

American Antiquarian Society

Manuscript Collections

NAME OF COLLECTION:

White, Caroline Barrett, Papers, 1844-1915

LOCATION:

Octavo vols. "W"
Folio vols. "W"
Misc. mss. boxes "W"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

28 octavo volumes; 2 folio volumes; 1 folder (57 items)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

See accompanying sheet for additional information.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Gift of Carolyn Olmstead, 1978

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Caroline Barrett White (1828-1915) was the daughter of Benjamin Barrett (1786-1837) and Nancy Stone Barrett (1786-1866), of Ashburnham, Mass. In 1830, the family moved to Fitchburg, Mass., and later to Newport, N.H. Caroline Barrett taught school for several years in Ashburnham, Worcester, and Shirley, Mass., until her marriage in 1851 to Francis Adams White (1824-1910). White was the son of Aaron White, Jr. (1771-1846) and Mary Avery White (1778-1860), of Boylston, Mass., and the grandson of the Rev. Joseph Avery (1751-1824), minister in Holden, Mass.

Francis Adams White was a partner of Frederick Guild (1826-) in the Boston tanning firm of Guild & White, Co., until 1871, when White retired to devote full time to his real-estate investments in the Boston area. He and Caroline settled on their Brookline, Mass., estate (named "Cliffside") with their four children: Charles Frederick (1856-1936), who married Louie Dean (1860-1945); William Howard (1858-1957), who married Katharine Dana (1873-1950); Francis Winthrop (1860-1943), who married Emma Locke Rianhard (1871-1953); and Sophia Buckland (1862-1956), who married John Charles Olmstead (1852-1920), a prominent landscape architect and nephew of Frederick Law Olmstead (1822-1903).

Caroline kept an extraordinary diary for sixty-five years (12 May 1849 to 1 June 1914). Its pages provide a wealth of information, especially in terms of the social history of that era. Included in the earlier diaries are detailed accounts of her teaching career, which she referred to as "a thankless task"; visits with relatives and friends in neighboring towns; and her courtship and happy marriage. The entries record her observations of nature, her attitudes and moods, and her political opinions, which found their fullest expression during the Civil War era. As Francis

became financially successful, Caroline began to record the daily activities of a comfortable Victorian housewife, such as the regimen of social calls, shopping trips to Boston, the trials and tribulations inherent in the hiring-and keeping-of servants (she bemoans her troubles with Irish "domestics"), attendance at plays and concerts, visits to dressmakers, house and garden renovations and redecoration, the purchase of furnishings and accessories, and, after 1856, the increasing responsibility of providing good care for her children.

A large portion of her diary is devoted to highly descriptive accounts of the seven European tours, which Caroline and Francis made between 1855 and 1894, as well as many American tours, such as those to the Pacific Coast. The diary also includes her observations about labor unions and the working classes, women's suffrage, Catholicism, child-rearing techniques, and the process of aging. There are also details of medical practices of that era, including an account of a mastectomy, 1870, during which Caroline assisted.

A few entries (e.g., vol. 3 - 12/6/1851; vol. 7 - 4/13/1858 and 4/28/1858) were apparently written by Francis White.

This collection contains a folder of family correspondence, receipts, and miscellaneous items, 1844 to 1915, as well as a photograph of Caroline, 1894, and a photograph of Cliffside, c. 1890, copied from the originals lent by Carolyn Olmstead in October 1979.

See Contents List.

15 January 1979
revised 19 October 1979
revised 5 March 2010

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Miscellaneous Information

Sources of information on collection:

For genealogical information concerning the Barrett family, see J. Gardner Bartlett, *Gregory Stone Genealogy* (Boston: n.p., 1918) p. 311.

For a biography of Francis Adams White, see Jane G. Carter and Susie P. Holmes, *The Avery Family* (Plymouth, Mass.: Winslow W. Avery, 1893) p. 74.

Studies focusing on materials in this collection:

Joanne Gray, "The Diaries of Caroline Barrett White," M.A. Thesis, Clark University, 1990.

Laura Wasowicz, *The Quest for Home: the Early Married Life of Caroline and Frank White, 1851-1859* (Worcester, Mass., 1992).

Other information:

This collection is also available on microfilm as part of the *American Women's Diaries: New England*. (New York, N.Y.: Readex Film Products, [1984?]).

Related collections:

Mary Avery White, Diary, 1836-1861 (1 octavo volume)

White-Forbes Family, Diaries, 1808-1902 (10 octavo volumes; 3 folio volumes)

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Contents List

**Octavo
Volume**

1 *Journal, 12 May 1849 - 22 August 1850*

Contains her reasons for keeping a diary; her reactions to teaching in the public schools of Ashburnham, Mass., and the teaching of piano in Worcester, Mass.; descriptions of nature and weather patterns, as well as visits among friends and relative in Fitchburg, Worcester (observes the Worcester State Hospital), Millbury (visits an iron-rolling mill), Ashburnham, Mass., and Newport, N.H.; excursions to Lake Sunapee, N.H., and other New England towns. There are also introspective passages and reactions to letters from her suitor, Francis (or "Frank") Adams White, while he was traveling in London. The volume contains quotations from Lord Byron's "Childe Harold," original poetry, and a copy of Caroline's teaching certificate for the town of Ashburnham.

2 *Journal, 1 September 1850 - 3 September 1851*

The volume includes details of her discipline problems in her new teaching position in Shirley, Mass.; visit to the Shaker community in Shirley; her courtship by Francis and preparations for their wedding; introspective passages; details of her wedding day (25 June 1851) and, later, a trip to Springfield, Mass., and New York by steamboat.

3 *Journal, 22 September 1851 - 7 July 1852*

Mentions daily social activities as a young housewife in Roxbury, Mass.; interactions with her mother, sisters, and in-laws; bemoans her lack of confidence in introspective passages; attendance at plays and concerts, such as a Jenny Lind performance.

4 *Journal, 1 January 1853 - 31 October 1853*

Details of daily social visits, shopping trips to Boston, Mass.; friendship with Frederick (1826-) and Sarah Woodward Guild (-); refers to French lessons which she and Francis were taking.

5 *Journal, 1 November 1853 - 31 May 1855*

Describes an eclipse of the sun (26 May 1854); reactions to Francis' frequent business trips to New York; her opinion of the return of fugitive slave Anthony Burns (1834-1862) to his master; visits with her sister Julia Maria Barrett White (1826-1889) and her husband (Francis' brother) Samuel Charles White (1820-1886) in Bergen Point, N.J.; travels to North Conway, N.H., Portland and Fryeburg, Me., with descriptions of mountain scenery; trip to Montreal and Quebec City, Canada, with her opinion of the Roman Catholic churches which she visited.

In 1855, the Whites rented a furnished house in Milton, Mass. On 30 March 1855, they left for a tour of Europe. Caroline kept a daily record of life on board the "John Eliot Thayer" and described in great detail her impressions of various towns and countrysides in England, Scotland, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and France. This volume also contains references to the Crimean War, as well as the reactions of Europeans to the American slavery issue.

6 *Journal, 1 June 1855 - 18 August 1855*

Continue touring Europe until their return home on 15 November 1855. Following their move back to Roxbury, Mass., Caroline again detailed her daily social activities such as visits, shopping and trips.

7 *Journal, 18 December 1855 - 18 August 1858*

Records daily activities up to the birth of her first child on 27 May 1856. She then refers to her new responsibilities and the difficulties she developed from premature weaning of the infant. The volume also includes her reactions to a visit through Roxbury by Sen. Charles Sumner (1811-1874); the Whites' visits to Bergen Point, N.J.; the purchase of a house in Brookline, Mass. (for \$18,180) in 1858; their move to Brookline and the complexities involved in running a large house during that era, including the hiring of servants and her negative attitude toward Irish "domestics," as well as details of her own household duties. The volume contains references to world events, such as the laying of the transatlantic cable.

8 *Journal, 19 August 1858 - 9 May 1860*

Continued references to the "fascinating" transatlantic cable; birth of second child, and references to her children's developing personalities and her own insecurities as a parent. She refers to her older child's "waywardness," especially when her husband is away. Reference to the execution of John Brown (1800-1859), whom Caroline considered a "hero." Continuing record of her daily social activities.

9 *Journal, 10 May 1860 - 25 June 1862*

Caroline began to record her political views more frequently as the Civil War neared, such as the election and inauguration of Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), the secession of South Carolina, the outbreak of war, and mobilization. The volume contains her emotional reactions to the scenes witnessed and her weekly or daily reports of war news, as well as her contributions through the making of clothing for the soldiers. Birth of third child.

10 *Journal, 26 January 1862 - 16 December 1864*

Recording of war news, as well as her views on slavery. She also recorded the deaths of soldier-sons of her friends and relatives; the formation of the Mass. 54th Regiment (black regiment) and its acceptance by the citizens; her daily visits, travels to relatives, and her apprehensions as a mother. Birth of fourth child.

11 *Journal, 17 December 1864 - 31 July 1866*

Record of battles, political news, celebrations over the surrender at Appomattox; Caroline's deeply emotional reaction to the assassination of Pres. Lincoln; the capture of Jefferson Davis (1808-1889); the "traitorous" acts of President Andrew Johnson (1808-1875); visits with relatives, such as Catharine White Forbes (1815-1902).

12 *Journal, 1 August 1866 - 15 May 1869*

Mention of Francis' business reversals in the tanning business "in such times as these"; November 1867 election results and her reactions; trip to Washington, D.C., February 1868, and her presence in the Senate Gallery when the decision was delivered there to impeach Pres. Andrew Johnson; the beginning of her children's school days. Caroline kept a record (with asterisks) of her fertility cycle between January 1865 and August 1867.

13 *Journal, 16 May 1869 - 31 December 1871*

Describes early Decoration (Memorial) Day services; travels through Massachusetts and trip to Niagara Falls, N.Y.; comments on the fashions of the 1870s; her children's rankings in school; tour of mountain regions of New Hampshire.

In 1870, Caroline assisted during a mastectomy performed on her sister Lucy Barrett Johnson (1819-1902). She described the "etherization" process and the surgery itself. The volume also contains references to the Franco-Prussian War; the retirement of her husband from Guild & White, Co.; the installation in their house of modern plumbing; Caroline's negative reaction to women's suffrage; travel to Aroostook County, Me., and Canada.

14 *Journal, 1 January 1872 - 4 August 1874*

Descriptive references to the Great Boston Fire, 9 November 1872; the Whites' journey to the Pacific, April 1873 (e.g., train travel, descriptions of Salt Lake City, Utah; San Francisco, Cal.; the Sierras, Yosemite, Lake Tahoe). Upon her return to Brookline, Caroline commented on the frustrations involved in hiring and keeping good servants.

Journal, 5 August 1874 - 11 December 1879

[see Folio Volume 1]

15 *Journal, 8 May 1875 - 25 August 1875*

Record of voyage on the "S.S. Batavia" to England, Scotland; historic sightseeing.

16 *Journal, 26 August 1875 - 29 October 1882*

Continued from volume 15. For the period 26 August to 31 October 1875, records travel through Paris, then return to England. For the period 3 May to 14 September 1878, records travels through England, France, Germany, Prussia, and Switzerland. For the period 9 September to 29 October 1882, records travel through England and Wales.

17 *Journal, 30 October 1882 - 18 August 1883*

Continued from volume 16. Extended tour of England, Wales, the South of France, Monaco, Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium.

18 *Journal, 12 December 1879 - 22 July 1882*

Record of travel to St. Louis, Mo., Baton Rouge, La., Mobile, Ala., and Philadelphia, Pa.; reference to the shooting of Pres. James Abram Garfield (1831-1881) and his lingering death; household duties; study tour of Europe by sons William Howard and Francis Winthrop White following William's graduation from Harvard University.

Journal, 6 August 1882 - 17 September 1887

[see Folio Volume 2]

19 *Journal, 23 May 1885 - 7 October 1888*

Record of two trips to Europe. For the period 23 May to 28 August 1885, records travel through England, Scotland, and Wales. For the period 21 April to 7 October 1888, records travel through England, Holland, Prussia, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and Scotland.

20 *Journal, 18 September 1887 - 26 June 1892*

Details of Caroline's work with the Italian Mission, including teaching children of Italian immigrants; son William's "defection" to the Democrats and his aborted attempt to win a seat in the State House; negative reaction of Italian priests to the Protestant-run Italian Mission.

21 *Journal, 27 June 1892 - 30 November 1895*

References to the Lizzie Borden (1860-1927) court case; cholera outbreak stemming from arriving immigrant ships; son William's election to the State House; Caroline's visit to Chicago World's Fair with her son Charles Frederick White and his wife Louie Dean White; Caroline's dislike of electric cars and references to the high incidence of railroad accidents and suicides in these "rather awful" times; attended meetings of "Remonstrants against Suffrage for Women," as well as addresses by Booker Taliaferro Washington (1856-1915) of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Several references to America's Cup yacht races.

22 *Journal, 28 April 1894 - 23 September 1894*

Record of voyage to England and Scotland, with the usual descriptive passages concerning tours through English and Scottish towns and country estates.

23 *Journal, 1 December 1895 - 14 February 1899*

Record of journey to Detroit and Chicago to visit her son Charles Frederick; details of the varied treatments Caroline underwent following the breaking of her wrist, as well as for her hearing loss; references to the "shameful" Spanish-American War; reports on the "appalling" treatment of Spanish prisoners of war and the inefficiency of the War Department in distributing supplies to the American armies; birth of first grandchild.

24 *Journal, 15 February 1899 - 31 December 1901*

Includes several comments on "modern" methods of child-rearing, such as lack of discipline; the "pampering" of new mothers following childbirth; comments on the "wrongdoing" in the Philippines; installation of a telephone; births of grandchildren. Caroline recorded that "the world is passing through a terrible ordeal now ... a wicked warlike spirit is troubling the earth." The entries include references to the Boxer Rebellion, death of Queen Victoria (1819-1901), the assassination and funeral of Pres. William McKinley (1843-1901).

25 *Journal, 1 January 1902 - 7 March 1904*

Details of visits to Staten Island, N.Y., to visit son Francis Winthrop and his family; reports on yacht races, daily social activities; records of various family illnesses and their treatment by physicians.

26 *Journal, 8 March 1904 - 3 December 1905*

The later volumes concern mainly the business, social, and family lives of her children, as Caroline and Francis began to lead less active lives. Several entries refer to the "horrid" new automobile, her attitude toward the growing power of the working, or "shirking" classes, and her opinion of child-rearing practices. The volume contains details of her son's, Francis Winthrop, near-fatal bout with pneumonia; references to the Russo-Japanese War and the mediation of Pres. Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919); and details of the celebration of Brookline's bicentennial.

27 *Journal, 4 December 1905 - 31 December 1907*

Contains references to the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, new machinery, social activities; details events at her children's summer homes in Maine and her visits there.

28 *Journal, 1 January 1813 - 1 June 1914*

[There is a gap in the diary, 1 January 1908 to 1 January 1913.] Francis Adams White died on 13 January 1910. This volume contains brief entries of an aged widow whose loneliness leaves her depressed and wishing that she "could be more useful." Entries refer to visits by her children, the pleasure she derived from her garden, events in her children's lives, Caroline's serious deafness, and her feeling that "life goes rather hard—but I must not complain." The last entry was written by her eldest son Charles Frederick and refers to her death on 4 December 1815.

Folio
Volume1 *Journal, 5 August 1874 - 11 December 1879*

Celebration of Centennial at Lexington and Concord; second voyage to England [see Octavo Vol. 15]; trip to Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition; third voyage to England [see Octavo Vol. 16]; daily social activities.

2 *Journal, 6 August 1882 - 17 September 1887*

Comments on labor unions and her negative attitude towards strike of Boston artisans in 1886. Social activities and household duties detailed.

Folder The folder contains family correspondence for the period 1846 to 1915; miscellaneous receipts and expense accounts; the lease for a house in Milton, Mass., dated 1854; miscellaneous printed advertisements, newsclippings, menus and stationery from Europe; and Christmas and Easter cards from relatives and friends.

The family correspondence includes Francis Adams White's farewell note to his wife, 1910; letters from and among the White children; and letters from Caroline and Francis to their son Charles Frederick (e.g., on his birthday in 1883) written from Lucerne, Switzerland. The letters, which are descriptive and affectionate, deal with family activities and the growth and development of the White children. There is a letter from Caroline to her mother, Nancy Stone Barrett, and from Mary Avery White to her son, Francis. The folder also contains photographs of Caroline and of Cliffside.