

**Charles G. Eastman (1816-1860)**  
**Papers, 1826-1861**  
**MS 41-42, MS 68-69 & MS 71**

## **Introduction**

This collection consists primarily of correspondence, poems, and other documents relating to Charles G. Eastman's career as a newspaper editor, writer, poet, and postmaster in Woodstock and Montpelier, Vermont. These papers represent the consolidation of three separate collections related to Charles Gamage Eastman in the Vermont Historical Society library. The collection is housed in five archival flip-top boxes and occupies 2.5 linear feet of shelf space.

## **Biographical Note**

Charles Eastman was born, the son of Mary Rebecca Gamage (1794-1832) and Benjamin Clement Eastman (1788-1858), on 1 June 1816 in Fryburg, Maine. His father, a watchmaker and Methodist minister, was born in Canterbury, New Hampshire, and died in Concord. Charles Eastman pursued a literary career from an early age. He left home as an 11 year old, eventually attending the University of Vermont where he founded a literary society. After he was expelled from the University for unspecified reasons, he entered the newspaper business. He ran a newspaper, *The Lamoille Valley Express*, in Johnson, Vermont, from 1838-1839, after which he moved to Woodstock to run *The Spirit of the Age*. For the bulk of his career, however, he edited the Montpelier newspaper, *Vermont Patriot*. He also loved to write poetry and published many of his poems, including the *Poems of Charles G. Eastman*, some of which were set to music. Many of Charles Eastman's poems, which were presented to the Vermont Historical Society in 1875 by Mrs. Charles Eastman, are available in this collection.

Charles Eastman was active in civic life and used the *Vermont Patriot* and his other newspapers to reflect some of his active support of the Democratic Party. He served as state senator for Washington County in 1852 and 1853; was a member of the National Democratic Conventions of 1848 and 1856; and was active in both the Baltimore and Charleston conventions of 1860. Charles Eastman received a commission as major in 1844, and for many years he served as postmaster in Montpelier.

In 1846, Charles Eastman married Susan Swan Powers Havens (1816-1891) of Woodstock, Vermont. Susan and Charles Eastman had three children, one girl and two boys by the time of the 1860 census: Mary A. Eastman (age 11), John P. Eastman (age 9) and Edward S. Eastman (age 3). Charles Eastman died in Montpelier, Vermont, on 16 September 1860.

## **Scope & Content Note**

These papers represent the consolidation of three separate collections pertaining to Charles Eastman. Letters sent to Eastman in his capacity as editor of *The Lamoille*

*Valley Express*, *The Spirit of the Age*, and especially the *Vermont Patriot*, as well as letters about Democratic Party politics comprise the bulk of this consolidated collection. Accounts for the newspapers, records related to the Montpelier post office, and Eastman's poetry and other literary endeavors make up the remainder of the collection.

Records documenting the operations of both the *Vermont Patriot* and Eastman's other newspapers include substantial correspondence written to Eastman, although none of his responses are saved in this collection. Letters about subscription problems and requests for articles or advertisements to be printed in the paper were apparently frequent occurrences. Additionally, a great many letters address state and national Democratic Party affairs. Some letters discuss the abolitionist cause and whether this would be a divisive issue for the Vermont Democratic Party to support. One such letter suggests the party not touch the issue, stating that "it's a bitter pill, however, this going the nigger business in any shape." There are also letters concerning the tariff issue, particularly speaking out for stronger tariffs to protect the wool industry. Eastman was a strong Democrat and his newspaper reflected his political affiliations. Much of this correspondence reflects the political climate of the state and country over time, from a warning to look out for troublemakers or "barnburners" at the state convention in 1848 to Free Soilers joining the Democrats in 1849. By 1850, it is the Wilmot Proviso splitting a united Democratic Party and worries about how to unite the party. The correspondence shows some strong division over the "slavery issue" in Vermont: "We have negroes and paddys enough. They drive off Yankee labor and they know nothing of farming and are incapable of learning." Accounts, bills, and subscribers for the *Vermont Patriot* are also documented in ledgers and other records in this collection.

Much of the latter years of Eastman's correspondence, 1854-1857, are related to his position as postmaster. In this capacity, he received numerous requests to support specific candidates for other postmaster positions in various Vermont towns. As there was no civil service protection for these positions at the time, new postmasters would often be installed when party control in Washington changed, making the struggle for those jobs intense. Eastman lobbied hard to become postmaster, first in Woodstock and later in Montpelier. Post office financial records (quarterly reports, cashbook, receipts) dating from 1843 and 1853-1860 are also available in the collection. In addition, there is 1858 correspondence with the Post Office Department charging that Eastman's petition for reappointment as Postmaster was signed by more Republicans than Democrats.

Although this correspondence, which spans from 1826 to 1861, is focused mainly on the *Vermont Patriot*, the post office, the Vermont Democratic Party, and some other miscellaneous topics are also addressed. In particular, letters of advice from former classmates early in Eastman's career may indicate an interest in the legal profession. There is also one lengthy letter written in 1847 from Buena Vista, Mexico, which expresses criticism of the U.S. in the Mexican War, the strategy used, and General Zachary Taylor in particular. Other letters include an invitation to speak as a poet at commencement ceremonies for the University of Vermont. The invitation was later rescinded, presumably because he had been expelled while a student there. Eastman eventually recited his poems at a side session at UVM, apparently in defiance of the

University administration. Although there are letters written by Charles Eastman's father, including one asking for money and another indicating that Benjamin Eastman only learned of his son's marriage from another party months later, the collection contains primarily professional and administrative correspondence.

## Related Collections

*A sketch of the life of Eastman, read before the Historical Society of Vermont, Jan. 23, 1862*, by F. S. Shelton is available in VHS collections at MS B Ea783s.

Other related materials in the VHS library include a collection of letters received by Eastman while in Woodstock (\*MS X B Ea 78).

## Inventory

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|---------|--|
| MS 41:1 | Letters, 1826-1838   |
| 2       | _____, 1839  |
| 3       | _____, 1840-42   |
| 4       | _____, 1843, January through July  |
| 5       | _____, 1843, August through December   |
| 6       | _____, 1844  |
| 7       | _____, 1845  |
| MS 42:1 | _____, 1846  |
| 2       | _____, 1847-1848   |
| 3       | _____, 1849, January through July  |
| 4       | _____, 1849, August through December   |
| 5       | _____, 1850  |
| 6       | _____, 1851-1853   |
| 7       | _____, 1854-1856   |
| MS 68:1 | _____, 1857-1860   |
| 2       | _____, 1861  |
| 3       | _____, undated letters   |
| 4       | <i>Spirit of the Age</i> , subscription list, receipt book, etc., 1843-1847, undated |
| 5       | <i>Vermont Patriot</i> , contracts and correspondence, 1851-1859                     |
| 6       | _____, account book and subscriber list, 1852-1861                                   |
| 7       | _____, bills, job books, 1854-1860   |
| 8       | _____, incoming letters about bills and money, 1856-1859                             |
| 9       | Poems, undated   |
| MS 69:1 | _____, undated   |
| 2       | _____, undated   |
| 3       | _____, undated   |
| 4       | _____, 1858  |
| 5       | _____, reviews of his poetry book  |
| 6       | Paper and magazines quoting his poems  |
| 7       | Post Office, accounts, commissions, appointments, and                                |

correspondence, 1843, 1850-1859, undated

- MS 71:1 Post Office cashbook, Montpelier postmaster quarterly reports, 1853-1856
- 2 Montpelier Post Office receipts, 1853-1860
- 3 Montpelier bills, 1854-1856, undated
- 4 Passbooks, memorandums, etc.
- 5 Philosophical articles
- 6 Miscellaneous newspapers:
- Daily Milwaukee News* Apr 27, 1867  
*Boston Daily Times* Apr 14, 1849  
*Weekly Union & American* (Nashville, Te) Nov 28, 1859  
*Burlington Daily Times* Apr 19, 1859  
*Vermont Patriot & State Gazette* Aug 3, 1861  
*Green Mountain Freeman* June 25, 1857  
*Argus and Patriot* July 23, 1868  
*American Phrenological Journal* June 1856
- 7 Miscellaneous: Justice of the Peace appointments, E.P. Walton exchange list, etc. 1853-1859, undated
- 8 Unrelated item

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