

Dawson Turner Papers
1820-1848
Mss.B.T854

American Philosophical Society
5/2003
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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858
Title	Dawson Turner Papers
Date [inclusive]	1820-1848
Call number	Mss.B.T854
Extent	0.25 Linear feet
Location	LH-MV-B-2
Language	English
Container	1
Abstract	<p>Dawson Turner, banker, botanist, and antiquary, was an avid collector of literary and scientific books and manuscripts as well as an author of many works on antiquities and botany more specifically cryptogamic plants. This small collection of only 12 items contains letters written primarily to Jacob Henry Burn and relates to the purchase of items for Turner's vast personal library.</p>
Preferred Citation	Cite as: Dawson Turner Papers, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

Botanist and antiquary Dawson Turner was born at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk on 18 October 1775 to banker James Turner and Elizabeth Cotman, the only daughter of the John Cotman, mayor of Yarmouth. He received his early education at the public grammar school and afterwards privately by Reverend Robert Forby, a botanist of some ability, from whom it is believed that Turner may have acquired his penchant for botany. He entered Pembroke College of Cambridge in 1793 only to leave a year later maybe in part because his father was ill; he died that same year. Following in his father's footsteps, he joined the Yarmouth Bank in 1796. During the same year, Turner married Mary Palgrave by whom he had 11 children. The fortune left to him by his father gave Turner the opportunity to pursue his foremost interests, botany, more specifically cryptogamic botany, and the study of antiquities.

Turner devoted most of his leisure time to botanical tours. In 1799 for instance he made an extensive tour through the western counties in England and on his return published a catalogue of the rarer plants collected on the expedition. In the following years he made tours in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Turner was most notably interested in mosses, lichens, and algae, describing in publications four new species of lichens between 1802 and 1804.

Turner published numerous works on the subject of botany including, *The Botanist's Guide through England and Wales* and the *Natural History of Fuci*. He also contributed several articles to the *Transactions* of the Linnean Society and formed large collections, predominantly of algae. After 1820, Turner seems to have directed his attention to the study of antiquities, in part because he gave the whole of his herbarium to his son-in-law Sir William Hooker, with possibly his most notable contribution the, *Account of a Tour in Normandy, undertaken chiefly for the purpose of investigating the Architectural Antiquities of the Duchy*. Many of his publications were enriched by drawings and etchings by his wife and six daughters.

Many of his family's drawing supplemented the nearly 8,000 volumes that comprised Turner's extensive personal library. Turner's Library was a leading interest of his throughout his life and he continued to collect book nearly to the end of his life. Turner was also an avid collector of manuscripts, his collection included the literary and scientific correspondence of many prominent men such as, Sir Isaac Newton, John Pinkerton, and Henry Baker, as well as some 25,000 autograph letters.

Between 1797 and 1803 he was elected a fellow of the Linnean Society, the Imperial Academy, the Royal Society, and the Society of Antiquaries. He continued to work as a banker in Yarmouth until 1851 when after his wife had died, Turner married a woman whom his family did not approve causing him to move to London. In 1855 Tuner's health began to fail and he died in London on 21 June 1858.

Scope & content

This small collection of 12 items contains, for the most part, brief correspondence between Dawson Turner and the bookseller Jacob Henry Burn concerning minor financial matters, as well as material relating to the enrichment of Turner's personal library.

There is one item of correspondence between Turner and Octavian Blewitt, writing on behalf of the Royal Literary Fund, acknowledging Turner's acceptance of the position of steward at the Fund's annual dinner. The single letter from Wilman Charles Colton includes a long poem dedicated to Dawson Turner.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 5/2003

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Acquired, 1973 (accn. no. 1973-563ms).

Processing Information

Recatalogued by Leigh McCuen, April 2003.

Related Materials

Related Material

Further correspondence of Turner's is located in the Charles Lyell Papers (B:D25L.1) and the James Paget Papers (B:P212). One additional letter can be found in the Charles Waterton Papers (B:W31n).

There is an additional collection of the papers of Dawson Turner at Trinity College Library, Cambridge University.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- General Correspondence
- Poetry

Personal Name(s)

- Blewitt, Octavian, 1810-1884
- Burn, Jacob Henry, ca.1793-1869
- Colton, Wilman Charles

Subject(s)

- Acquisitions (Libraries)
- Beyond Early America
- Book collecting
- Private libraries

Other Descriptive Information

Dawson Turner was a British botanist and scientist. This small collection contains information on his personal library and lends some insight into the book trade in nineteenth century Britain.

Bibliography

The Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History, vol. 3.

Dawson Turner Papers

Collection Inventory

Dawson Turner Papers	1820-1848	0.25 linear feet	Box 1
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1820 February 5	1 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1820 April 7	2 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to [Jacob Henry Burn]	1820 September 2	2 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1824 July 7	2 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1824 September 15	1 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1828 January 30	1 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1828 May 5	1 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1828 May 23	1 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1829 April 4	1 p.	
Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858 ALS to Jacob Henry Burn	1829 April 11	1 p.	
Blewitt, Octavian, 1810-1884	1847 April 8	2 p.	

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ALS to Turner, Dawson, 1775-1858

Colton, Wilman Charles	1848 September 25	5 p.
ALS to Dawson Turner, 1775-1858		
