

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John William Yeomans (1800-1863) served as Lafayette College's second president from May 6, 1841, to September 19, 1844. Yeomans was born on January 7, 1800, in Hinsdale, Massachusetts, and at an early age he was apprenticed to a local blacksmith. Prior to the completion of his apprenticeship, Yeomans purchased the remainder of his time so that he might begin his education. He initially studied with the Reverend Dr. Cummings of the Third Presbyterian Church in Albany, New York. While in Albany Yeomans supported himself by teaching day and night classes and, under the tutelage of Cummings, made a public confession of religion.

Soon after he entered the junior class at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. He graduated second in his class in 1824. Yeomans continued his affiliation with Williams College as a tutor from 1826-1827. Concurrently, he was enrolled at Andover Theological Seminary from which he graduated from in 1827. While at Andover Yeomans frequently preached in the neighboring community of North Adams and with his followers established the North Adams Congregational Church. Under Yeomans' leadership a successful fundraising campaign was completed allowing for the building of a new church. On November 12, 1828, the church was dedicated and Yeomans was ordained and installed as its first pastor. That same year he married Laetitia Snyder of Albany. The marriage produced two daughters and three sons, two of whom became Presbyterian ministers.

After four years of service in North Adams, Yeomans assumed the pastorate of the First Congregational Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Following a two-year tenure in Pittsfield, Yeomans resigned his position and became the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Trenton, New Jersey. He ministered to this congregation from 1834 to 1841, leaving Trenton for Easton and the presidency of Lafayette College. In 1841 he received honorary degrees from the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University), Williams College, and Miami University of Ohio.

While at Lafayette Yeomans oversaw and directed the administrative functions of the College, taught courses in Moral and Mental Philosophy and Evidences of Christianity, and served on the Board of Trustees. Although his service at Lafayette lasted only three and a half years and was marked by the struggles and internal conflicts inherent to a young institution, he was noted for being a capable teacher and a strict disciplinarian. He was a frequent contributor to theological publications such as the *Biblical Repertory* and the *Princeton Review*. Yeomans maintained an affiliation with the College as a member of the Board of Trustees until 1852.

Upon his departure from Lafayette Yeomans was appointed pastor of the Mahoning Presbyterian Church in Danville, Pennsylvania. He served this congregation until his death on June 22, 1863. Yeomans' involvement with the Presbyterian Church led him to be chosen as a moderator of the General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterian Church in 1860. As the country began to experience the fervor of secessionism, the nation's churches, including the Presbyterian, struggled to keep their denominations united across the sectional divide. As moderator, Yeomans was confronted with a deepening schism within the Presbyterian Church, as Southern

church leaders began to advocate for secession. This prompted Yeomans to issue a December 1860 circular that called for a national day of prayer to be held on January 4, 1861. During the General Assembly held in 1861 Yeomans opposed resolutions to the Assembly that pledged support to the Federal government, fearing such proclamations would aggravate sectional tensions. Once the war began, Yeomans remained solidly committed to the Union cause.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Yeomans Papers contain one cubic foot of incoming and outgoing correspondence of John William Yeomans, the second president of Lafayette College. Originally, this collection of correspondence was housed in bound letter books of "letters received" and "letters sent." The "letters received" books were disassembled at an earlier date, and the letters were removed and arranged in numerical order by the page number in the upper right hand corner. This page number was used in Yeomans' indexing system that is also contained in his papers. The "letters sent" books remain in their bound form and contain the clerk's copy of replies sent by President Yeomans.

The Yeomans Papers are arranged chronologically into two series: incoming correspondence and outgoing correspondence. The incoming correspondence series consists of all the letters previously contained in the "letters received" bound books. While the collective body of correspondence dates from September 28, 1839, to May 16, 1853, there are gaps in this run. Only a single letter remains from 1839. The correspondence resumes on January 4, 1840, and continues to December 27, 1843. Letters received during 1844 and 1845 are not included in this collection and are presumed missing. The sequence begins again on January 3, 1846, and continues to January 4, 1850. The location of letters from the remaining portion of 1850 and from 1851 and 1852 is also unknown. Incoming correspondence from January 1853 to May 16, 1853, can be found in this collection.

President Yeomans filed incoming letters in the order in which they were received, regardless of chronological correctness. He created an index for each letter book, in which he noted the name of the correspondent and assigned a page number to the letter. However, these indexes are sometimes incomplete, not always accurate, and contain references to missing correspondence. In light of this, the correspondence is now arranged in chronological order. Letters with only month and year date have been placed at the beginning of the month. Those letters with no discernable date have been filed near letters with similar page numbers. As a result, the page numbers no longer follow a strict numerical sequence.

The indexes, located at the beginning of the incoming correspondence run, should be consulted for a list of correspondents, but it should be noted that there is a gap in the indexes. An index exists for pages 1-167, 243-499, 753-964, and 965-1130. While it is not known where the missing indexes are, the letters from those pages are included in the collection. Most letters remain in good condition, with little fading of ink and minimal brittleness on the edges.

Yeomans' outgoing correspondence is contained in two bound books. The letters in these books are the clerk's copy of replies sent by Yeomans from 1841 to 1849. Both books contain an index similar to the index used for incoming letters. The first book contains letters from June 26, 1841,

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to May 9, 1843. Letters from May 10, 1843, to December 10, 1849, are contained in the second book, but there are gaps in this correspondence, most significantly in 1849. All replies are handwritten in script until April 27, 1847. From this date to early 1849 the correspondence appears in short hand script and is difficult to read because a notations key is unavailable.

There are a few typed transcripts of incoming and outgoing letters included in this collection. These transcripts are limited in number and arranged in chronological order. Four miscellaneous items are contained in the final folder. The only original piece is an undated note from a Junkin to Yeomans. The other two items are photocopies of originals that are not part of this collection. One is a letter was written by T. Hartley Cranford to Yeomans on April 5, 1840. The other is a note prepared by Yeomans for the Board of Trustees on April 8, 1841. Finally, there is a photocopy of an April 15, 1841, article from the *Democrat & Argus* noting the appointment of Yeomans as College president.

Additionally in September 2002 a small collection of Yeomans letters were purchased for this collection. These twenty-seven letters are arranged in chronological order beginning with July 8, 1835, and ending with October 1, 1849. All are addressed to Yeomans except for one, a letter to Samuel R. Jackson from William P. Jackson. Some of the letters have small numbers in the upper right hand corner, indicating that they may have been part of the bound letter books Yeomans kept.

Yeomans' correspondence provides insights into issues surrounding higher education and religion during the middle nineteenth century. Topics often addressed include requests for assistance in placing ministers, offers to preach before a congregation, and issues related to college administration, especially financial transactions, student relations, and reports. Frequent correspondents include his sons, George, Edward, and Alfred. The letters from Alfred are particularly interesting, as he discusses with his father his decision to travel to California in 1853.

RELATED MATERIALS

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia maintains a collection of approximately 150 items of correspondence related to John William Yeomans.

Folders

- Folder 1: Index to Letters Received
- Folder 2: Letters Received--September 28, 1841-July 28, 1841
- Folder 3: Letters Received--August 1841-November 29, 1841
- Folder 4: Letters Received--December 1841-March 17, 1842
- Folder 5: Letters Received--April 1, 1842-July 28, 1842
- Folder 6: Letters Received--August 1842-December 30, 1842
- Folder 7: Letters Received--January 3, 1843-May 32, 1843
- Folder 8: Letters Received--June 4, 1843-September 30, 1843
- Folder 9: Letters Received--October 7, 1843-December 27, 1843
- Folder 10: Letters Received--January 3, 1846-October 31, 1846

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- Folder 11: Letters Received--November 2, 1846-April 26, 1847
- Folder 12: Letters Received--May 2, 1847-November 26, 1847
- Folder 13: Letters Received--December 7, 1847-June 24, 1848
- Folder 14: Letters Received--July 20, 1848-May 8, 1849
- Folder 15: Letters Received--June 1849-January 4, 1850
- Folder 16: Letters Received--January 1853-May 16, 1853
- Folder 17: Letters Received, Copies--January 18, 1839-December 21, 1841 (Page #1-120)
- Folder 18: Letters Received, Copies--December 23, 1841-December 10, 1842 (Page #121-270)
- Folder 19: Letters Received, Copies--December 1842-October 7, 1843 (Page #271-430)
- Folder 20: Letters Received, Copies--October 14, 1843-December 27, 1843 (Page #431-499)
- Folder 21: Index to Letters Sent--June 26, 1841-May 22, 1844
- Folder 22: Letters Sent, Book I--June 26, 1841-May 9, 1843
- Folder 23: Letters Sent, Book I, Copies--June 26, 1841-April 11, 1842 (Page #1-141)
- Folder 24: Letters Sent, Book I, Copies--April 11, 1842-March 31, 1843 (Page #142-290)
- Folder 25: Letters Sent, Book I, Copies--March 31, 1843-May 9, 1843 (Page #291-300)
- Folder 26: Letters Sent, Book II--May 9, 1843-December 10, 1849
- Folder 27: Letters Sent, Book II, Copies--May 9, 1843-May 22, 1844 (Page #1-147)
- Folder 28: Letters Sent, Book II, Copies--May 24, 1844-October 7, 1844 (Page #148-192)
- Folder 29: Letters Sent, Transcriptions
- Folder 30: Miscellaneous
- Folder 31: Additional Letters Received, July 8, 1835-October 1, 1847

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION

Twenty-seven (27) handwritten letters addressed to Yeomans were purchased from Jeb Boyd in September 2002 and added to the John W. Yeomans Papers

1. July 8, 1835 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Trenton City, New Jersey, from D. P. Yeomans of Williamstown, Mass.
2. February 19, 1839 to Rev. John W. Yeomans, Trenton, New Jersey, from J. D. Tyler
3. March 22, 1839 to Rev. John W. Yeomans, Trenton, New Jersey, from S. G. Winhestor (?)
4. June 5, 1841 to Rev. President Yeomans, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from John Hall
5. July 3, 1841 to John W. Yeomans, President of Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from D. P. Yeomans
6. September 19, 1841 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, President of Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from D. P. Yeomans
7. September 23, 1841 to Samuel R. Jackson, Easton, Pennsylvania, from William P. Jackson

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8. September 30, 1841 to Rev. John W. Yeomans, President of Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from D. P. Yeomans
9. November 22, 1841 to Rev. W. Yeomans, President of Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from John Hall
10. January 13, 1842 to Professor Yeomans, President of Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from ?
11. January 13, 1842 to President Yeomans, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from ?
12. October 1, 1842 to Rev. John W. Yeomans, President of Easton College, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, from John Savidye
13. November 19, 1842 to The President of the College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from T. D. Dumont
14. April 1, 1843 to The Reverend President Yeomans, Lafayette College, from Richard Webster
15. May 8, 1843 to Rev. Dr. Yeomans, President of Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, from D. M. Halliday
16. November 21, 1843 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Easton, Pennsylvania, from M. B. Hope
17. December 13, 1843 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Easton, Pennsylvania, from ?
18. April 1, 1846 to Rev. Yeomans, Danville, Pennsylvania, from P. B. Morr
19. April 2, 1846 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Danville, Pennsylvania, from Willis Lord
20. April 3, 1846 to Rev. Dr. J. W. Yeomans, Danville, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, from W. M. Chapman
21. March 2, 1846 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Danville, Pennsylvania, from Joseph Stevens ?
22. November 17, 1846 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Danville, Pennsylvania, from M. B. Hope
23. March 8, 1847 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Danville, Pennsylvania, from R. S. Cooke
24. February 18, 1848 to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Danville, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, from M. B. Hope
25. October 1, 1849 to Rev. John W. Yeomans, Danville, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, from Lucy Stevens

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26. N.D. to Rev. John W. Yeomans, President of Lafayette College, Easton, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, from Ebert P. V. L. Stevens

27. N.D. to Rev. J. W. Yeomans, Easton, Pennsylvania, from M. B. Hope

Missing/unknown status:

28. October 17, ? to Rev. Dr. Yeomans, Danville, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, from George W. Thompson