

Mitchell Memorabilia Microfilm

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Archives, The Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association

Nantucket, MA

2008

Last Update: March 24, 2008

Collection Summary

Collection Number: 2008.2

Title: Mitchell Memorabilia Microfilm

Repository: The Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association Archives

Extent: 18 microfilm reels, 4 boxes

Language: English

Associated Materials: Originals in Maria Mitchell Papers and Mitchell Family Papers

Abstract: Contains 9 rolls of microfilmed material from the Maria Mitchell Papers and the Mitchell Family Papers, as well as some papers related to Maria Mitchell and owned by the Nantucket Atheneum. Also contains 9 rolls of microfilm negatives.

Administrative Information

Copyright Status: Property of the Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association.

Preferred Citation: Courtesy of the Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association.

Biographical Note

Maria Mitchell

Maria Mitchell was born on Nantucket on August 1, 1818. Her discovery of a telescopic comet on the evening of October 1, 1847 brought her worldwide fame and a gold medal from the King of Denmark. She was the first American and first woman to receive this honor. Raised in a Quaker family on an island with a strong Quaker presence in both law and society, Maria Mitchell grew up in a unique environment in which education was encouraged even among girls and young women.

One of the first females to work for the United States federal government, Maria Mitchell worked for the US Coast Survey and the Nautical Almanac. In 1848, she was the first female inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was also among the first women to be inducted into the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Philosophical Society.

In 1865, Mitchell began teaching at the newly opened Vassar Female College in Poughkeepsie, NY. This position made her the first female professor of astronomy in the United States, as well as the professor of mathematics and the director of the Observatory. Mitchell remained in this position until 1888 when she resigned due to failing health. Mitchell passed away in June of 1889 in Lynn, Massachusetts. She was buried on Nantucket. In 1902, family members, former students and friends joined together to create The Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association on Nantucket. In 1903, the organization was formally incorporated and the Association opened at 1 Vestal Street - housed in the Mitchell House.

William Mitchell

Born on Nantucket on December 20, 1791 in the spot where the Methodist Church now stands on Centre Street, William Mitchell was the son of Peleg Mitchell, Sr. and Lydia Mitchell. The family was Quaker. At the age of three, Mitchell began his schooling, taught by teachers at several different schools. Later in his schooling, he worked with the expectations of attending Harvard College which never occurred. He

learned the trade of coopering but then became interested in teaching. He began as an assistant teacher and then became principal of the same school. Due to ill health, he left teaching, returning to cooper in his father's soap and oil business.

William married Lydia Coleman on December 10, 1812; they had first met in 1804 when William had gone to the Coleman's house at the request of his father for pumpkin seeds which Captain Coleman had brought back from Patagonia. When first married, William farmed potatoes and corn and fished. Returning to Town, he taught, worked in his father's oil business and coopered. He taught at one of the first public schools on the island but left to open his own school for fifty students on Howard Street in the late 1820s. He left teaching, taking up the position of secretary at the Phenix Insurance Company. He left the position in 1837 when he was offered the position of bank cashier at the Pacific Bank, a job which he kept until he left the island in 1861 and one which housed the family in the apartments at the bank. This is what brought him to sell the house at 1 Vestal Street to his brother, Peleg Mitchell, Jr., in 1837.

Mitchell held many jobs in his lifetime, many at the same time in order to support his family. He was an astronomer and worked for the US Coast Survey. In his biography, he lists his occupations as: cooper, soap boiler, oil candle manufacturer, farmer, schoolmaster, Insurance Broker, Surveyor, Chronometer rater, astronomical observer for the Coast Survey, Justice of the Peace, Executor of Wills and Administrator of Estates, Writre of wills, deeds and other instruments, Cashier of a bank, Treasurer of a Savings Bank...He served in the state senate and was on the Board of Overseers and the Harvard College Observatory. More details of his life can be found in the NMMAA.

In 1861, after the death of Lydia Mitchell, William and his daughter Maria moved to Lynn, Massachusetts to be closer to family members. From there, William moved to Vassar College where Maria was professor of astronomy and mathematics and director of the observatory. William Mitchell remained active in astronomy and making his meteorological journals. William Mitchell died at Vassar College Observatory where he was living with his daughter, Maria. He passed away on April 19, 1869 and is buried on Nantucket. William Mitchell and Lydia Coleman Mitchell had ten children; nine of whom lived to adulthood.

Scope and Content

Contains 9 rolls of microfilmed material from the Maria Mitchell Papers and the Mitchell Family Papers, as well as papers related to Maria Mitchell that are owned by the Nantucket Atheneum. Also contains 9 rolls of microfilm negatives.

Series List and descriptions

Series I: Microfilm

Contains 9 rolls of microfilmed memorabilia. (Boxes 1-2)

Series II: Microfilm Negatives

Contains 9 rolls of negatives of microfilmed memorabilia. (Boxes 3-4)

Container List

Series I: Microfilm

Box	Reel	
1	1	Reel 1, Items 1-6: Item 1: William Mitchell. Autobiography. b. 20 December 1791. Item 2: William & Maria Mitchell. Correspondence [with scientists such as]: G. B. Airy; A. D. Bache; J. F. Bowditch; Alvan Clark; C. H. Davis; B. A. Gould; Edward Evertt Hale; Joseph G. Harlan; Joseph Henry; Matthew Fountain Maury; and others. Item 3: William Mitchell. Observations of the Eclipse of the Sun. Item 4: William Mitchell. Meteorological Observations at Nantucket and at Lynn, Mass. Item 5: William Mitchell. Meteorological Observations, 1865, continued by Maria Mitchell, 1869-1872. Item 6: William Mitchell. Meteorological Observations at Nantucket, July 1849-1856.
1	2	Reel 2, Items 7-17: Item 7: William Mitchell. Observations made for the purpose of correcting the chronometers of whale ships, 1845-1850. Also includes observations of the Comet of 1847 for which Maria Mitchell obtained the gold medal from the King of Denmark. Item 8: William Mitchell. Manuscript of a lecture on comets, 1842. Item 9: William Mitchell. Correspondence with family and personal friends. Item 10: William Mitchell. Lecture on stars. Item 11: William Mitchell. Notebook, astronomical records, surveying notes. Account of Encke's Comet by Walter Folger. Item 12: William Mitchell. Lectures on the moon, distances, eclipses. Item 13: William Mitchell. Meteorological observations, 1844-1849. Item 14: William Mitchell. Journal of weather (Nantucket). Scrapbook and clippings, 1935-1840, 1848. Item 15: A brief memoir of the late Walter Folger by William Mitchell. Item 16: Maria Mitchell. Diary, 1854-1857, on travels in Europe, (George Airy), poems for children. Item 17: Maria Mitchell: Lectures telling of trip to Europe and Russia, 1873. Travels with the Hawthornes, stay in Rome, 1857-1858. Visit to Vatican Observatory and Angelo Secci. Lecture to students on Women's Rights.
1	3	Reel 3, Items 18-29: Item 18: Maria Mitchell. Correspondence relating to the awarding of the gold medal. [William Mitchell, letter from Edward Everett, 1848-1864.]

Box	Reel	
1	3 (cont.)	<p>Item 19: Maria Mitchell. Lecture notes: observations to be made by students.</p> <p>Item 20: Maria Mitchell. Lecture notes: lessons in observing, 1866. [Class notes: 1866.]</p> <p>Item 21: Maria Mitchell. Notes on Saturn, 1877-1883. Diary Notes, 1882.</p> <p>Item 22: Maria Mitchell. Lecture notes: notes on meteors and some correspondence.</p> <p>Item 23: Maria Mitchell. Lecture notes: notes on distances, 1870.</p> <p>Item 24: Maria Mitchell. Lecture notes: combination of ideas for lectures and diary, 1880-1881.</p> <p>Item 25: Maria Mitchell. Questions for students - test, etc.</p> <p>Item 26: Maria Mitchell. Notes to Chauvenet - eclipses.</p> <p>Item 27: Maria Mitchell. Lectures on precession, sun spots, constellations, occultations, cycles of time, comets. Some diary notes for 1867 and [class notes, 1867].</p> <p>Item 28: Maria Mitchell. [Introductory lecture - remarks on distance of stars] [class notes]</p> <p>Item 29: Maria Mitchell. Lecture: Ideas on Observing, on women [1874]. Diary notes 1872 and 1873.</p>
1	4	<p>Reel 4, Items 30-34:</p> <p>Item 30: Maria Mitchell. Subjects of lectures given by students at Vassar and subjects of lectures given by Maria Mitchell, 1881-1887.</p> <p>Item 31: Maria Mitchell. Notes and printed references on Nautical Almanac. Studies in preparation for computational work done for U.S. Nautical Almanac first published in 1849.</p> <p>Item 32: Maria Mitchell. Lecture notes. Observations of Saturn and its satellites, 1879-1882 and 1877-1879. Observations on Mars, 1869. Lecture notes on the possibility of an intermercurial plant read in November 1869. Observations on Mira, 1856-1858. Lectures on Seasons. Lectures on double stars. Lectures on early astronomers.</p> <p>Item 33: Maria Mitchell. Lecture on the Eclipse of 7 August 1869. Lectures on the Sun and Moon. Lectures on Saturn. Lectures on the Importance of Using Your Eyes. Lectures on the Size of the Universe. Lectures on the Moon [with photograph] and the Moon's Phases. Motion of the Planets and their Discovery. Lecture on La Place read February 1868. Lectures on Accidents in Observing. Observations of Comets made in Nantucket. Observations of Comets made at Vassar, 1881-1882. Lecture on Alvan Clark and Telescope Making. Notes on Gauss [Nantucket].</p> <p>Item 34: William and Maria Mitchell. Letters of William, Henry and Maria Mitchell. Poems written by and Maria Mitchell. Accounts</p>

of activities at Vassar [copies from the college newspaper].
Obituary notice and miscellaneous memorials to Maria Mitchell.

Box Reel
1 5

Reel 5, Items 35-42:

Item 35: Book of clippings on astronomical observations made by other astronomers.

Item 36: Correspondence with Sir George Airy and Lady Airy, 1857-1882.

Item 37: Diary notes and Ideas on Women's Education, 1886-1888, including some observations, 1887-1888.

Item 38: William and Maria Mitchell. Maria's letter on 1857-1858 trip to Europe. Autographs, miscellaneous. Letter to William Mitchell from well know people, 1825. Letters to and from Maria Mitchell.

Item 39: Clippings on astronomers, on Vassar. Reports of Comet observations; additional clippings on science and women, etc.

Item 40: Maria Mitchell. Letter to Maria Mitchell and clippings on astronomical subjects, [1881-1888(?)].

Item 41: William Mitchell. Clippings on women and astronomy, obituary of William Mitchell, computations.

Item 42: Maria Mitchell. Early letters to Maria Mitchell received during her trip to Europe, 1857-1858.

1 6

Reel 6, Items 43-55:

Item 43: Maria Mitchell. Photograph and calling cards [Scrapbook of views & calling cards of European trip, 1857-1888(?)].

Item 44: William and Maria Mitchell. Letters to Maria Mitchell from astronomers (1869) after her father's death. Obituaries of William Mitchell.

Item 45: Maria Mitchell. Lecture notes and diary, 1881-1882. [Maria Mitchell private notes, 1881-1882].

Item 46: Maria Mitchell. Notebook on the Women's Congress [Association for the Advancement of Women 1880-1881.]

Item 47: Maria Mitchell. Notebook on the Women's Congress, 1876. Questionnaire and Statistics on Women in Science.

Item 48: Maria Mitchell. Private notes and journal, 1873, includes clippings. Accounts of travel to Europe.

Item 49: Maria Mitchell. European notes, 1873.

Item 50: Maria Mitchell. Ideas on science and its popularization, 1874. [Commonplace book, 1871-1880]. On government and patronage. On English gentlemen. On music. On transit of Venus, 1874. On Women's Congress, 1875-1876. Life in the college, 1875. Visit of Don Pedro, 1876. Diary, 1878, 1879, 1880.

Item 51: Maria Mitchell. Clippings on Women's Congress in an old computations book, 1865.

Item 52: Genealogy of the Mitchell Family, Phebe Mitchell [1864]. [Chase, Joseph, A book of genealogy, 1815, copied by Phebe Mitchell, 1844]. List of Shares sold for social library.

Item 53: "Scraps to be saved about Jupiter," etc.

Item 54: Lectures on Saturn, Jupiter, Color of Stars, Women's Labor

Box	Reel	
1	6 (cont.)	Item 55: Book of clippings, engravings. Obituaries of Edward Everett. Maria Mitchell at Vassar. Accounts of Life at Vassar. Obituaries and Accounts of the activities of William and Maria Mitchell.
1	7	Reel 7, Items 56-65: Item 56: Letters from Maria Mitchell's students and famous people like John G. Whittier, John D. Rockefeller. [Letters to Maria Mitchell, 1886]. Item 57: "Scraps from newspapers, not very important." Item 58: Reminiscences of the Herschels. Lectures by Maria Mitchell. Item 59: "Letters and Scraps - some of them are very valuable." Letters of introduction from George Bond to famous European astronomers, 1865. Letters of famous astronomers to Maria Mitchell. Letters from famous women, such as Dorothea Dix, Julia Ward Howe, Frances Willard - to Maria Mitchell. Item 60: Maria Mitchell. Printed Papers, articles in magazines and newspapers by Maria Mitchell. Item 61: Maria Mitchell. Diary of a trip to Europe 1857-1858. (Copy Book Copy) Item 62: Maria Mitchell. Diary account of western trip, 1857, includes voyages on the Mississippi and travels through the south. Copied by William Mitchell Item 63: Lecture on Jupiter; on scientists and the popularization of science, on time [parts very faint]. Item 64: THERE IS NO ITEM 64. Item 65: William Mitchell Kendall, autobiography and journal (European trip, 1881).
2	8	Reel 8, Items 66-69b: Item 66: Phebe Mitchell Kendall. Diaries. Item 67: Maria Mitchell. Lecture on the moon. Item 68: Scrapbook containing letters to Maria Mitchell, 1870-1875. Item 69: Maria Mitchell. Astronomical story. Item 69a: William Mitchell. Lecture on meteorology. Report on a visitation to the Harvard Observatory. Item 69b: Maria Mitchell. Letters [1 volume].
2	9	Reel 9, Item 69c and Nantucket Atheneum #1-5: Item 69c: Maria Mitchell. Travel notes [1 volume]. Diary in Europe. Travels in America, 1857, and other papers. #1: Maria Mitchell, Weather Observations, 1846-49, and 1854-56 #2: Maria Mitchell, Weather Observations, 1850-53 #3: Maria Mitchell, Weather Observations, 1854-56 #4: Letter from Robley Dunglison to Nantucket Atheneum, 1846

#5: Letter from Maria Mitchell to officers of Nantucket Atheneum, no
year

Series II: Microfilm Negatives

Box	Reel	
3	1	Reel 1, Items 1-6: See Box 1, Reel 1
3	2	Reel 2, Items 7-17: See Box 1, Reel 2
3	3	Reel 3, Items 18-29: See Box 1, Reel 3
Box	Reel	
3	4	Reel 4, Items 30-34: See Box 1, Reel 4
3	5	Reel 5, Items 35-42: See Box 1, Reel 5
3	6	Reel 6, Items 43-55: See Box 1, Reel 6
3	7	Reel 7, Items 56-65: See Box 1, Reel 7
4	8	Reel 8, Items 66-69b: See Box 2, Reel 8
4	9	Reel 9, Item 69c and Nantucket Atheneum #1-5: See Box 2, Reel 9