. Delighted to receive his volume. The letter also discusses her health, her publications, and her intent to travel during the upcoming summer.	1851 Apr 10
1	3	Letter to an unknown female correspondent. 3 pp. Original. The letter returns some printed material (not included here) and states that Martineau is " <i>hard</i> pressed at present to finish my history & cannot spare thought for anything already finished."	1860 Dec 27
1	4	Letter to an unknown male correspondent. 3 pp. Original. The letter includes some thanks for the cheque and refers to enclosing a receipt (not included here). It also refers to Martineau's concern with her friend [Thomas?] Carlyle's "abortive jest" and its reference to the slaveholder's "hire." The reference to Bates's "Naturalist on the River Amazons" places this no earlier than 1863, when the book was first published.	[1863-1876]
1	5	Letter to an unknown correspondent. 4 pp. Original. The Letter expresses Martineau's concern for her friend's health, includes an invitation for the friend to visit and details what would be the best time due to Harriet's schedule and her finishing of <i>History of the Peace</i> , first published in 1864.	[1864?] Feb 18
1	6	Letter to an unknown correspondent. 6 pp. Original. Letter discusses his visit and Martineau's gratification in his interest in her work. Also discusses an upcoming course of lectures and the reaction of one man to her temperance lecture. Letter mentions the problems of the Irish. References to Martineau's history, the baptism of Lord & Lady Elgin's son in water from the Jordan River, and bracelets she gave that were	[n.y.] Sept 13

“olive from Jerusalem,” suggest this letter was written ca. 1849, but that is not confirmed.

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| 1 | 7 | Letter to “Dear friends” (addressed to Mrs. William Ware).
3 pp. Original. Wishes her friends goodnight and tells them how she misses them. | [n.d.] |
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Series II. Writings about Harriet Martineau

Extent: 1 folder

Date: [1849-59]

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|---|---|--|-------------|
| 2 | 1 | Manuscript written by Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859).
Manuscript in De Quincey’s hand. 3 pp. Original and typed transcript. Regarding the virtues and shortcomings of “Miss Martineau,” particularly her views of Christianity. References in the letter suggest this was written after Martineau’s trip to Egypt, Palestine and Syria and the publication of her book <i>Eastern Life, Present and Past</i> (1848). | [1849-1859] |
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Series III. Correspondence of James Martineau

Extent: 1 folder

Dates: 1862-1892

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| 1 | 1 | Letter to Mr. B. B. Wiley [Benjamin B. Wiley, Chicago, Ill.].
4 pp. Original. The letter discusses Ralph Waldo Emerson, slavery, and the Englishman’s reaction to the Civil War in America. | 1862 Sep 20 |
| 1 | 2 | Letter Mr. [Benjamin B.] Wiley. 4 pp. Original. The letter congratulates Mr. Wiley on his upcoming marriage. The letter mentions a number of friends and relations now dead, and also refers to regretting the “Ethical” movement that is dividing the Unitarian Societies of the West. | 1888 Jan 13 |
| 1 | 3 | Letter from James Martineau to the honored Pinckney Ladies.
4 pp. Original. The letter thanks them for sending him the “Memoir of Mr. Willard.” The letter lists the following names after Martineau’s signature: Miss Mary Willard; Miss Susanna Willard; and Miss Mary F. Tuckerman. | 1892 Oct 9 |