

Ruth Taylor (1898-1994)
Family Papers, 1857-1994 (bulk: 1857-1958)
MSA 292 & 322

Introduction

The Ruth Taylor family papers consist of Taylor family letters from the 1850s until 1939. Many of the letters in the collection focus on Taylor's grandmother, Jennie Hoskins Taylor (b. 1837), who was born in Jericho, Vermont, and lived variously in Mississippi, Italy, and Brooklyn, New York. The papers include Hoskins family genealogy, and birth, death, and marriage records for Ruth Taylor's immediate family. In addition there are Alonzo Taylor's 1860s receipts for slaves as well as Jenny Taylor's receipts for dry good goods when they were living in Mississippi.

The papers were given to the Vermont Historical Society by Harriet M. Harris of Barton, Vermont, a friend of Ruth Taylor (ms. acc. no. 97.17). They occupy one linear foot of shelving and are housed in two manuscript boxes.

Biographical Sketches

Jennie Hoskins Taylor, grandmother of Ruth Taylor, was born in Jericho, Vermont in 1837 the daughter of Henry E. (b. 1799) and Elizabeth Miller Hoskins. She was educated at the Converse School in Burlington and taught school in Minnesota and Houston, Mississippi, where Alonzo bought and sold slaves. Jennie Hoskins married Alonzo H. Taylor (1820-1889) who was born in Carmel, New York and they eventually settled in Mississippi. During the Civil War, Alonzo fought in Hardie's Battalion, Alabama Cavalry Reserves, Company B. After the war, the family relocated in Corinth, Mississippi, where Alonzo founded a bank. During this time, Jennie spent several years in Italy pursuing a musical career, leaving her husband and entrusting their young son, John W., to the care of relatives. Upon her return to Mississippi, the couple separated and Jennie moved north. After Alonzo's death in 1889, litigation ensued in regard to the settlement of his estate. Jennie died in Brooklyn, New York.

John W. Taylor (January 24, 1864-May 6, 1939), son of Jennie and Alonzo Taylor, was born in Talladega, Alabama while his father was serving in the Confederate States Army. In the 1870s he was sent to live with his aunts in Carmel, New York. He graduated from Cornell in 1884 and lived in Corinth, Mississippi where he owned a lumber business and was a banker. In letters to his niece, Ruth Taylor, he writes that as a young man he did not know the whereabouts of his mother nor that he had a brother, Robert.

Ruth Taylor, (February 4, 1899-April 8, 1994), was the daughter of Robert Eugene Taylor (September 27, 1874-January 27, 1947) and granddaughter of Alonzo and Jennie Taylor. Her mother, Eliza Lincoln Taylor died in Barton, Vermont in 1948. Her father was a brother of John W. Taylor who figures prominently in the papers.

Born in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Taylor taught school in New York City. She moved to Barton, Vermont, in 1947, having previously lived in Cambridge and Westford, Vermont.

In 1922 Taylor married Gerald A. McCrea, who died in Barton in 1957. In 1958 she married Grant J. Dawley who died in Barton in 1963. There are no records for her third husband, Harold G. Brewer. There were no children from these marriages.

Taylor died at 96 in Barton and, although widowed or divorced, she used the surname of Brewer at the time of her death.

Scope and Content

The papers consist largely of Taylor family letters that span the Civil War period to the middle of the twentieth century. In addition to the letters, there are receipts for slaves that Alonzo Taylor acquired in Mississippi in the 1850s and 1860s as well as receipts for dry goods, his wife purchased during the same period. More recent items include birth, death, and marriage certificates for Ruth Taylor's parents and two of her husbands. Hoskins family genealogy includes a typescript from Hayden, Chauncey et al. *History of Jericho, Vermont* (VHS 974.31 J 477).

The letters focus on Jennie Hoskins Taylor, wife of Alonzo Taylor and Ruth Taylor's grandmother. Jennie and Alonzo Taylor lived in Mississippi, as did their son, John, who wrote a series of letters in the 1930s to his niece, Ruth, who was living in New York State. His letters are autobiographical and in them he gives the details of his mother's estrangement from the family and the litigation over his father's estate in 1890.

In a handful of the earliest letters in the papers, dating from 1857, Jennie Hoskins writes to her cousin, Cyrus A. Snow, and to her family in Jericho, Vermont from Houston, Mississippi, where she was teaching school. Although she was reasonably happy as a single young woman she states she has no intention of "settling" there. She comments that the condition of the slaves compares well with "the poor class of laborers in the north". In July 1857, she writes: "There is little labor performed by white men. They would never endure the burning heat of summer. Nor do the women labor. They occupy their time sewing and superintending their household matters."

The papers contain little relating to Ruth Taylor. It appears that the family letters came into her possession largely as a result of her correspondence with John W. Taylor prior to his death in 1939.

Organization

- I. Genealogy
- II. Alonzo (1820-1889) and Jennie Hoskins Taylor (b. 1837)
- III. John W. Taylor, Jan. 26, 1864-May 6, 1939
- IV. Ruth Taylor, Feb. 4, 1898-April 18, 1994
- V. Miscellaneous

InventoryI. Genealogy

MSA 292:1 Genealogy

II. Alonzo (1820-1889) and Jennie Hoskins Taylor (b.1837)

MSA 292:2 Alonzo Taylor, letters from John W. Taylor, 1869-72
3 _____, slave receipts etc., 1850s-1861
4 Jennie Taylor, letters, to Cyrus A. Snow and to family, 1857 and 1896
5 _____, _____, to son and husband, 1891
6 _____, _____, to a friend, 1877
7 _____, _____, from friends, 1882 and 1924
8 _____, dry goods receipts, 1868-72
9 Miscellaneous, 1866 and 1890

III. John W. Taylor, 1864-1939

MSA 322:1 Letters to his parents, 1872-73
2 _____, to his mother and grandmother, 1891
3 _____, to Ruth Taylor, 1932-33
4 _____, _____, 1938 - 39
5 _____, _____, undated
6 _____, _____, _____
7 _____, from miscellaneous people, 1890-1911

IV. Ruth Taylor, 1989-1994

MSA 292:10 Letters from miscellaneous people, 1935-58
11 Birth, death, marriage certificates, 1922-1994
12 Miscellaneous, 1932-1970

V. Miscellaneous

MSA 292:13 Fragment, undated
14 Envelopes, 1899-57

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