

Samuel Stehman Haldeman letters, 1859-1875
1844-1875
Mss.B.H129

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
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Abstract	These letters are addressed to S. J. Sedgwick and concern personal affairs, philology, scientific topics, publications, Afro-Americans, and gymnastics. There is also a letter to John L. LeConte discussing entomological subjects.

Background note

Samuel Stehman Haldeman (1812-1880, APS, 1844) American naturalist and philologist, who attended the Harrisburg Academy and Dickinson College. Largely self-taught, Haldeman would become an internationally renowned scientist and philologist, whose publications contributed to the fields of conchology, entomology, arachnology, crustacea, geology, chemistry, philology and archaeology, among others. He helped to found the American Philological Association. He was professor of zoology at the Franklin Institute (1842-1843), professor of natural history at the University of Pennsylvania 1850-1853), professor of geology and chemistry at Delaware College (now University of Delaware) (1855-1858), and the first professor of comparative philology at the University of Pennsylvania, (1869-1880).

Haldeman was born in Locust Grove, Pennsylvania, son and oldest child of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania businessman Henry Haldeman and Frances Stehman. He grew up in the family's mansion constructed by his grandfather John Haldeman. The family owned considerable property in the Susquehanna Valley, and his grandfather had been elected to the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1795. Haldeman's mother, an accomplished musician, died when he was only ten years old, but passed on to him an acute sense of hearing that aided him in his later investigations in natural history and philology. As a boy on his parents' estate south of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Haldeman collected specimens of shells, insects, birds, and minerals. He learned Pennsylvania Dutch from neighbors, and read extensively in his father's library. Haldeman was trained in the classics at the Harrisburg Academy from 1826-1828 and studied with the geologist Henry D. Rogers (1808-1866, APS 1835) at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Ill-suited to an academic regimen, Haldeman left college without earning a degree. Afterward, he studied independently, attending medical lectures at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as scientific discussions at the Academy of Natural Sciences and the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia.

From 1830 to 1835 Haldeman managed the family sawmill; nevertheless, he also found time for field trips and reading. In 1835 he married Mary A. Hough from nearby Bainbridge, and moved into an imposing new residence built by his father at Chickies Rock, overlooking the Susquehanna river outside of Marietta, Pennsylvania. The couple had four children. Also, that year Haldeman, at the age 23 wrote his first publication, a "Refutation of Locke's Moon Hoax" for the Lancaster Journal.

After 1835 Haldeman joined his brothers' iron smelting business. Leaving the commercial management of the business to them, he applied himself to the scientific and technological aspects of iron smelting. Haldeman's activities at the iron works resulted in two scholarly articles published in 1848 for the American Journal of Science, entitled "On the Construction of Furnaces to Smelt Iron with Anthracite" and "The Results of Smelting Iron with Anthracite." Haldeman's articles demonstrated the benefits of anthracite coal furnaces over traditional charcoal furnaces for the iron smelting process. This breakthrough transformed the American iron smelting industry and the Haldeman iron works prospered, as a result. In 1854 the brothers built their second iron works at the mouth of the Chickies creek.

In his spare time Haldeman conducted independent scientific research. In 1836, Haldeman's former Geology professor and mentor Henry Rogers, who had become chief of the New Jersey Geological Survey, appointed him to a field position. A year later Haldeman took charge of field work for the south-

central section of the Pennsylvania Geological Survey. In the field as a survey naturalist, Haldeman began to assemble materials for a Monograph of the Freshwater Univalve Mollusca of the United States (8 pts., 1840-1866). This would be the first comprehensive study of American mollusks.

Haldeman's interests also extended to entomology. In 1842 he was the driving force behind the organization of the Entomological Society of Pennsylvania, the first society of its kind in America. Although short-lived the Society helped American entomologists keep in touch, while also facilitating contact with European colleagues. Members of the Society published hundreds of descriptions of American insects and gathered the first permanent insect collections in the country. Furthermore, Haldeman's monograph on the long-horned beetles, *Materials toward a History of the Coleoptera Longicornia of the United States* (1847), was the first comprehensive treatment of these insects. Together with John L. LeConte (1825-1883, APS 1853), Haldeman edited Friedrich Ernst Melsheimer's *Catalogue of the Described Coleoptera of the United States* for publication by the Smithsonian Institution (1853). This monograph series on various insect orders helped to bring American entomology to an equal stature with its European counterpart.

In the late 1840's Haldeman began to experience problems with his eyesight. These visual problems combined with a desire to explore new fields turned his attention to the study of human and animal sounds. His acute sense of hearing allowed him to carefully examine, record, and duplicate with his own voice the fine distinctions between sounds. In 1848, he published an article on his discovery of sound organs in certain moths. Haldeman was especially interested in the languages of Native Americans and traveled throughout the East and Midwest to hear and study the speech of various Indian tribes. He frequently met visiting tribal delegations in Washington, D.C., and requested Indian vocabularies from western naturalists. A paper presented at the 1849 meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences was published in the proceedings of the latter, and immediately established Haldeman's reputation as a eminent philologist. He introduced a new, more empirical approach to the study of languages, listening to sounds and studying their meanings.

During six trips abroad between 1847 and 1875, Haldeman focused his investigations on multilingual cities and regions in Europe, but also became adept at languages across the world. He wrote widely on linguistic topics such as the pronunciation of latin terms for naturalists, the relationship between Chinese and Indo-European languages, the origin and use of prefixes and suffixes in Pennsylvania Dutch, and a general outline of etymology. Haldeman's *Analytic Orthography: An Investigation of the Sounds of the Voice, and Their Alphabetic Notation* (1860) won the Trevelyan Prize for the reform of English spelling. Haldeman was one of the founders of the American Philological Association, and served as its president in 1876-1877. He also chaired the meeting of the International Convention in Behalf of the Amendment of English Orthography, which organized in Philadelphia to prompt spelling reform.

Late in his life, Haldeman's interests turned to archaeology. His report on a prehistoric cave on his Marietta property, read before the American Philosophical Society on June 21, 1878 was published as a monograph in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, Vol. 15, No. 3* (1881).

Samuel Stehman Haldeman died on September 10, 1880 of a heart attack at the age of sixty-eight. He was survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters. Haldeman was elected to honorary memberships in twenty-eight scientific societies worldwide, including the American Philosophical Society in 1844. Historian of Science W. Connor Sorensen noted that Haldeman "epitomized the post-1812 generation of

scholars . . . , who advanced American science and letters to a position of true cultural independence from Europe.” He set new standards in the fields of conchology, entomology and linguistics, and wrote widely and intelligently on a variety of topics.

Scope & content

The Samuel Stehman Haldeman Letters is a small collection of correspondence between this nineteenth century American naturalist and philologist and fellow naturalists John L. LeConte and Stephen James Sedgwick. The collection spans the years 1844-1875. The substance of the letters varies, as does the length. But, they reflect the breadth of Haldeman's interests, ranging from entomology to physical education and philology. The earliest letters in the collection Haldeman addressed to LeConte. One dated April 22, 1844 concerns a box of one hundred specimens of American Coleoptera (Beetles) that LeConte had sent to Haldeman for classification. The greatest number of letters [seven] were addressed by Haldeman to Sedgwick, a New York City school teacher and lecturer on natural history between 1859-1875. These letters clearly reflect the shift in Haldeman's interests to philology. The earliest letter of this group, dated January 29th, 1859, announces to Sedgwick that Haldeman had "closed" his course at Delaware College due to low enrollments and returned home. He mentions that his plans to prepare lectures on the "Mechanism of Speech and the Philosophy of Etymology" had to be shelved, and that instead he hoped to set sail for France on February 5. A second letter written less than two months afterward on March 22 from Paris describes Haldeman's plan to meet an Arabic scholar, who had written a grammar of the language in French. He also describes in great detail a "gymnastic apparatus" he discovered there along with an instructional manual on its use and benefits. Other letters to Sedgwick follow after a hiatus of eleven years, and discuss Haldeman's etymological and philological research. A May 28, 1875 letter mentions several publications, including "Outlines of Etymology" and articles on English prosody. Table of contents available Not included in the database is the original April 22, 1844 letter from Haldeman to John L. LeConte.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Purchased and accessioned, 1958 (1958 262ms). Letter to LeConte purchased from E. Moore (list 12, no. 90; \$25.00) and accessioned, 10/26/1971 (1971 1455ms).

Indexing Terms

Personal Name(s)

- LeConte, John L., (John Lawrence), 1825-1883
- Sedgwick, S. J.

Subject(s)

- Abolition, emancipation, freedom
- African Americans
- Beetles.
- Biology, genetics, eugenics
- Entomology.
- Race, race relations, racism
- Science.

Other Descriptive Information

Students of African American history may find one of Haldeman's letters of interest: a December 1859 letter expresses Haldeman's disapproval of the Abolitionist activities of "negro stealing," and cites Samuel Morton's studies of the African's limited cranial capacity to justify American slavery.

Papers

Collection Inventory

Papers

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 April 22, 1844
Letter to John LeConte

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 Jan. 24, 1849
Letter to John LeConte

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 March 5, 1849
Letter to ----.

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 [Month?] 20, 1849
Letter to ----.

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 Jan. 29, 1859 10x8
Letter to [S. J.] Sedgwick

Columbia, A.L.S. 1p. Has stopped teaching in Delaware and thinks he will soon leave for France.

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 March 22, 1859 6-1/2x4-1/4
Letter to [S. J.] Sedgwick

Paris, A.L.S. 2p. Concerning languages. Concerning gymnastic exercises. Friendly letter.

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 Sept. 26, 1859 8x5-1/2
Letter to [S. J.] Sedgwick

Columbia, A.L.S. 3p. Enjoyed his European trip. Refers to exercises and gymnastic materials.

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 Dec., 1859 6-1/2x4-1/2
Letter to S. J. Sedgwick

Columbia, A.L.S. 4p. Concerning his work on physical education. Refers to the APS and LeConte
Concerning slavery.

Papers

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 June 12, 1871 8x5
 Letter to [S. J.] Sedgwick

A.L.S. 2p. Is glad his lectures are going well. Refers to animals at a zoo in London. Concerning his work, English prosody.

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 May 28, 1875 8-1/2x5-1/2
 Letter to [S. J.] Sedgwick

A.L.S. 1p. Hopes to meet him in Rhode Island. Concerning some publications, one by F.A.P.Barnard.

Haldeman, Samuel Stehman, 1812-1880 Nov. 26, 1875 5-1/4x4-1/4
 Letter to [S. J.] Sedgwick

A.L.S. 1p. and 3p. enc. Notifies him of his daughter's marriage. Is collecting beads for anthropological purposes.
