

**Guide to the
John Farmer Papers**

Accession Numbers: 1961-2 and 1962-1

**Special Collections
Tuck Library
New Hampshire Historical Society**

John Farmer Papers

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Collection Overview

Title: John Farmer Papers

Bulk Dates: 1806–1838

Accession Numbers: 1961-2 (John Farmer Papers)
1962-1 (Oversize items in manuscripts flat storage)

Physical Description: Total 6 boxes (including 8 bound volumes in box 6), 1 oversize flat storage case

Provenance and Acknowledgements: The Society purchased the bulk of the John Farmer Papers in 1928 in two lots. The bulk of the collection (some 400 letters) was purchased from Miss Ella A. Farmer of Hingham, Massachusetts, and a smaller group (about 100 letters) was purchased from Mr. W.E. Fiske of Exeter, New Hampshire.

Processor: Thomas E. Camden

Access Restrictions: No restrictions

Copyright: For permission requests to publish material from this collection, contact the Special Collections Librarian for copyright information.

Repository: Special Collections, Tuck Library

For Additional Information:

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Summary:

This collection is composed chiefly of correspondence, arranged chronologically. It includes letters from such notables as John Adams, Samuel Bell, Philip Carrigain, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Isaac Hill, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Kelly, Dudley Leavitt, William Plumer, William Plumer, Jr., John Greenleaf Whittier,

and Levi Woodbury. Also included are miscellaneous writings by Farmer as well as seven bound manuscript volumes. Three items—certificates and a family bible record—have been removed from the collection and are housed in the Special Collections manuscript flat storage for oversize items.

Biographical Note

John Farmer may be said, in the strictest sense, to have been a self-educated man. During his short life, he became quite a respectable scholar, familiar not only with works of history, but with standard works in other branches, and with the literature of the day.

At age 16, Farmer left his father's house and began work as a store clerk in Amherst, NH. After five years, however, he found the labors too arduous for his feeble health and left to teach school at age 21. Meanwhile, a literary association for mutual improvement had formed in Amherst, meeting weekly for debate, for rehearsal of pieces, and for readings. Farmer joined the group and was their chief supporter for eleven years.

Although he held several jobs during his early adulthood, Farmer's most noted work was as an "antiquary," a position for which he was well-suited. He became highly distinguished at an early age for his knowledge of facts and events in New Hampshire and New England history. At age 27, Farmer published a pamphlet, "Historical Sketch of Billerica (MA)." Four years later he published another pamphlet, "An Historical Sketch of Amherst (NH), from the First Settlement of the Town."

At age 32, Farmer moved to Concord, NH to open an apothecary store with Dr. Samuel Morrill. Farmer received the title of "Doctor" but never entered the medical profession. The next year he received an honorary degree of Master of Arts from Dartmouth College, followed in 1823 by an appointment of Justice of the Peace for newly formed Merrimack county. That same year the New Hampshire Historical Society was established and Farmer, unable to be present at the early meetings of its founders, took a deep interest in the society, contributing much to its organization and success. Two years later he was elected Corresponding Secretary of the Society, an office which he filled until the period of his last illness. Farmer was also elected Corresponding Member of the Historical Society of Massachusetts, Historical Society of Rhode Island, Maine Historical Society, and the American Antiquarian Society. He was also, until his death, Corresponding Secretary of the New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society.

Farmer published numerous works; yet, in spite of his infirm state of health, those who best knew him were surprised at the extent and variety of his labors. With Jacob Moore, an esteemed printer and book-seller in Concord, Farmer also co-wrote a Gazetteer of New Hampshire and contributed to *Moore's Annals of Concord*. *A Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New England* published in 1829, thought to be Farmer's greatest work, was called by Moore a "wonderful monument of patient industry." The *Register* includes the names of thousands of persons, their dates of birth, death, offices held, places of residence, and so on, through the seventeenth century. It is also said that, on examination, the *Genealogical Register* contains but few names of men living in New England during its first two centuries that cannot be found. Had Farmer published nothing else, the *Register* would remain a lasting monument of his meticulous research and marvelous accuracy. The same year that the *Genealogical Register* was published, Farmer left the apothecary business.

In his seventeen years in Concord, Farmer rarely left town because of his frail health, yet he was the guiding spirit of the New Hampshire Historical Society and author of the greatest number and variety of published works relating to the history of New Hampshire thus far. Farmer died in Concord in 1838 at age 49.

Chronology of John Farmer

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|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1789 | Born on June 12 at Chelmsford, Massachusetts, the elder son of John Farmer and Lydia Richardson Farmer. |
| 1803 | The family moved to Lyndeborough, NH and then to Merrimack, NH. |
| 1805 | At age 16, began work as a clerk in the store of Nathan Kendall in Amherst, New Hampshire. Kendall encouraged and stimulated Farmer's love for books. |
| 1810 | Left Kendall's store in Amherst and began to teach school in Amherst, New Hampshire, remaining in this profession for eleven years. |
| 1821 | At age 32, moved to Concord, New Hampshire where he formed an apothecary business with Dr. Samuel Morrill. |
| 1822 | Received the honorary degree of Master of Arts from Dartmouth College. |
| 1825–1838 | Served as Corresponding Secretary of the New Hampshire Historical Society. |
| 1829 | Left the apothecary business on Main Street, Concord, and began to board with the family of Stephen P. Breed on State Street, midway between School and Pleasant Streets, Concord. <i>A Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New England</i> published. |
| 1832 | Moved again to the north end of Main Street, Concord, and became a boarder with the Misses McClary.

Moved once again (the exact date is not available) to the residence of Mrs. Daniel Clark about two miles west outside of Concord, New Hampshire. |
| 1837 | In August, elected a member of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquities at Copenhagen, Denmark. |
| 1838 | On August 13, died in Concord, New Hampshire. |

Sources

Jacob B. Moore, "Biographical Notice of John Farmer, M.A." *American Quarterly Register*. (Vol. XI, No. 3), February 1839, p. 233.
Ibid., p. 236.

Scope and Content Note

The bulk of the John Farmer collection, consisting of six document boxes, is composed chiefly of Farmer's correspondence and is arranged chronologically. The correspondence spans the period 1806–1839 and includes letters from many notables such as John Adams, Samuel Bell, Philip Carrigain, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Isaac Hill, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Kelly, Dudley Leavitt, William Plumer, William Plumer, Jr., John Greenleaf Whittier, and

Levi Woodbury. In his genealogical investigations, Farmer inquired into the names, ages, characters, and deaths of distinguished men through correspondence with important people who could furnish those facts. A more detailed list of names is part of the finding aids in the Special Collections at the Tuck Library.

Box 6 of this collection consists of miscellaneous writings by Farmer including seven bound manuscript volumes of the memoirs of Harvard graduates, 1642–1763, and one bound volume containing an appraisal of Farmer’s property after his death. Farmer, in his humble surroundings, gathered books on every subject, such as early records of NH towns, and notices of the first settlers of the country. This collection shows Farmer's untiring effort, care, and labor in his contribution to the history of New Hampshire and New England.

Contents

- I. John Farmer Papers
- II. Separation Record (part of John Farmer Papers)

I. John Farmer Papers

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	Correspondence, 1806–1812.
1	2	1813–1818
1	3	1819
1	4	1820
1	5	January–July 1821
1	6	August–December 1821
1	7	January–June 1822
1	8	July–September 1822
1	9	October–December 1822
1	10	January–April 1823
1	11	May–July 1823
1	12	August 1823
1	13	September–October 1823
1	14	November 1823
1	15	December 1823
1	16	January–February 1824
1	17	March–May 1824
1	18	June–September 1824
1	19	October 1824
1	20	November–December 1824
Box	Folder	Description
2	1	Correspondence, January–March 1825
2	2	April 1825
2	3	May 1825
2	4	June–July 1825
2	5	August 1825

2	6	September–October 1825
2	7	November–December 1825
2	8	January–February 1826
2	9	March 1826
2	10	April 1826
2	11	May 1826
2	12	June–August 1826
2	13	September–November 1826
2	14	December 1826
2	15	January–February 1827
2	16	March–July 1827
2	17	August–October 1827
2	18	November–December 1827
2	19	January–March 1828
2	20	May–August 1828
2	21	September–October 1828
2	22	November–December 1828

Box	Folder	Description
3	1	Correspondence, January 1829
3	2	February 1829
3	3	March 1829
3	4	April 1829
3	5	May 1829
3	6	June 1829
3	7	July 1829
3	8	August–September 1829
3	9	October 1829
3	10	November 1829
3	11	December 1829
3	12	January 1830
3	13	February 1830
3	14	March 1830
3	15	April 1830
3	16	May 1830
3	17	June 1830
3	18	July 1830
3	19	August 1830
3	20	September–October 1830
3	21	November 1830
3	22	December 1830

Box	Folder	Description
4	1	Correspondence, January 1831
4	2	February 1831
4	3	March 1831
4	4	April 1831
4	5	May 1831
4	6	June 1831

4	7	July 1831
4	8	August–September 1831
4	9	October 1831
4	10	November–December 1831
4	11	January 1832
4	12	February 1832
4	13	March–April 1831
4	14	May 1832
4	15	June–July 1832
4	16	August 1832
4	17	September 1832
4	18	October–November 1832
4	19	December 1832
4	20	January 1833
4	21	February 1833
4	22	March 1833
4	23	April 1833
4	24	May 1833
4	25	June 1833
4	26	July 1833
4	27	August 1833
4	28	September–October 1833
4	29	November 1833
4	30	December 1833

Box	Folder	Description
5	1	Correspondence, January 1834
5	2	February 1834
5	3	March 1834
5	4	April 1834
5	5	May 1834
5	6	June 1834
5	7	July 1834
5	8	August 1834
5	9	September–October 1834
5	10	November 1834
5	11	December 1834
5	12	January 1835
5	13	February 1835
5	14	March–April 1835
5	15	May–June 1835
5	16	July–August 1835
5	17	September 1835
5	18	October–November 1835
5	19	December 1835
5	20	January 1836
5	21	February–March 1836
5	22	April–May 1836
5	23	June–July 1836
5	24	August 1836

5	25	September 1836
5	26	October–November 1836
5	27	December 1836

Box	Folder	Description
6	1	Correspondence, January 1837
6	2	February–March 1837
6	3	April–May 1837
6	4	June 1837
6	5	July 1837
6	6	August 1837
6	7	September 1837
6	8	October–December 1837
6	9	January 1838
6	10	February–March 1838
6	11	May–July 1838
6	12	August–December 1838
6	13	July–December 1839
6	14	Miscellaneous Charts and Correspondence, undated.
6	15	Manuscript volume. “Chronological Account of Amherst in New Hampshire. John Farmer. Undated.
6	16	Memorandum Book (misc. subject matter). John Farmer. ca. 1835
6	17	<i>Address of the Hingham Temperance Society on the Evil Effects of Intemperance.</i> Printed by John Farmer. 1832
6	18	<i>An Enquiry Into the State of the Farm.</i> Author unknown. 1808
6	19	<i>Considerations on the Embargo Laws.</i> Daniel Webster. 1808
6	20	<i>Third Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the New Hampshire Temperance Society.</i> Author unknown. 1831

Box 6 – Bound Volumes

- Volume 1. *Memoirs of the Graduates of Harvard College From 1642: Containing those who graduated from the year 1642 to 1678, Vol. 1,* by John Farmer.
- Volume 2. *Notes for Memoirs of the Graduates of Harvard College From 1642: Containing those who graduated from 1679 to 1707, Vol. 2,* by John Farmer.
- Volume 3. *Graduates of Harvard College From 1642: From A.D. 1707 to 1724, Volume 3,* by John Farmer.
- Volume 4. *Memoirs of the Graduates of Harvard College From the Year 1642: Containing those from 1725 to 1738, Vol. 4,* by John Farmer.
- Volume 5. *Memoirs of the Graduates of Harvard College, From the Year 1642: Containing those from the year 1738 to 1753, Vol. 5,* by John Farmer.
- Volume 6. *Memoirs of the Graduates of Harvard College: Containing the Graduates from 1754 to 1760, Vol. 6,* by John Farmer.
- Volume 7. *Memoirs of the Graduates of Harvard College From 1642: Containing the classes of 1760, 1762, & 1763, Vol. 7,* by John Farmer.
- Volume 8. “Appraisal of Property of John Farmer, deceased, as made by Messrs. Charles Hutchins, Gardner P. Lyon & J. B. Moore, 29 Aug. 1838.”

II. Separation Record

The following items have been removed from the collection of John Farmer Papers, and are housed in the Special Collections flat storage for oversize items.

1. Certificate making John Farmer of Concord, NH, an honorary member of the Rhode Island Historical Society. July 19, 1831.
2. Certificate making John Farmer a member of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquities, Copenhagen, Denmark. July 30, 1838.
3. Farmer family bible record (one page). Undated.
4. A list of Congregational Ministers in the County of Hillsborough from 1685 to 1823. (see Oversize manuscript Box F).