



**Walter Havighurst Special Collections  
Miami University Libraries**

**William Ashton Collection  
1840-1874**

**OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION**

Title:	William Ashton Collection
Dates:	1840-1874
Media:	Manuscripts, including medical notes, letters, essays, and poetry; printed material, including agricultural publications and newspaper clippings; artistic ephemera
Quantity:	0.75 cubic feet
Location:	Manuscript shelving; oversized item in closed stacks

**COLLECTION SUMMARY**

This collection of papers pertaining to William Ashton includes manuscripts, including medical notes, letters, essays, and poetry; printed material, featuring agricultural publications and newspaper clippings; and artistic ephemera, such as a wallpaper design of Ashton's.

**PROVENANCE OF THE COLLECTION**

In the late 1950s, Edgar W. King found the items in this collection in a chicken house in southern Indiana that belonged to a descendant of William Ashton's.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

A native of Ashton-under-Lyne in the county of Lancashire, England, William Adolphus Ashton was born in 1803. For generations, the Ashton family had worked with and designed textiles, as this area was central to cotton manufacturing. As a result, Ashton became interested in cotton miller Robert Owen's factory reform efforts. Ashton was a member of the Manchester and Salford Social Community, which believed that Owen's plan for a proposed Villages of Cooperation could be made to work on a much smaller scale than the population of 500 that Owen envisioned.

As a result, Ashton and six other families came to America from Manchester in 1834 to establish a cooperative community, finally settling in Franklin County, Indiana. When the community failed two years later, Ashton returned to his old trade of textile designing for his livelihood. Although there was no textile manufacturer in Cincinnati, one firm made oilcloth and table covers. Ashton joined the firm in June 1836. He traveled throughout Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana and Tennessee to sell his product.

During the 1840s, Ashton designed textiles for J. Briggs and Company of Frankfort, Pennsylvania, selling them to many leading mills in the East. Ashton's designs predominantly featured Greek Revival patterns, paisley motifs, and sprigged floral patterns.

In 1848, Ashton and partner Almon Sawyer established the Great Western Oil Cloth and Window Shade Manufactory in Cincinnati. These window shades featuring painted landscapes were made to order for private homes, businesses and steamboats. To create the shades, muslin was first stiffened; then, the outline of the design was applied to the cloth by copying, tracing, stenciling or pouncing. After the design had been outlined on the cloth, the transparency was painted. Ashton operated a flatboat on the Ohio River to facilitate the transportation and sale of his creations. Ashton left the window shade business in 1857.

One of Ashton's ambitions was to become a physician. From 1851 to 1854, Ashton studied medicine at the Cincinnati Eclectic Medical College, receiving a degree in 1855. He practiced medicine in Cincinnati for eight years, and also served as a trustee and treasurer of the medical college.

Following his retirement in 1862, Ashton returned to his farm, which was part of the original lands owned by the cooperative community he established. Supervising the running of his farm and pursuing his interest in horticulture, Ashton lived in a brick house he had built near Scipio, an unincorporated community in the northwest corner of Morgan Township in Butler County, Ohio. Situated at the intersection of State Routes 126 and 129 on the state line with Indiana, Scipio was laid out by Joseph Alyea in 1827. A post office was established on February 15, 1823, under the name "Philanthropy."

Ashton died in 1870.

References:

"Again Pressed Window Panes," *Antiques*, December 1938, pp. 294-295.

Goulder, Grace. "Textile Designs, Dishes and Shells Attest to Zest for Life of Some Ohioans," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer Pictorial Magazine*, August 24, 1958, pp. 15-16.

King, Edgar W. "William Ashton and His Collection of Early American Textiles," *American Fabrics*, Spring 1960, pp. 92-93.

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

Ashton's medical notes begin the collection. Topics include the brain and flow of blood; rational medicine; the eclectic system; consumption; emotions; the nervous system; application of medicine; conditions of the system; compatibility of medicine; form of medicine; *materia medica*; therapeutics; forces and actions of medicine; treatment of gonorrhea and stricture; symptoms and treatment of syphilis; diseases attendant upon gonorrhea and syphilis; stimulants; doses of medicine; and use of acids.

A manuscript notebook of prescriptions follows. Equivalencies of apothecaries weights begin the notebook, followed by instructions for making expectorants, ointments, linaments and other remedies for a variety of medical conditions. The notebook also includes a newspaper clipping addressing cures for cholera and consumption.

Medical notebooks include information about topics covered in lectures.

The collection also includes a June 18, 1869 letter from Dr. A.R. Brown of Albion, Michigan to Ashton, in which Brown informs him of a recent lawsuit in which he was involved regarding a patent. Brown also encourages Ashton to "have no fears or hesitancy in employing the Acupuncture set. Do it freely and report how you like it."

Handwritten poetry and essays can also be found in the collection. Poetry includes verse regarding a man's bout with sickness and a selection titled "A Wife Wanted," written as though it was intended for publication in a newspaper. Essays include those titled "Working Miracles," "The Educated Mind, and "What Is Knowledge?" The latter selection is addressed to Eliza Ashton.

Miscellaneous selections of notes include an envelope addressed to Ashton at Mt. Carmel, Indiana from Jno. Farquhar, a verse titled "On Lewd Women," and sentences about being a good son and a real gentleman. Notes on what appears to be a stage performance outline selections such as "Rob Roy or Isle of France," "Over the Water to Charley," "Jonny Come Kiss Me," and "Flowers of Edenborough." Notes regarding the Civil War discuss ideas concerning the powers of government, duty to the Union, whether the Southern states have a right to secede, causes of the war, equality, and abolitionists.

A resolution from the Union Club of the Constitutional Union Association outlines the order of business in meetings of the club, while two passes dated September 3, 1862 document Ashton's permission to leave the city of Cincinnati and Newport, [Kentucky] to go home.

In a May 12, 1863 letter to his grandfather, Adam Shade writes from camp near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. In the letter, Shade describes his company being tired of waiting, fairly "spoiling for a fight." "We would wish to strike now while the season is genial – and the roads are good and while the great majority of the army is in good health and in fine spirits," Shade writes. "If we are to realize another summer's running all over creation fatiguing and wearing down man for nothing, this army, the finest and best disciplined in the world, will most assuredly become totally demoralized and doubtful about placing confidence in any General that may be placed over it." Shade also mentions concerns about the safety of forces at Murfreesboro and the strength of the troops.

Printed material in the collection includes a December 1867 issue of *Prang's Chromo*. This issue of a journal of popular art reveals how chromolithographs are made; letters from Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Frederic Church, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Bayard Taylor on chromolithography; hints on framing chromolithographs; and a price list of Prang publications, including rewards of merit, Sunday School room cards, albums, gifts for children, marriage certificates, and miscellaneous prints.

*The Budget of Novelties: Containing a Catalogue of Valuable Books and All the Latest Novelties & Curiosities for Everybody* provides information on purchasing a variety of publications covering topics such as ballroom dancing, riddles and puzzles, curing bashfulness, magic and card tricks, letter-writing and business handbooks, ventroquillism, and taxidermy.

A broadside titled "Last Week, at the Melodeon" provides information about performances of magic tricks such as the "Sleeping Arab," producing hundreds of American flags, cutting off noses, the "interminable bottle," and "wonderful productions from a lady's shawl."

Issues of *The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener* span from December 1869 through December 1870. Edited by A.M. Purdy and published in Palmyra, New York, this newspaper covered topics such as preparing planting beds, information on specific varieties of fruits, vegetables and trees, and cultivators. The collection also includes a broadside advertising the "monthly paper devoted solely to the cultivation of small fruits, flowers and vegetables" that features illustrations of varieties such as Wilson's Albany and Davidson's Thornless berries. Other advertising ephemera connected with the newspaper includes notices to distribute the paper to those "who would be likely to take an interest in getting up a Club for the Recorder" and a list of plants raised at the Palmyra Fruit Nurseries in Palmyra, New York that were available for purchase.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

### Series I: Manuscripts

Sub-Series I: Medical Notes

Sub-Series II: Letters, Essays, Poetry and Notes

### Series II: Printed Material

Sub-Series I: General Topics

Sub-Series II: The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener

Sub-Series III: Agricultural Booklets and Articles

Sub-Series IV: Newspaper Clippings

### Series III: Artistic Ephemera

### Series IV: Oversized Materials

## RELATED MATERIALS

The Miami University Art Museum holds other materials of Ashton's, most notably his mahogany drawing box, which contains his brushes, drawing tools and original water colors. The museum also has some circa-1829 unused folio sheets of Ashton's Whatman paper, which he used for his designs; similarly watermarked Whatman paper was used for the original John James Audubon prints.

The museum's collection also includes ten looseleaf notebooks of mounted drawings and sketches (most in color) for fabrics, window shades and wallpapers. Three antique scrapbooks bound in marbled paper feature hundreds of samples. Some of the designs are accompanied by Ashton's marginal notes.

The museum's Ashton-related material also includes correspondence and a manuscript copybook or "scriptory" that Ashton kept for practicing ornamental penmanship, dated February 13, 1818. Printed material can also be found in the collection; books include *The Painter's and Varnisher's Pocket Manual: Containing Rules and Instructions in Everything Relating to the Arts of Painting and Varnishing, with Full Instructions for the Processes...To Which Is Added, a Statement of the Diseases and Accidents to which Painters and Varnishers are Peculiarly Liable, with the Simplest and Best Methods of Prevention and Remedy* (Knight & Lacey, 1825) and *A Practical Treatise on Dyeing and Calico-Printing: Including the Latest Inventions and Improvements; Also a Description of the Origin, Manufacture, Uses and Chemical Properties of the Various Animal, Vegetable and Mineral Substances Employed in These Arts*, by Clinton G. Gilroy (Harper & Bros., 1846).

Framed portrait photographs of Ashton and his second wife, Sarah Heap, can also be found at the art museum.

Miscellaneous uncataloged materials pertaining to William Ashton are housed at the Lilly Library at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. These items include miscellaneous papers relating to Ashton's interest in social reform; cooperative social and commercial ventures; mechanics' institutes and their libraries; the trade union movement; commerce and currency reform; fraternal organizations; Ashton's medical career; and contemporary advertising material. For more information, visit:  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/shorttitle/ashton.html>

Other collections pertaining to Ashton can be found at the Indiana Historical Society. One collection of papers consists of handwritten notes, printed materials, and drawings and sketches related to Ashton's training at the Eclectic Medical Institute in Cincinnati and his medical career. Another collection includes notebooks and papers describing disease symptoms, treatments and recipes for medicines, together with a diary of Ashton's son, Samuel, a farmer near Mount Carmel, Ohio.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

- Access:** This collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.
- Preferred Citation:** Researchers are requested to cite the *William Ashton Collection* and *The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries* in all footnote and bibliographic references.
- Provenance:** Donated by Edgar W. King, 1976.
- Processed By:** Betsy Butler, October-November 2008.
- Property Rights:** The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries, owns the property rights to this collection.
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#### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION**

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note both the box and folder numbers shown below.

**Series I: Manuscripts**  
**Sub-Series I: Medical Notes**

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	1	Medical notes	1851-1858
	2	Prescription notebook	ca. 1850-1859
	3	Medical notebook, including notes on albumin; bile; chlorification; congestion; diseases of the blood; ether; chloroform; fiberin; kidneys and urine; liver; lungs; nerves; nervous sensibility; organic sensibility; pancreas; spleen; urea; vital stamina; vomiting. Also includes printed material about <i>Buchanan's Journal of Man for 1850-1851</i> .	November-December 1852
	4	Medical notebook, including notes on arterial circulation; blood-albumin; fiberin; globules; circulation; calorification; digestion; exercise; kidneys; osmosis; respiration; science of development (hygiene)	November 15-28, 1853
	5	Medical notebook, including notes on feelings; <i>materia medica</i> ; reaction modifiers; remedies-external (chemical, dynamical, mechanical); internal (feeling, intellect); irresponsibles (electricity, heat, light)	February 12, 1855
	6	Medical notebook, including notes on blood-letting; absorbant system; calorification; consumption	February 25, 1855
	7	Medical notebook, including notes on galvanism; magnetism; quantity and intensity of electricity	March 3, 1855
	8	Medical notebook, including notes on acids; alcalies; ammonia; catalytea; chemical actions of medicine on the system; tonics	March 8, 1855
	9	Medical notebook, including notes on ague; diseases of anterrim; dysentery; goiter; fractures; inflammation of the bone; melanocis; periostetis; polyps; tonsils	March 16, 1855
	10	Medical notebook, including notes on the brain; chemical laws; circulation; cupping; doses; emotion regions; facial development; heat; classification by nervous system; pulse; state of sleep; tendencies; vitality	March 28, 1855
	11	Medical notebook, including notes on blood medicines; counteractants; desolvants; iron; tonics	April 9, 1855
	12	Medical notebook, including notes on	April 10, 1855

Box	Folder	Title	Date
		antiarthritica; blood medicines; catalytic; narcotics; neurotics (nerve medicines); stimulants; special stimulants	
	13	Medical notebook, including notes on bile; kidneys; liver; respiration; specific gravity; spinal system; voice	May 4, 1855
	14	Medical notebook, including notes on astringents; concentrated medicines; narcotics; sedatives; special sedatives	May 1855
	15	Medical notebook, including notes on antiarthritics; astringents; diagnoses; remedies; stimulants	May 15-19, 1855
	16	Medical notebook, including notes on application of medicines; heat; medical incompatibility; water	February 10, 1858
	17	Medical notebook, including notes on origins and doses of remedies	February 26, 1858
	18	Medical notebook, including notes on general diseases; local diseases; circulatory diseases; constitutional diseases; diseases of absorbant vessels and glands (tubercular), cellular and serous tissues (dropsical), digestive system, liver and appendages, reproductive organs, urinary glands, ear, eye, hair, skin; diseases incident to pregnancy and childbed	Undated
	19	Medical notebook, including notes on classification of medicines with notes and memoranda, including a copy of The New York Mentor from April 21, 1860	circa 1860
	20	Medical notebook, including an index of terms	Undated

**Series I: Manuscripts**

**Sub-Series II: Letters, Essays, Poetry and Notes**

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	21	Ashton's leave passes	September 3, 1862
	22	Letter from Adam Shade to his grandfather (camp near Murfreesboro, Tennessee)	May 12, 1863
	23	Letter from A.R. Brown, M.D. (Albion, Michigan) to William A. Ashton, M.D. (Franklin County, Indiana)	June 18, 1869
	24	Civil War-related notes	Undated
	25	Union Club Resolution	Undated



Box	Folder	Title	Date
	26	Poetry	Undated
	27	Essays	Undated
	28	Miscellaneous notes	Undated

## Series II: Printed Material

### Sub-Series I: General Topics

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	29	<i>Prang's Chromo: A Journal of Popular Art</i>	December 1867
	30	<i>The Budget of Novelties: Containing a Catalogue of Valuable Books and All the Latest Novelties &amp; Curiosities for Everybody</i>	1874
	31	<i>Last Week, at the Melodeon</i>	Undated

## Series II: Printed Material

### Sub-Series II: The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	32	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	December 1, 1869
	33	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	January 1, 1870
	34	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	February 1, 1870
	35	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	March 1, 1870
	36	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	April 1, 1870
	37	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	May 1, 1870
	38	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	June 1, 1870
	39	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	July 1, 1870
	40	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	August 1, 1870
	41	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	September 1, 1870
	42	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	October 1, 1870
	43	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	November 1, 1870
	44	The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	December 1, 1870
	45	"Small Fruits Raised at the Palmyra Fruit Nurseries, Purdy & Johnston, Proprietors, Palmyra, Wayne County, N.Y."	Undated
	46	Advertisement for The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	circa 1870
	47	"To the Receiver" notice to start a club for The Small Fruit Recorder and Cottage Gardener	undated
	48	Broadside for The Small Fruit Recorder and	Undated

Box	Folder	Title	Date
		Cottage Gardener	

**Series II: Printed Material**

**Sub-Series III: Agricultural Booklets and Articles**

Box	Folder	Title	Date
2	1	Boyer, N.P. Hog Breeder's Manual (Coatesville, PA: Kauffman & Brother)	1865
	2	Speech of Hon. J.B. Grinnell of Iowa on a protective policy for the wool grower and agricultural interests of the Northwest	March 6, 1866
	3	H.A. King & Co. Hints to Bee-Keepers (Buffalo, NY: Franklin Printing House)	1867
	4	Root, James A. Native Evergreens for the Spring of 1868 (Skaneateles, New York)	ca. 1867-1868
	5	Cincinnati Horticultural Society Special Premium List, Strawberry Exhibition, June 11, 1869 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1868)	1868
	6	Hoosier Drill (Milton, Indiana)	1870
	7	"Flour and Bread vs. Potatoes" and "The Horse"	undated
	8	"Bargains in Fine Teas! Keep Up the Year Round at the Corner of Sixth St. & Central Avenue"	undated

**Series II: Printed Material**

**Sub-Series IV: Newspaper Clippings**

Box	Folder	Title	Date
2	9	Kissing	1856, undated
	10	Fashion, Manners, Politics	1851, 1855-1859, undated
	11	Philosophical Issues	1853-1859
	12	Advice, Proverbs and "How-To" Instructions	ca. 1856
	13	Verse, Wit and Humor	ca. 1856
	14	Miscellaneous Items, Biographies, and History	ca. 1857-1859
	15	Poetry	ca. 1860-1865
	16	Politics, Government and the Civil War	ca. 1860-1865

**Series III: Artistic Ephemera**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
2	17	Fragment of "Point Paper for Weavers-No. 8 & 8"	Undated
	18	Artwork for wallpaper design	Undated

**Series IV: Oversized Materials**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Drawer</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Vault Map Case 1	13	Subscription broadside for The Cultivator for 1841(Albany, NY: Jesse Buel & Company)	December 1840