

Jerusha Hall Peacock Papers

MS – 139

Wright State University
Department of Special Collections and Archives

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Introduction

The papers of Jerusha H. Peacock were part of a larger accession donated by Corrine Odiorne Pelzl, Eve Odiorne Sullivan, and Ken Odiorne, all the great grandchildren of Jerusha Hall Peacock. They were accessioned into the Wright State University Department of Archives and Special Collections in October of 1982.

The papers in this collection date from 1860-1878 and fill one Hollinger box and ten file folders. The collection is arranged in three series:

Series I:	Correspondence
Series II:	Literary Endeavors
Series III:	Artistic Endeavors

There are no restrictions on the use of this collection. See also SC-120 for a paper written on Jerusha Peacock.

Biographical Sketch

Jerusha Hall Peacock was born June 20, 1843 in the state of New York, probably in the community of Canaan. She was the daughter of Jacob Peacock (Dec. 23, 1810-Sept. 1, 1867) and Charlotte B. Hall Peacock (1814-Sept. 19, 1882). Jerusha had two younger sisters, Anna (born 1846) and Laura (1849-1878). Sometime after Jerusha's birth, the family moved to Albany, New York, and Jerusha attended Albany Female Academy where she met Maria Carey. Evidently they became friends while attending the same drawing class there. She became friends with Maria's brothers and may have been romantically involved with Edward Carey. In the early 1860's, Jerusha often traveled to other towns in New York (state) to visit friends.

Sometime near 25 September 1865 Jerusha first came to Yellow Springs to take a teaching position in the Preparatory Department of Antioch College. This department accepted students anywhere from the age of twelve on up to adult and taught subjects such as English, Greek, Latin, Grammar, and Drawing. It is not clear why she came to Antioch College. She may have received her position because she or her family was friendly with one or more of the trustees. The principal of the Preparatory Department in the fall of 1865 was Edward Orton and her frequent mention of him in letters to her family hint that she or her family may have known him when he worked at the Albany State Normal school or at the Chester Academy, Chester, Orange County, New York. Jerusha frequently visited Chester in the summers.

Jerusha Peacock stayed in North Hall during the 1865-66 school year and often took meals with Edward Orton, Francis Tiffany, and a number of other teachers at Antioch. Her letters often noted the subjects of those mealtime discussions.

In the summer of 1866, she visited a home in Bristol, Rhode Island which may have been that of Francis Tiffany. He was there when she visited and from the tone of her letters he and his wife appeared to be the hosts although it was never actually stated. In August she arrived at 43 West Ferry Street, Albany, New York. The only surviving letter Charlotte wrote Jerusha had this address on it also. From the description she gave of this visit it is almost certain that this was the home of her parents at that time. When they had moved there from Canaan was unknown. Maria Carey lived in or was visiting in Albany in August of 1866 and Jerusha mentioned visiting her there, then.

While in Albany, in August the principal of the Preparatory School, Edward Orton, visited her and expressed his satisfaction with her work. He approved her plan to learn Latin and reduced her teaching schedule at Antioch so that she would have more time to study. In the fall term, Jerusha taught drawing, English, grammar-composition, and French. Between September 11 and September 16, 1866, Jerusha returned to Antioch to teach for her second year and to study Latin.

She spent Christmas 1866 at 27 Mound Street, Cincinnati at the home of Reverend Amory Dwight Mayo and his wife Sarah Carter Edgarton. He was the Unitarian minister of the Church of the Redeemer at this time and a trustee of Antioch

College. By December 26, 1866, she had returned to Antioch to begin the winter term. She taught grammar, two English classes, and a geography class and began her second term of Preparatory Latin with the continued encouragement of Mr. Orton. During the winter term or spring term she became involved with two campus literary societies, the 'Star and Crescent' and the 'Adelphians' but there was no record of her formal membership in either society. She also became an avid baseball fan during this period and vividly described one of the Antioch College's teams and a game they played which she attended.

She came home to be with her parents sometime just after June 30, 1867 but at the end of July, she set off on a trip to visit friends in Boston. She stayed at the home of the Dale family, 70 Warren Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. While she was there she toured a large part of the city and was introduced to the wife and son of William Lloyd Garrison. Unfortunately, the distinguished Mr. Garrison was in Europe at the time but Jerusha was able to view his portrait and see the interior of his home. She was also introduced to Mr. Johnson, the managing editor of the *Independent*. It was not certain when she returned to her parents' home, but she was probably present at her father's death, September 1, 1867.

Anna became a teacher in the Model School at Antioch College in the fall of 1867, and she taught there until 1872. Jerusha also continued to teach at Antioch but there were no letters to detail her specific activities there from the Fall of 1867 until February of 1870. She had been encouraging her parents to move to Yellow Springs prior to the death of her father and after his passing, her mother, Charlotte, moved quickly to get a home in Yellow Springs. She purchased lots 210, 211, and half of 212 in Yellow Springs from Florence and Francis Creager for \$1,700. She took title to the property in 1879 for \$5,000. She continued to live there until her death in 1882 and Anna finally sold the property in 1886, for only \$800.

The first mention Jerusha made of her future husband was in a letter to Maria Carey dated March 30, 1870. Ironically, she mentioned him only in passing and seemed more interested in another beau she had at the time.

Maria Carey may have visited Jerusha in Yellow Springs in the spring of 1870. Later, in August, she visited a home at 19 Philip Street, Albany, New York. Unfortunately she was unclear in explaining just who her hosts were. She did spend some time with Maria there. She returned in time to teach at Yellow Springs in the fall of 1870 and records revealed that she also taught there the school year of 1871-72. Only one letter from Jerusha Peacock survived from 1871 to reveal what she had done in that period and it revealed little.

In the fall of 1872 several events occurred in Jerusha's life which the letters did not mention. Jerusha married James Madison Harris on August 8, 1872 and Laura Peacock began her first and only year as a teacher in the Preparatory School. There were no detailed descriptions of the wedding; even the newspaper accounts were bland. James Harris was not a particularly religious man according to a short biography that was prepared by a friend of his after his death. James M. Harris received an M.D. at Bellevue

and set up a practice in Yellow Springs. He received an A.B. from Antioch in 1870 and taught physiology there for a number of years. He received an A.M. from Antioch in 1877 and continued to teach and practice medicine for many years after Jerusha's death. Charlotte Peacock evidently approved of the marriage of James and Jerusha. In letters she enclosed along with Jerusha's to Anna she seemed to be pleased with the match and particularly fond of James as well.

Anna had gone to Brooklyn to a teaching position and evidently disliked it. Jerusha strongly urged her to return to Yellow Springs in these few letters of the period.

In letters written in the fall of 1872, when Jerusha was Matron at Antioch College, she sometimes described her duties. She particularly disliked disciplining students for their unruly behavior and dreaded having students expelled. These letters also described the first home that Jerusha and James had and Jerusha's initial efforts to combine teaching and homemaking.

Jerusha and James had their first son Allen, July 13, 1873, but no mention of the event was made in either surviving letters of the local papers. George was born in 1875 and Robert followed in 1877. The last letters Jerusha wrote were to Anna and discussed her children and her life in Yellow Springs in general. She did not work at Antioch during this time but whether it was her own choice or the policy of Antioch to prohibit women with infants from teaching was not discussed by her or researched by the writer of this inventory. She frequently visited neighbors and they frequently reciprocated. She often mentioned writing to Maria Carey but none of those letters survived to be part of the collection.

The last letter Jerusha Hall Peacock may have written was to Anna Peacock. The text suggested that she may have been in a Roman Catholic institution, probably a hospital such as there were in those days. From the text of the letter it was unclear where this hospital was located. She described her care as well as her aches and pains. There was reason to believe that it was written in July or August of 1878. She died November 8, 1878 in Yellow Springs leaving three young sons and her husband James, her elderly mother Charlotte, and or two sisters. Laura died in 1878 but whether it was before or after Jerusha was unknown. The newspaper stated that Jerusha H.P. Harris died after "a painful illness or several months duration".

Scope and Content

Series I

The series contained correspondence between Jerusha and her family and one friend. A vast number of the letters were written by Jerusha but the few exceptions to that were noted. The letters were all folded once and have the additional pages clipped to them in the order they belonged to reduce confusion and avoid having additional pages of the letters confused. They were generally organized chronologically and divisions were made by addressee. The letters were in good condition but should be handled carefully to avoid tearing them along their old folds.

Subseries I: In the first file there were four letters all written by Jerusha to her parents, Jacob and Charlotte Peacock. The first three letters were all written in August of 1861 from Chester, New York, where Jerusha was visiting. The fourth letter was also written from Chester but in July of 1862. These letters were legible, complete, and mentioned a number of friends, family members, and interesting events. These were some of the earliest letters written by Jerusha Peacock.

File two contained letters that were also written by Jerusha but were addressed exclusively to her mother. The bulk of these letters were written while Jerusha was in Yellow Springs but there were some which were written from places that she visited during her summers off. These letters were more sporadic than those written while Jerusha was in Yellow Springs. The places she visited included Chester and Freehold, New York, Bristol, Rhode Island, and Boston, Massachusetts. The most puzzling was the letter from Bristol because she was so vague as to whom she was visiting. No other letters in the collection mention that she visited there again. The most interesting of her travel letters were the ones from Boston due to their descriptions of Boston sites and of her visit to the home of William Lloyd Garrison.

This file contained one letter from July 1862 but the rest spanned the period between August 1865 and August 1867. They were almost weekly accounts of Jerusha's activities at Antioch in the Preparatory Department and at the place she boarded (North Hall). I included one fragment in this file that may or may not have been written to Charlotte but because information in a letter to Charlotte permitted the fragment to be dated, it was included in this file. It was an account of a baseball game played in Yellow Springs which Jerusha apparently enjoyed.

The third file contained only one letter. It was the only letter written by Charlotte to Jerusha. There were no other letters by her to Jerusha in the collection, only little notes written on the letters of Jerusha to Anna and Laura, Jerusha's sisters. This single letter was dated 9 February 1866 and addressed from where Charlotte probably lived at the time, Albany, New York. It contained a few lines of poetry that may have been composed by Charlotte herself and it mentioned a number of family friends and Yellow Springs.

Subseries II: File one contained letters Jerusha wrote to her youngest sister Laura. The oldest letters in this file were written from Chester in August of 1861 and in July of 1862. The rest of the letters covered the period between November 1865 and June 1867. Most of these letters were also written from Yellow Springs. They discussed the people she met at Yellow Springs and the activities she engaged in there. These letters described the mealtime conversations that took place at the place she stayed in while working in the Preparatory Department. They also mentioned some of the gentlemen with whom she 'spent time' and described some of the places around Yellow Springs and beyond that she went with them.

Anna was younger than Jerusha but older than Laura and it was to her that the letters of the second file were addressed. The oldest letter of the entire collection was the first letter of this file. It was written by Jerusha to Anna in 1860 but contained a short note written by Charlotte. There were no clues to decide from where it was written. There was a letter in this file from Charlotte to Anna, another from Edward Orton to Anna, and another from Libbie Carey to Anna. The majority of the letters were written by Jerusha to Anna although there were a number of these that contained short notes from Charlotte as well. These letters were written by Jerusha between June 1865 and June 1867, then one in August 1870, two in 1871, four in 1872, and one each in 1875, 1876, 1877, and 1878. The gaps may have been due to the fact that Anna stayed in Yellow Springs most of the time in those years and Jerusha only wrote to her when she was visiting for extended periods.

These letters were fascinating and frustrating because they offered insights into Jerusha's early married years and into the early years of her child-raising activities but the gaps of time between the letters fogged up so much of the information. There were so many names mentioned and so much common knowledge must have existed between the sisters that it was difficult to decide what was going on.

Maria Carey was a good friend to Jerusha Peacock and in letters to her sisters and her mother she often mentioned that she had written to Maria. Unfortunately only two of these many letters were in the collection and they made up the third file. These letters revealed Jerusha's thoughts about the educational system at Antioch and her frustration with the system of education for women in other places. She was pleased that Antioch offered women the opportunity to compete with men at the academic level. Her tirade against the practice of giving women inferior educations was exciting and interesting. These comments contained the only mention of the school where she had received her previous education, Albany Female Academy.

One of these letters also contained the first mention of James Madison Harris, Jerusha's husband. His name and a brief description of him were included in a letter which also discussed a number of her beaux. He was not among them, but a gentleman she had just met was and she did not seem all that interested in him.

Series II

Jerusha often mentioned that she read books in her letters and in this series she attempted to create some of her own literature. The first of this series contained two essays, one of which she only translated from the French and the other 'My Dear Mr. Union' she authored. This essay was written much as a letter might have been a contained colorful description of what was probably the area surrounding Bristol, Rhode Island.

'Poor Dick' was a humorous French essay which she only translated. The fact that she translated it and that it survived to be included in this collection may reveal something about the literary tastes of one of the sisters or Charlotte if not Jerusha herself.

The second file contained dated poems written between 1861-1867 and signed by Jerusha. These poems as well as the ones in the 'Undated Poems' file were mainly about nature and the changing of the seasons. One of the dated poems, 'For Anna' was particularly touching because it was probably written by Jerusha to comfort Anna just after Jerusha arrived at Antioch in September 1865. I suspect that Anna and Jerusha were very close and the sisters must have missed each other quite a bit.

In the 'Undated Poems' file there was an interesting poem called 'The Wizard' which was different from any of the other poems in either of the poem files. It dealt with a fantasy subject rather than some aspect of nature. 'Kitty and I' was one of the best and most amusing of her poems. 'Calling the Children' was also an excellent poem and probably revealed many of her feelings about the children she taught.

Series III

This series contained only one item, a sketch book with dated sketches of landscapes and portraits. Some were unfinished but all revealed marvelous talent. She taught drawing in the Preparatory Department and often mentioned in letters that during her excursions she drew. These sketches were probably the ones which she mentioned in passing to her mother and sisters. These sketches were in pencil and the paper on which they were drawn is deteriorating so this book should be handled with much care.