

Shaw Family Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2012

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Collection Summary

Title: Shaw Family Papers

Span Dates: 1636-1892

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1770-1870)

ID No.: MSS39610

Creator: Shaw family

Extent: 650 items ; 4 containers ; 1.6 linear feet ; 4 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Correspondence, writings, copybooks, genealogical materials, reports, and other papers relating to the Shaw, Smith, Adams, and Felt (Felts) families. Central to the collection is the correspondence of Abigail Adams with her sister, Elizabeth Smith Shaw Peabody, and with Elizabeth Peabody's children, Abigail Adams Shaw Felt and William Smith Shaw. Includes sermons and other papers of Joseph Barlow Felt relating to New England; state laws; practices regulating religious fasts and feasts, especially Thanksgiving; court records; and Salem, Massachusetts, town records. Also includes papers of Felt's nephew, Joseph Barlow Felt Osgood.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Adams family.

Adams, Abigail, 1744-1818--Correspondence.

Cranch, Mary Smith, 1741-1811--Correspondence.

Felt, Abigail Adams Shaw, 1790-1859--Correspondence.

Felt, Joseph B. (Joseph Barlow), 1789-1869. Joseph Barlow Felt papers. 1822-1832.

Felts family.

Fox, John, 1805-1884--Trials, litigation, etc.

Osgood, Joseph B. F. (Joseph Barlow Felt), b. 1823 Joseph B. F. Osgood papers. 1817-1892.

Peabody, Elizabeth Smith Shaw, 1750-1815--Correspondence.

Shaw family.

Shaw, William Smith, 1778-1826--Correspondence.

Smith family.

Organizations

New England Historic Genealogical Society. New England Historic Genealogical Society records. 1849-1852.

Woburn (Mass.)--Trials, litigation, etc.

Subjects

Antinomianism.

Arminianism.

Cities and towns--Massachusetts.

Courts--Massachusetts.

Fasts and feasts.

Genealogy--Societies, etc.

Religion.

Thanksgiving Day.

Theology.

Places

New England--Social life and customs.

Salem (Mass.)--History.

United States--History--Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775.

Occupations

Authors.

Secretaries.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of the Shaw family were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1947 and 1964.

Processing History

The Shaw Family Papers were processed in 1975. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Additional Guides

A genealogical guide to names represented in the Shaw collection is available for use in the Manuscript Division Reading Room. The guide is also available as a [PDF](#) document.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Shaw family is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of the Shaw family are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on four reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Shaw Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the Shaw family span the years 1636-1892, with the bulk of the material from 1770 to 1870, during the lifetimes of Elizabeth Smith Shaw Peabody and Joseph Barlow Felt, whose papers make up the largest proportion of the collection. The latter's papers alone comprise about three-fourths of the collection. The material consists of family and other letters sent, business papers, records, receipts, notes, copybooks, writings, research materials, and miscellany. Nearly half of the collection consists of Felt's handwritten sermons. The papers are arranged by type of material under a family member's name and therein chronologically.

The papers provide source material for studies in New England ecclesiastical history and genealogy, as well as biographical studies of Abigail Adams and her family.

The collection originated with Elizabeth Smith Shaw Peabody, a sister of Abigail Adams, wife of President John Adams and mother of President John Quincy Adams. Elizabeth Smith Shaw (later married to Stephen Peabody), was mother of William Smith Shaw, who served as secretary to John Adams, and of Abigail Adams Shaw Felt, who married Joseph Barlow Felt, a minister (1821-1833) and antiquarian of Hamilton and Boston, Massachusetts. The last section of the collection originated with Felt's nephew, Joseph Barlow Felt Osgood, a Salem attorney who served his town as councilman, state representative, state senator, mayor, and judge.

Although there are handwritten notations on some of the documents that indicate the papers remained in the family for a number of years, there is no record of the location of the papers from 1892, the last date in the collection, until 1947, the year they were acquired by the Library of Congress.

An important part of the collection is a series of letters from Abigail Adams beginning in 1784, when she went to Europe to join her husband in Holland, and ending in 1818, the year of her death. These letters are addressed to her sister Elizabeth and to her niece and nephew, Abigail Adams Shaw Felt and William Smith Shaw, and may be found in the files of those individuals. Related material, letters from Abigail Adams to her sister, Mary Smith Cranch, are owned by the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Mass.

In the Peabody and Shaw papers are letters and letter drafts from Elizabeth to her sisters Abigail and Mary and to her son William. These letters describe some of the activities of the Adams children and grandchildren who stayed with the Shaw family or attended school under the Reverend Peabody. John Quincy Adams also stayed with his aunt the year he was preparing for Harvard, and there are candid comments about the character and personality of the future president.

Although there is a small section of family correspondence in the Joseph Barlow Felt papers, most of the letters in this section relate to Felt's professional activities. Felt was the author of more than a dozen books of New England history and records, with primary emphasis on colonial and ecclesiastical history of Massachusetts. None of his manuscripts, except for a few essay drafts, are included in the collection. There are, however, research notes and source materials for studies concerning Massachusetts towns, churches, and families. One section, the series of correspondence from May to November 1840, contains information from all of the states in the Union on past and current practices and laws regulating religious fasts and feasts, particularly Thanksgiving. Other papers discuss various aspects of ecclesiastical history, including theological trends such as antinomianism and Arminianism.

The Felt papers also include handwritten sermons that are dated 1822-1832. The earlier sermons were delivered in Sharon, and the later ones in Hamilton, Massachusetts, as well as in surrounding towns. Some of the sermons are incomplete or fragmented, but most of them are in good condition, and may have been used several times in various churches. Also included in the Felt papers are records (1849-1852) of the New England Historic Genealogical Society; court records (1731-1733) of the case of Woburn, Mass. vs. Rev. John Fox; Salem town records (1636-1728); and a review of manuscripts (1622-1820) concerning American colonies in the London State Paper Office.

The Joseph Barlow Felt Osgood file is relatively brief and provides limited information on Osgood, his family, and the town of Salem.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged by type of material under a family member's name and therein chronologically.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 16,453

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	William Smith Shaw Papers
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Letters received, family, 1794-1798
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Adams, Abigail
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Peabody, Elizabeth Smith Shaw
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Letters received, family, 1799
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Adams, Abigail
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Peabody, Elizabeth Smith Shaw
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Letters received, family, 1800-1817
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Adams, Abigail
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Felt, Abigail Adams Shaw
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Peabody, Elizabeth Smith Shaw
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Letters received and miscellany, including promissory notes and receipts, 1804-1825
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Abigail Adams Shaw Felt papers, circa 1809-1818, undated
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Copybooks, miscellany, circa 1809, undated
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Letters received, family, 1815-1818
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Adams, Abigail
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Shaw, William Smith
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Elizabeth Smith Shaw Peabody papers
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Letters sent and drafts, 1768-1778
REEL 1	
BOX 1	Correspondence, Abigail Adams,
REEL 1	1784-1815 (5 folders)

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1 REEL 1	Letters sent and drafts, 1780-1805.
	(2 folders)
BOX 1 REEL 1	Letters sent, drafts, writings, and miscellaneous, including reports on students, and elegies and obituaries, 1807-1811, undated
BOX 1 REEL 1	Joseph Barlow Felt papers
BOX 1 REEL 1	Article, "Seals of Massachusetts," drafts notes (1629-1685), 1838
BOX 1 REEL 1	Boston Charter, Boston, Mass., copy, patent copy, 1650
BOX 1 REEL 1	Court records, town of Woburn, Mass. v. Rev. John Fox, collected by Felt (1849), 1731-1733
BOX 1 REEL 1	Sermons, 1822-1832
BOX 1 REEL 1	1822, July
BOX 1 REEL 1	1823
BOX 1 REEL 1	Jan.-June
BOX 2 REEL 2	July-Oct.
BOX 2 REEL 2	1824, Jan.-Dec.
BOX 2 REEL 2	1825, Mar.-Dec.
BOX 2 REEL 2	1826, Mar.-Oct.
BOX 2 REEL 2	1827
BOX 2 REEL 2	Jan.-July
BOX 3 REEL 3	Aug.-Dec.
BOX 3 REEL 3	1828, Jan.-Dec.
BOX 3 REEL 3	1829, Feb.-Dec.
BOX 3 REEL 3	1830, Feb.-Dec.
BOX 3 REEL 3	1831, Jan.-Dec.
BOX 3 REEL 3	1832, Feb.-July
BOX 3 REEL 3	Sermons, fragments, and miscellany, 1831, undated
BOX 4 REEL 4	Genealogical notes, correspondence, research, and miscellany, A-Z, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
BOX 4	Massachusetts families, circa 1825-1835

Container List

Container

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REEL 4	
BOX 4	Family names
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Clark
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Conwin <i>See also same container, research notes, Salem</i>
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Cotton
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Cutler
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Denison and Knight
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Emerson
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Farley
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Gernish
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Hubbard
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Janvrin
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Parsons and Robinson
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Thacher and Marston
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Family letters received and sent and miscellany, 1803-1834, undated
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Adams, Abigail, 1834
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Adams, Thomas B.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Hunt, William
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Peabody, Elizabeth Smith Shaw
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Shaw, William Smith
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Wells, Samuel A., relating to Shaw and Adams estates
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Letters received
REEL 4	
BOX 4	1820-1825
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Essex Historical Society, Essex, Mass.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Foster, Charles S.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Kimball, Charles

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
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BOX 4	Loring, Thomas, Jr.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Stevens, David
REEL 4	
BOX 4	1826
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Danvers Church, Danvers, Mass.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Essex Historical Society, Essex, Mass.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Foster, James
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Hubbard, Sam
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Ipswich Church, Ipswich, Mass.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Rockwood, Rev. O.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Tolman, Thomas
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Williams, Israel
REEL 4	
BOX 4	1827
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Emerson, Brown
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Hubbard, Sam
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Ipswich Church, Ipswich, Mass.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Ives, W. and S. B.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Kimball, Rev. D. T.
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BOX 4	Masonic Lodge
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Oliver, Benjamin L.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Rockwood, Rev. O.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Salem Church, Salem, Mass.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Whitman, Zach G.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Worcester, Iona F.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	1828-1829
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Beverly Church, Beverly, Mass.

Container List

Container

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REEL 4	
BOX 4	Bible Society
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Ipswich Academy, Ipswich, Mass.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	1830-1837
BOX 4	Barber, Rev. I. R.
BOX 4	Low, William
BOX 4	Gloucester Church, Gloucester, Mass.
BOX 4	Young, Alexander
BOX 4	1840
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BOX 4	May-June
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Causten, James H.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Laborde, M.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Marion, Charles
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Spencer, John C.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Staples, William R.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Stevens, William Bacon
REEL 4	
BOX 4	July-Aug.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Causten, James H.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Day, Thomas
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Fenwich, George
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Hawley, William
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Minor, Lucian
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Perkins, Rev. I. H.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Stevens, William B.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Williams, Charles K.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Sept.-Nov.
REEL 4	
BOX 4	Bacon, E. Champion
REEL 4	

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 4 REEL 4	Day, Thomas
BOX 4 REEL 4	Kingsley, James L.
BOX 4 REEL 4	Robbins, Thomas
BOX 4 REEL 4	William, Charles K.
BOX 4 REEL 4	1843-1845
BOX 4 REEL 4	Hayes, Edward
BOX 4 REEL 4	Putman, Perley G.
BOX 4 REEL 4	Savage, Joseph
BOX 4 REEL 4	1853-1860
BOX 4 REEL 4	Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.
BOX 4 REEL 4	Greenley, Benjamin
BOX 4 REEL 4	Hayes, Edward
BOX 4 REEL 4	New England Historic Genealogical Society
BOX 4 REEL 4	Savage, Joseph
BOX 4 REEL 4	Letters sent, drafts, 1844-1847, relating to registration and ecclesiastical matters
BOX 4 REEL 4	Miscellaneous autographs, circa 1840-1860
BOX 4 REEL 4	Miscellaneous vouchers, fragments, Boston State Store, Boston, Mass., 1776-1779
BOX 4 REEL 4	New England Historic Genealogical Society accounts, correspondence, legal, notes, publications, and related matter, 1849-1852
BOX 4 REEL 4	Research notes
BOX 4 REEL 4	Fasts and Thanksgiving (1634-1669), circa 1840 <i>See also same container, letters received, 1840, May-Nov.</i>
BOX 4 REEL 4	Lists of eighteenth century names, A-Z, circa 1832
BOX 4 REEL 4	Miscellaneous, circa 1840
BOX 4 REEL 4	Salem, Mass. <i>See also same container, Family names, Conwin</i>
BOX 4 REEL 4	Census (1784-1820) and history, undated
BOX 4 REEL 4	Town records, facsimile, 1636-1728

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 4 REEL 4	Story, Augustus, correspondence and miscellany, 1866-1874, undated
BOX 4 REEL 4	Wills (1848 copy), 1640 and 1650
BOX 4 BOX 4 REEL 4	Cradock, J. Mathew Rogers, Ezekiel
BOX 4 REEL 4	Writings, miscellaneous
BOX 4 REEL 4	Ecclesiastical history, circa 1847, drafts, notes, report, etc.
BOX 4 REEL 4	Review of manuscripts relating to American colonies (1622-1782) in London State Paper Office, London, England, undated
BOX 4 REEL 4	Memoir of David Mason, 1842
BOX 4 REEL 4	Joseph Barlow Felt Osgood papers
BOX 4 REEL 4	Article, "A Double India Voyage," relating to trip of Captain William Osgood on the <i>Eliza</i> to Bangkok, manuscript, 1817-1821, undated
BOX 4 REEL 4	Biography, handwritten manuscript, circa 1888
BOX 4 REEL 4	Letters and miscellany, circa 1865-1892
BOX 4 REEL 4	Hale, Edward E.
BOX 4 REEL 4	Sherman, Edgar J.
BOX 4 REEL 4	Phrenology report (Fowler & Wells), J. L. Auden, J. L., 1860
BOX 4 REEL 4	Poetry book, clippings, notes, including writings of Henry Cogswell, H. K. Oliver, Carl Outis, and Joseph B. F. Osgood, circa 1845