William Parker Foulke Papers, 1840-1865 1840-1865 Mss.B.F826

American Philosophical Society 9/2000 105 South Fifth Street Philadelphia, PA, 19106 215-440-3400 manuscripts@amphilsoc.org

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William Parker Foulke Papers

Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Foulke, William Parker, 1816-1865
Title	William Parker Foulke Papers, 1840-1865
Date [inclusive]	1840-1865
Call number	Mss.B.F826
Extent	3.75 Linear feet ca. 3,000 items
Location	LH-MV-C-7 (B F826); LH-MV-E-1 (B F826.1); LH-SB-Black Case-26 (B F826, OS)
Language	English
Abstract	A product of the distinctive culture of reform in antebellum Philadelphia, William Parker Foulke was the scion of the old elite who put a conservative stamp on social change. Trained as an attorney, Foulke spent much of his adult life engaging his deep amateur interest in natural history and mental philosophy and devoting himself to a variety of civic and philanthropic causes, including the colonization of freed slaves, penal reform, and cultural institutions in his native Philadelphia. The Foulke Papers are the product of the diverse social and intellectual interests of the Philadelphia attorney and philanthropist William Parker Foulke. Consisting primarily of correspondence, notes, and essays, the collection touches on Foulke's many interests. The collection includes numerous lectures delivered by Foulke along with material on the Lancaster County Prison, New York Prison Association, and the Philadelphia Society For Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons; notebooks concerning prisons and prisoners, including a 1846-1852

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diary, and a listing of prisoners, their race, age, crime, sentence, and observations; a diary concerning the American Colonization Society (1852); a copy of an arctic diary (1853-1854) by John Wall Wilson, in the hand of Isaac Israel Hayes, which recounts much of the journey aboard the brig *Advance*, commanded by Elisha Kent Kane. There is also a list of buildings (1820-1841) designed by John Haviland, and material on the American Academy of Music, Philadelphia.

Preferred Citation Cite as: William Parker Foulke Papers, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

William Parker Foulke was a product of the distinctive culture of reform in antebellum Philadelphia, a scion of the old elite putting a conservative stamp on social change. A descendant of Welsh Quakers who had emigrated in 1698, Foulke was a tireless worker in the cause of the colonization of freedmen and in prison reform, though his philanthropic interests and financial largesse were as varied as his financial commitments.

Describing himself as a Federalist in politics even years after the failure of that party, Foulke was possessed of a rambling and incisive intellect and a strong sense of social obligation for the high standing he had inherited. He indulged an appetite for natural science, mental and moral philosophy, and literature during the 1830s, passing through a period of deep religious skepticism before emerging as a diffuse, non-(or anti-) sectarian believer. It was out of this spiritual sense of the community of man and nature that Foulke developed a distinctive social philosophy that may first have appeared in lectures he delivered at the Frankford Lyceum in 1843.

Having studied for the law under John B. Wallace and John Morin Scott, Foulke was admitted to the Pennsylvania bar in 1841, though the law could hardly be said to be his life's work. At age 29, he began an association with the two reforms that would occupy so much time and energy in his short life. Sensitized to the problems of incarceration through his legal training, Foulke joined the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries in Public Prisons in July, 1845, the first of many prison reform organizations that would attract his support. Following in the tradition of his Quaker forebears, Foulke was an assiduous student of the penitentiary and the cognate issues of instilling discipline, repentance, and social order. Directing his attention first to the nearby Eastern State Penitentiary, he was rapidly drawn into the controversy between the Pennsylvania System, in which prisoners were isolated in silent confinement, and alternate models said to be less harsh.

Foulke spent several years comparing alternative disciplinary models and writing on correctional issues in the *Journal on Prison Discipline and Philanthropy* and in separate pamphlets. Following a tour of mid-Atlantic correctional institutions in 1847 and 1848, Foulke was instrumental in erecting the new Lancaster County Prison, and contributed materially to later penitentiaries in several other counties in Pennsylvania. In his broad view of penal discipline he considered issues ranging from relief of the suffering to prison architecture, and he became a noted supporter of "cellular isolation" and hard labor. He was associated with the American Association for Improvement of Prison Discipline, the Convention of State Prison Wardens (becoming Corresponding Secretary in 1861), and was in regular contact with prisons and prison associations in New York, Massachusetts, and Maryland.

In October, 1845, Foulke threw his support to a second major reform, the Pennsylvania Colonization Society. An antislavery organization that resettled as many as 1,000 freed slaves per year in West Africa, the Colonization Society fell out of favor with the more radical abolitionists during the mid-1840s and was roundly opposed as well by most pro-slavery advocates. Foulke, however, committed himself to the project of resettlement, never wavering in support until the time of his death in 1865, at which time he was the Society's Vice President. His cherished scheme of locating a more healthful home for the

transplanted freemen than Liberia died for lack of congressional support and from opposition in both proslavery and anti-slavery circles.

Among his numerous other social commitments, Foulke was a prominent financial supporter of arctic exploration at a time when it first gripped the public consciousness in the United States, assisting both Isaac Israel Hayes (1860). He was a major benefactor of Philadelphia cultural institutions, particularly the American Academy of Music, and was a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and, like his grandfather John Foulke (1757-1796), the American Philosophical Society. He was, as well, an avid natural historian and geologist, active in support of the Pennsylvania Geological Survey. Perhaps his most visibly lasting achievement may have been his discovery in 1858 of a dinosaur skeleton in a marl pit in Haddonfield, N.J. *Hadrosaurus foulkei*, the first dinosaur discovered in America, was named after Foulke by Joseph Leidy.

In 1855, Foulke married Julia DeVeaux Powel (d. 1884), daughter of Col. John Hare Powel, with who he had seven children. He died at his residence on Pine Street on June 18, 1865.

Scope & content

The Foulke Papers are the product of the diverse social and intellectual interests of William Parker Foulke (1816-1865), a Philadelphia attorney and philanthropist. Consisting primarily of correspondence, notes, and essays, the collection touches on Foulke's many interests ranging from colonization of freed slaves to penal reform, mental philosophy, geology and paleontology, and Philadelphia cultural institutions.

A solid reformer, Foulke was deeply devoted to the cause of penal reform, and the collection is rich in material relating to county and state prisons and prison reform associations, particularly the Philadelphia Prison Society, the New York Prison Association, and the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries in Public Prisons. Foulke corresponded with a great number of prison reformers, including Dorothea Lynde Dix (1802-1887), Louis Mathurin Moreau-Christophe (1799-1881), A. Blouet (probably Guillaume Abel Blouet, 1795-1853), H. C. King, Isaac G. Gordon (1819-1893), James Hall, and the architect John Haviland (1792-1852). In addition to the correspondence, Foulke collected some biographical material on John Haviland for an obituary he published, including a list of prisons he designed and copies of a few of his letters one of which includes a sketch of a radiating plan for a prison. Two notebooks on prisons and prisoners are located at the end of the collection.

As an agent for the Pennsylvania Colonization Society in 1852, Foulke kept a valuable diary of his activities, and while less well documented than his interests in prison reform, colonization appears as a theme in his correspondence with Edward Everett (1794-1865), Elliott Cresson (1796-1854), John H. B. Latrobe (1803-1891), William Francis Lynch (1801-1865), and William McLain, among others.

Foulke's fascination with natural history is reflected in the presence in the collection of some interesting materials relating to arctic exploration and geological research. His support for Arctic exploration resulted in acquiring the diary of John Wall Wilson, 1853-1854, and in significant correspondence with Isaac Israel Hayes and minor correspondence with Henry Grinnell and Elisha Kent Kane, as well as miscellaneous folders labeled "Arctic Expedition." Perhaps the most unusual arctic item is an exchange of letters with the great landscape painter Frederick Edwin Church (1826-1900) regarding submission of his painting of Haye's dog to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Geologically, Foulke was involved with the Pennsylvania Geological Survey and in supporting the establishment of a state school of mines. In addition to some interesting correspondence with Martin Hans Boyé (1812-1909), James Curtis Booth (1810-1888), John Chapman Cresson (1806-1876), George H. Hart, Joseph Leidy (More natural historical than geological or paleontological), Henry D. Rogers (1808-1866), John Fries Frazer (1812-1872), Peter Wenrick Sheafer (b. 1819), and J. W. Guernsey, there is an important account of Foulke's role in the discovery of *Hadrosaurus foulkei* in 1858, including a map of the excavation site. This work was published in the *Proceedings* of the Academy of Natural Sciences.

Given Foulke's industrious efforts in the city, Philadelphia institutions are well represented in collection, including the Franklin Institute, Academy of Natural Sciences, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and a small but important cache of materials relating to the establishment of the American Academy of Music. A series of lectures delivered by Foulke at the Frankford Lyceum in 1843 reveal his thoughts on mental philosophy, induction, "popular studies," and romance, and can profitably be compared to a manuscript,

"Elements of Mental Philosophy," he prepared for his sister Elizabeth's benefit in 1838. This manuscript is a lengthy exposition of mental philosophy showing the influence of popular writers on the subject, such as Abercrombie, Rush, and Stewart. Other essays or sets of notes, some intended for publication, touch on the history of Freemasonry (Foulke became a mason in 1851), the geology of Pennsylvania, photography (probably written before 1845), and of course, penal reform and colonization.

Foulke's family correspondence goes well beyond the typical platitudes and family news. As a young man he wrote long, personally revealing letters to his cousin Deborah Bringhurst, discussing his thoughts on spirituality and religion, mesmerism, and other topics. There is a very fine set of letters written by Foulke to his aunt Eleanor (1792-1882) describing his tour of Pennsylvania county prisons in 1847 and 1848, describing travel conditions in central and western Pennsylvania, the landscape, geology, social life in small towns, and agriculture. Letters to his father, Richard Parker Foulke (1789-1860), mother Anna Catherine Strohn Foulke (1792-1856), and wife Julia are somewhat less revealing, but provide interesting background material for interpreting his social and intellectual life.

The collection also includes biographical materials on Foulke assembled by Julia Foulke, Frederick A. Packard, and J. Peter Lesley.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 9/2000

Provenance

Acquisition Information

The collection was acquired between 1973 and 1976; see 1973-2292ms, 74-734ms, 74-851 ms, 75-606ms, 75-1145ms, 76-281ms.

Related Materials

Related Material

Lesley, J. P., "William Parker Foulke," APS Proceedings 10 (1868): 481-510.

See also the William Parker Foulke Minute-book of the Eastern State Penitentiary, 1846-1858, at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The HSP collections include other Foulke material.

Separated Material

A Foulke family account book, 1797, is housed separately (B F826.1).

Photographs and maps have been removed to their respective departments for proper storage.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- General Correspondence
- Legal Records
- Literature
- Manuscript Essays
- Miscellaneous

Political Correspondence

Personal Name(s)

- Bache, A.D., (Alexander Dallas), 1806-1867
- Bringhurst
- Cadwalader, John
- Carey, Henry Charles, 1793-1879
- Carson, Joseph, 1808-1876
- Cassin, John, 1813-1869
- Dix, Dorothea Lynde, 1802-1887
- Du Ponceau, Peter Stephen, 1760-1844
- Everett, Edward, 1794-1865
- Frazer, John Fries, 1812-1872
- Gilpin, Henry D. (Henry Dilworth), 1801-1860
- Grinnell, Henry
- Hart, George H.
- Kane, Elisha Kent, 1820-1857
- Landis, Henry D.
- LeConte, John L., (John Lawrence), 1825-1883
- Leidy, Joseph, 1823-1891
- Lesley, J. P., (J. Peter), 1819-1903
- Morton, Samuel George, 1799-1851
- Olden, Charles Smith
- Packard, Frederick A., (Frederick Adolphus), 1794-1867
- Rogers, Henry D., (Henry Darwin), 1806-1866
- Sheafer, Peter W.
- Sumner, Charles, 1811-1874

Subject(s)

- Abolition, emancipation, freedom
- Advance (Brig)
- Africa, West--Description and travel
- American Academy of Music (Philadelphia, Pa.)
- American Colonization Society
- Antislavery movements--Pennsylvania
- Archaeology--Pennsylvania
- Arctic regions--Discovery and exploration
- Colonization, repatriation
- Dinosaurs--New Jersey
- Eastern State Penitentiary (Philadelphia, Pa.)

- Freemasons--Pennsylvania
- Geology--Pennsylvania
- Haviland, John, 1792-1852
- Hayes, I. I. (Isaac Israel), 1832-1881
- Kane, Elisha Kent, 1820-1857
- Lancaster (Penn.) County Prison
- Law
- Literature, Arts, and Culture
- Lyceums--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia
- Mesmerism
- Native America
- New York Prison Association
- Pennsylvania History
- Pennsylvania--Description and travel--19th century
- Philadelphia History
- Philadelphia Society For Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons
- Philadelphia--History--19th century
- Prison reformers--Pennsylvania
- Prisons--Design and construction
- Prisons--New York (State)
- Prisons--Pennsylvania
- Reformers--Pennsylvania
- Science and Technology
- Slavery -- United States.
- Social conditions, social advocacy, social reform
- Wilson, John Wall

Other Descriptive Information

Among his many interests, Foulke was concerned with the colonization of West Africa for settlement of ex-slaves. As an agent for the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, Foulke kept a valuable diary of his activities in 1852. Colonization also appears as a theme in his correspondence with Edward Everett (1794-1865), Elliott Cresson (1796-1854), John H. B. Latrobe (1803-1891), William Francis Lynch (1801-1865), and William McLain (1855-1857), among others.

Other Descriptive Information

The William Parker Foulke Collection is one of the largest and richest collections at the APS. The collection, described and inventories in depth in MOLE, reflects the wide and varied interests of one of Philadelphia's most prominent 19th century citizens.

Perhaps one of the most interesting and often overlooked aspects of Foulke is his interest in historical writing. Known today as a reformer of prisons, Foulke showed a keen interest in writing and thinking

about the past. He has essays on Native Americans, a piece of historical fiction on Dunmore's War, an essay on the writing of American history, an essay on the "right use of history," a history of freemasonry, and a fascinating and detailed account of Native Americans and Pennsylvanians in the colonial period.

Other Descriptive Information

Prior to their arrival at the APS, the Foulke Papers suffered from fire and environmental damage. The most fragile items have been encapsulated in mylar, but many others remain fragile, particularly along the folds, and may be handled only with great care

Bibliography

Foulke, William Parker, "Account of the remains of a fossil extinct reptile recently discovered at Haddonfield, New Jersey," *Proceedings* of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (December 1858) Call no.: Pam. 384, no.11 and 389, 14

_____, *Considerations respecting the policy of some recent legislation in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1861) **Call no.:** Pam. v.1053, no.7 (re: Prisons)

____, Discourse in commemoration of the founding of the Academy of Natural Sciences of *Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia, 1854) Call no.: 506.73 Ac1mi no.4

_____, "Notes respecting the Indians of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania," *Memoirs* of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania 4, 2 (1850) **Call no.:** 970.1 Pam. no.9

<u>, Remarks on cellular separation. Read by appointment of the American association for the</u> *improvement of penal and reformatory institutions* (Philadelphia, 1861) **Call no.:** 365 F82r

____, *Remarks on the penal system of Pennsylvania particularly with reference to county prisons* (Philadelphia, 1855) Call no.: 365 Pam. v.7, no.10

____, The right use of history: an anniversary discourse delivered before the Historical Society of *Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1856) Call no.: Pam. v.473, no.12

Collection Inventory

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Adams and Co.			Box 1
Adshead, Joseph			Box 1
Africa			Box 1
African Repository			Box 1
Allen, W H			Box 1
American Academy of Music, Philadelphia			Box 1
American Association for Improvement of Prison Discipline			Box 1
American Colonization Society			Box 1
Andrews, Ethan Allen			Box 1
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Appropriation Bill			Box 1
Argrus, Charles			Box 1
[Arnsbury?], Edward			Box 1
Arctic Expedition			Box 1

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Astronomy	Box 1
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Barton, Isaac	Box 1
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Benson, Stephen A	Box 1
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Cadwalader, John	Box 1
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Catalogue of Books Read	Box 1
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Chambers, Elizabeth	Box 1
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Clark, Joseph	Box 1
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Concerning George Washington	Box 1
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