American Antiquarian Society
Manuscript Collections

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Cushing, Anna Quincy Thaxter, Papers, 1816-1923
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LOCATION(S):

Octavo vols.

Mss. boxes

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

thirty-two octavo volumes; one manuscript box (14 folders)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

See accompanying sheets for additional information.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Purchased from Isaiah Thomas Books & Prints, 1985, 1986, 1989

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Anna Quincy Thaxter Cushing (1825-1900), the daughter of Edward Thaxter (1784-1841) and Susan Joy (Thaxter) Thaxter (1791-1837), was born on 24 October 1825 in Hingham, Mass. Both Anna's family and that of her husband's, Dr. Benjamin Cushing (1822-1895), son of Jerom Cushing (1780-1824) and Mary (Thaxter) Cushing (1784-1867), were among the first settlers of the town of Hingham.

After the untimely death of her parents, Anna left Hingham to attend school in Cambridge, Mass., and shortly thereafter she settled in Dorchester. As the eldest child Anna became responsible for the care of her sister, Susan Barker Thaxter (1827-1849), and her brother, Edward Thomas Thaxter (1832-1859). Susan married Henry Hunter Peters (1825-1877), in 1848, and died soon after giving birth to Edward Dyer Peters in 1849.

Anna married her cousin, Benjamin Cushing, on 5 January 1848. He had received his education in the Derby Academy (Hingham, Mass.), Harvard College, class of 1842, and Harvard Medical School, class of 1846. He studied in Paris for a year following graduation. Except for the period during the Civil War in which he served as a volunteer surgeon at Fortress Munroe (Hampton, Virginia), he lived and practiced in Dorchester.

The Cushing's four children were all born in Dorchester. They were Mary (1848-), who married Joseph Richmond Churchill (1845-) in 1871; Edward Thaxter (1851-); Annie

Quincy (1857-), who married her cousin, Edward Dyer Peters (1849-1917) in 1881; and Susan Thaxter (1863-).

The First Church (Unitarian) in Dorchester, was a center of Anna's many activities. She belonged to its various sewing groups formed to aid the needy or benefit a cause and was also a member of its choir. Music was one of Anna's passions and indeed of the entire Cushing family.

Nearer home, Anna's charitable instincts benefited the young Irish women -- nearly all of whom were named Mary -- who came to work for her. Her kindness resulted in friendships, which in the cases of Mary Desmond, Mary Gately, and Margaret Gately lasted for years.

Anna died in Dorchester on 13 March 1900.

This collection contains thirty-two octavo volumes which cover most of the years 1844 to 1875 and 1884 (the years in which Ben was away in the Army are notably missing). The diaries record Anna's daily activities and news of the extended Thaxter-Cushing family. Many members of this family lived in Dorchester and nearby Hingham. Though Anna had relatives living in Bolton, Deerfield, and Cambridge, they were near enough to be a vital part of Anna's life.

Anna was an intelligent, articulate, and sympathetic observer of her world. She saw herself as a homemaker, mother, and wife. When her domestic duties were completed -- although she noted the sewing was never finished -- she liked to visit friends, read, sing, play the piano, and attend lectures and concerts. The diaries reveal a woman of charitable disposition anxious to be of service to her family and community, grateful for her blessings but sometimes wishing to escape from the confines of the cult of domesticity -- "Oh dear I wish I had the faculty of turning off work a little more." Despite the work Anna seemed to be more than a little satisfied with Wednesday's spotless sugar bowls, castors and saltcellars, Friday's clean swept house and the jars of pear preserves on the shelf.

This collection also contains two folders of correspondence to or from various members of the Thaxter-Cushing family, including early letters from Anna's mother, Susan Joy Thaxter, to her mother, Anna Thaxter; letters from Benjamin Cushing to Anna shortly before their marriage; letters of condolence regarding the deaths of Susan Joy Thaxter, Thomas Thaxter (-1839), and Edward Thaxter; and a letter dated 4 August 1918 written in German.

There is a folder of photographs including: two of Benjamin Cushing; one each of Mr. and Mrs. Darius Brewer, grandparents of Joseph Richmond Churchill; two of Joseph Richmond Churchill; and one each of Mary Thaxter Cushing and Mary Cushing Churchill.

There are six folders of materials of Joseph R. Churchill while he attended Harvard University. The folders include lecture notes, compositions, and exams. Additionally, there is a folder which contains Churchill's certificate for passing the bar.

The collection also contains a folder of newspaper clippings regarding the death of Dr. Benjamin Cushing and the long career of Joseph R. Churchill, as well as a folder containing a memoir of Mary Thaxter Cushing written by her grand-daughter, Mary Cushing Churchill, in 1932.

The final two folders are notes of, and genealogical materials gathered by, the processor.

See Contents List. The finding aids include notes on each volume, listing matters of interest, and nearly every book or piece of music mentioned by Anna, and every treatment used for medical complaints.

18 September 1997
revised 2 March 1999

American Antiquarian Society
MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT

ANNA QUINCY THAXTER CUSHING, PAPERS, 1816-1932
CONTENTS LIST

Octavo Volume

1 1844 January 7-21; 1845 January 20
Anna begins with reasons for keeping a diary; lists readings for her history class; cogitates on Cousin's lecture on war; worries that she is not attentive enough during public prayers but thinks clergymen are partly to blame; wishes to act more unselfishly.

2 1846 January 1-July 3
Details daily schedule of visits with family and friends; lists books read and music studied; Ben to go to France; Anna invited to attend a magic lantern show of Palestine; feels "almost fearful" responsibility for her brother, Edward.

3 1846 July 4-October 23
Describes a trip with her sister Susan to visit relatives in Deerfield; details day long excursion to Leyden Glen; back at home describes trip to Nantasket and picnic at Moon Head; worries about propriety of attending the theater and the opera; prepares for move to new quarters.

4 1846 October 24-1847 May 13
Begins study of Latin and arithmetic; attends anti-slavery fair; details Susan's experience with use of ether for tooth extraction; collects money for "sufferers in Ireland"; Ben returns from Europe in April; Anna views 3 mile long painting of the Mississippi River in Boston.

5 1847 October 24-December 31
Susan Cushing and Henry Peters become engaged (presumably Anna's and Ben Cushing's engagement was noted in missing volume as they are preparing to be married); Anna notes her wedding presents as they arrive.

6 1848 January 1-September 23
Anna describes her wedding day and beginning of her married life in their home; Susan and Edward move in and Mary Gately is hired to help with the housekeeping; specific domestic chores are to be performed on specific days; Anna critiques "Jane Eyre; Edward moves to Boston to board and work for commission merchants; Ben hires Patrick Gately (Mary's nephew); description of Hingham wedding; Susan suffers from a cough and medicines are prescribed; Susan marries Henry Peters and they depart for a trip to improve her health; story of l3 year old New Hampshire boy who has left home; Cushings move to another house; Anna says she will now write irregularly -- will keep a "diary of events ... for my own satisfaction".

Octavo Volume

7 1848 September 24-1850 May 25
Gap between 1848 October 12 and 1849 October 12
Anna summarizes the 12 months between October 1848 and October 1849 as "one of the most eventful [periods] of my life" -- daughter Mary is born 16 October, 1848; brother Edward sails for Canton in June 1849; Susan's son Edward Peters is born 1 June, 1849; in July the Cushings move into house at the corner of East and Highland Streets; Susan dies in July 1849. Dr. Parkman fails to return home; Dr.Webster is arrested; Anna is teaching Mary Gately to read; widowed Henry Peters goes to California; Edward returns from China; Ben attends anti-slavery meetings; Dr. Webster is found guilty of the murder of Dr. Parkman.

8 1851 February 16-August 15
Summary of 1851 August 15 to 1852 March written in 1852 May
Fugitive slave Sims is confined in Boston; Anna depressed at his forced return to Georgia; Anna joins group making clothes for slaves who have escaped to Canada; Edward sails on "Mermaid" after week of dosing for "sort of bilious attack"; Edward returns early on account of his illness and Henry Peters returns from California.

9 1852 April 1-1853 July 16
Kossuth comes to Boston; Ben takes vacation with Fred May to Niagara, Montreal, Lake George and West Point; Anna busy with "picking up things after the children"; trims bonnet for "poor Mary Desmond"; death of Daniel Webster noted with tolling of bells, etc.; Aunt Mary Cushing (who is also Anna's mother-in-law) moves in for the winter; Anna joins Dorchester Singing Society and "voluntary choir" at church; Edward comes back from Calcutta with presents for all and then goes back to Boston to board.

10 1853 July 17-1854 April 29
Anna teaches daughter Mary her letters, to sew on patchwork, and to do "little sums"; children and Anna often ride with Ben on his rounds; Mr. Gassett converts to Catholicism; Ellen May dies in childbirth; Anna worries about having to sometimes ignore her children in order to accomplish her chores; fugitive slave sewing society disbands for winter season to be replaced by society sewing for the poor; Anna decides to attend singing school; goes to anti-slavery fair; Mary Gately's sister Margaret comes as second maid; Ben joins church choir and also plays the horn; Cushings give two large tea parties; Ben operates on tumor of Aunt Harriett(?) while Anna administers the ether.

11 1854 May 1-November 30
Ben acquires new sailboat the "Mattapan"; attempt to rescue fugitive slave, Burns, from the authorities in Boston is rebuffed; T.W. Higginson suffers sabre cut in melee and cancels appearance at First Church; Henry Peters remarries; Anna and 30 friends spend a festive day on the water; Anna hears Mozart's 12th Mass twice in one week; Ben pulls one of Anna's teeth using ether; account of Mr. Gassett's marriage to Maria at house of Catholic bishop; Anna considers her own religious beliefs.

Octavo Volume

12 1854 December 1-1855 September 22
Mr. Gassett to go to California and Calcutta on business; pew auction at church; visit to Hingham; detailed account of Dorchester's 225 anniversary on July 4, 1855; when a guest minister mentions slavery in his sermon some 20 people walk out of the church; Ben goes to Chatham for vacation to shoot "sea fowl".

13 1856 March 9-July 26
Edward sails to Europe on the "Medora"; Anna continues to teach daughter Mary; Charles Sumner assaulted in Senate chamber; Mary and Eddie get the measles; Ben applies 8 leeches to his sore finger; Mary sews and does "a little washing and ironing" for her doll; 4th of July activities include procession of "Antiques and Horribles," "crackers and torpedoes," and a balloon ascension.

14 1856 July 27-October 11
Anna says she now writes in her diary partly for her children's future benefit; account of huckleberrying party; Edward's ship is lost off the island of Miquelon but he is safe; on a visit to Roxbury Anna's horse bolts; Ben returns from his "gunning" vacation; Cushings visit Peters on their new farm in Southboro; 2 new sewing societies formed to sew for anti-slavery fair and Kansas emigrants.

15 1856 October 12-1858 March 6
Mary Cushing's 8th birthday is celebrated; Mary begins piano lessons with Anna; Anna has leeches applied for eye inflammation; Ben works for election of Fremont; Patrick Mulhearn comes to work; Edward to be 3rd mate on "The Seaman's Bride",

Hannah Mulhearn hired; Miss Critcherson comes to sew with her sewing machine; 23 February, 1857 Anna Susan Cushing born [her name seems to have been changed later to Annie Quincy]; Anna uses ether at the end and later had breast abscess; Edward sails to New Orleans; Mary and Eddie attend Miss Noyes' school; Anna resumes daily writing in diary "I feel lost ... when I have nothing of the kind to which I can turn"; Ben lends money to Margaret Gately to purchase sewing machine; Anna learns to use sewing machine "by degrees"; Ben disagrees with dentist who put preparation of arsenic, morphine and oil of cloves on Anna's teeth to kill nerves; Cushings begin to build their "house on the hill"; Anna thinks her sister would not have approved of Eddie Peters being sent away to school at the age of eight; Cushings visit Eddie at boarding school; Patrick and Hannah discharged to save money for house building; Anna reads new magazine the "Atlantic Monthly" for which Aunt Mary has subscribed; Edward goes to sea on the "Judge Thaw" bound for Madras; unsettled state of finances prevent Cushings from moving to new house; description of Anna's costume as "Night" at a Bal Masque and an account of the ball; Dr. Holmes asks Anna to sing with Wulf Fries in Milton.

Octavo Volume

16 1864 January 1-January 20
[Susan Thaxter was born 17 January 1863] Baby's first birthday is noted.

17 1867 January 16-31
An account of "the great storm of 1867"; Ben is caught out in the storm when he goes to treat two patients; Susie's fourth birthday party is curtailed.

18 1867 April 1-August 31
Account of wedding of nephew Robert Edes to Lizzie Clark; Eddie Cushing, almost 16 years old, goes on sailing vacation with a friend; Maria Gassett home for visit after seven years living abroad; Ben has new boat "The Elk"; Eddie goes wood-cock shooting in New Hampshire; Ben's mother dies; account of beach party to Nantasket which becomes an indoor party at the Edes.

19 1867 September 1-1868 March 14
Description of home rigged "telegraph" between Bailey and Cushing homes; Ben vacations in Highgate, Vermont; account of buggy accident observed by Anna; Mary Cushing, now 19, is studying German and history; Anna teaches Suzy reading and spelling every day; former Governor Andrews dies; Anna mentions death of brother Edward eight years ago; details new regulations for church sewing circle to combine sociability and charity; Mary attends a sewing school; Joseph Churchill becomes a regular visitor; Joe plays the flute and sings; Joe enters Harvard Law School.

20 1868 March 15-July 18
Severe snowstorm strikes while Anna is visiting in Hingham; Cushings attend a "unique" multi-generational party at the Hall; Ben obtains a baritone horn; Anna

helps Bailey family stricken by measles; Anna hears Mrs. Kemble read "Romeo and Juliet"; after four years with Cushings, Mary Landergan, at her mother's request is returning to Ireland; Annie and Suzy come down with the measles; Mary Cushing is engaged to Joseph Churchill; Edward performs in theatrical staged in Captain Austin's bowling alley; Bridget Kough replaces Mary Landergan; Mary Gately to stay as long as she wishes, says she feels "happier here than anywhere".

21 1868 July 19-1869 February 13
Description of visit by Anna and Susie to Martha May who is living in 150 year old house at Hough's Neck; Anna plays her first game of croquet; Edward vacations in the White Mountains; Mr. Damon of Hingham who was "intimately connected" with both Anna's father and grandfather dies; Edward begins work on Uncle Pope's wharf to learn about the lumber business; Anna hears from Margaret Gately who has become a Sister of Charity; Annie attends Lottie Pope's school and takes music lessons as well; Suzy begins school; Ben and Edward go on gunning vacation to Highgate; Anna and Annie view Church's picture of Niagara; Mary Cushing ill with "lung fever and pleurisy"; Anna recounts visit to dying girlhood friend, Lizzie Brooks; Anna attends annual meeting of Barnard Freedman's Aid Society; Edward acts in another theatrical.

Octavo Volume

22 1869 February 14-June 19
Anna is learning to use new sewing machine; Mary Gately is diagnosed with an eye disorder; Annie sews once a week for infant asylum fair; Bridget is replaced by Mary Kelleher; account of Annie's visit to dentist to have two teeth removed with benefit of gas; Mary Gately hears of her probable impending blindness and is offered care in the Cushing home; Robert Edes wins six hundred dollar prize for his medical treatise; Ben enjoys gardening, Anna says his strawberries are "his pets".

23 1869 June 20-October 30
Dorchester is annexed by Boston; Elizabeth Cushing who advised Anna when she went to housekeeping dies; Joe Churchill passes the bar examination; after waiting ten years Anna begins to "fit up" the parlor with new carpeting, paper, etc.; new singing society is organized; Anna for the first time preserves pears in glass jars; Ben goes duck hunting.

24 1869 October 31-1870 July 24
Anna sings in double quartette at church; account of Christmas celebration and presents given to Desmonds and Mary Gately; Mr.Pope takes nephews Edward Cushing and Robbie Swan into partnership; Henry Peters' wife Emily suffers from "depression as well as bodily troubles"; Mary and Joe perform in musical evening in Hingham; Mary bothered by dyspepsia or a "lump in her throat"; Anna reading Mrs. Stowe's "Old Town Folks" writes "the pleasure of reading is very much dampened to me by the feeling a good deal of the time, that I ought to be doing something else"; Ben is ill, his eye is affected; Anna is invited to attend a series of lectures on ancient civilizations by William Henry Channing; Mary goes to visit in

Bolton hoping it will improve her condition; Ben has inflammatory rheumatism; Mary McMullen is hired.

25 1870 July 25-December 3
Mr. Turner visits on his way to hospital in Boston where unexpectedly the diagnosis is cancer; Mary goes to stay in Princeton, Mass., at the Mountain House, for the air; Anna is horrified by the heavy loss of life in the Franco-Prussian war; plans are made for creation of singing club.

26 1870 December 4-1871 April 5
Joe Churchill is appointed trial justice of Dorchester Municipal Court; account of Christmas shopping and presents exchanged; plans made for Mary and Joe's Feb. 21st wedding; description of Susie's 8th birthday party; presents for Mary and Joe arrive -- they will live with the Cushings; account of Frank and Miss Lyon's wedding in Charlestown; Ben is ill; Robert Edes sees Ben's patients; Ben takes vacation to New York, Philadelphia, and Washington.

Octavo Volume

27 1872 February 18-October 31
Anna hears Nillsson perform in "Lucia" and was "charmed"; "May", the Cushings maid, is married secretly; Anna plans a "tea company" with food, music, and whist; Lizzie Lyons hired to replace "May"; Lizzie replaced by Mary Flynn, Mary Flynn replaced by Mary Jane Timmary -- Anna comments "not pleasant or profitable to go on in the present way"; Annie attends high school to study German, Latin, and French; Ben attends school committee meetings; Margaret Gately calls; Boston streets are "quite deserted" because of a general epidemic among horses.

28 1873 January 1-February 15
Mary and Joe plan to leave Cushings to move into their new house; Anna and Ben celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary; Edward is in Iowa; Ben gives Anna a new wedding ring but she says "the [old one] ... must stay where it has been so long"; Medical Club is entertained with the help of Bridget McCool.

29 1873 February 16-March 20
Daniel, the hired man, is ill -- he is moved into Mary and Joe's now vacated room in order to be warm; Henry and Emily Peters visit; Susie has gas for tooth extraction.

30 1873 April 6-September 23
Bailey's house to be auctioned; Ben takes Susie to see Barnum's Menagerie & Circus; Mary Desmond calls; "terrible fire in Boston"; [gap of two months]; Margaret Gately calls to report that her sister Mary is now not only blind but insane; account of Ben's visit to see Mary as well as a later one by Mary Cushing Churchill and Annie; Edward will leave for a trip to the west.

31 1875 April 1-7

Ben has gone to Europe and while there becomes ill; he telegraphs that he is recovering; Mary Churchill comes to call on Anna with her baby [Richmond, born 20 July, 1874].

32 1884 January 1-31
Anna's daughter, Mary Churchill, lives close by ... Anna visits her often as she is confined to home awaiting birth of her child [her two young sons both died in 1880]; daughter Susie is living at home; daughter Annie Peters stays with Cushings for months while her husband is in Montana with a mining company ... much company and music is generated by Annie's presence; Mary gives birth to daughter, Anna Quincy Churchill ... concerns about finding proper wet nurse; son Edward has married Lillie ? who comes to visit with her two young children, Edith and Robbie; usual domestic routines are noted.

Manuscript Box

Folder 1: Letters, n.d., 1816-1841

Folder 2 Letters, 1842-1918

Folder 3 Photographs

Folder 4 Joseph R. Churchill, Chemical Lectures, Book #1, 1865

Folder 5 Joseph R. Churchill, Abstract of Chem. Physics, n.d.;
Reading Exercise: "Genius and Industry," 1860 November 17;
Composition: "Theory and Practice," 1861 May 16

Folder 6 Joseph R. Churchill, Exams from Harvard, n.d., 1863

Folder 7 Joseph R. Churchill, Exams from Harvard, 1864

Folder 8 Joseph R. Churchill, Exams from Harvard, 1865

Folder 9 Joseph R. Churchill, Exams from Harvard, 1866-1867

Folder 10 Joseph R. Churchill, Bar Certificate, 1869

Folder 11 Newspaper Clippings, 1895; 1921-1927

Folder 12 Mary C. Churchill, "Memories of My Grandmother Cushing in Her Later Life," 1932

Folder 13 Processor's Notes

Folder 14 Genealogical Notes

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ANNA QUINCY THAXTER CUSHING, PAPERS, 1816-1932
SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION

Churchill Family in America. Ed. George Bodge. Published by the Family of Gardner A. Churchill, 1904.

Cushing, James. Genealogy of the Cushing Family. Montreal, the Perrault Printing Co., 1905.

History of Hingham. Published by the town, 1893. Vol. III.

Orcutt, William Dana. Good Old Dorchester 1630-1893. Cambridge: John Wilson & Sons, University Press, 1893.

Peters of New England. Comp. by Edmond Frank Peters and Eleanor Bradley Peters. New York, Knickerbocker Press, 1903.