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Guide to the John Godfrey Saxe Collection 1857-1875



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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Citation	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope Note	4
Related Resources	4
Subject Headings	4
INVENTORY	4

Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.SAXEJG
Title	Saxe, John Godfrey. Collection
Date	1857-1875
Size	0.25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	John Godfrey Saxe (1816 –1887) American poet. The Collection contains correspondence between Saxe and Edward Salisbury Dana, an American mineralogist and physicist, and Edmund Clarence Stedman, a fellow American poet and scientist. The letters are dated 1857-1875.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Saxe, John Godfrey. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

John Godfrey Saxe was born on June 2, 1816, in Highgate, Vermont. He was born on his family's farm, Saxe's Mills, to Peter Saxe, a miller and judge, and Elizabeth Jewett. In 1835, Saxe went to Wesleyan University. After only a year, he transferred to Middlebury College, where he graduated in 1839. In 1841, he married Sophia Newell Sollace, whom Saxe had met through a classmate. Together they had a son, John Theodore Saxe.

In 1843, Saxe was admitted to the Vermont bar association. Saxe continued to work in the legal field in Franklin County. In 1850, he became the state's attorney for Chittenden County. From 1850-1856, Saxe served as the editor of the Sentinel in Burlington, Vermont, and in 1856, he served as the attorney-general of Vermont. Legal work did not hold Saxe's attention through this period, however. He began publishing poems for a literary magazine in New York, The Knickerbocker. His poems gained the attention of a Boston publishing house, Ticknor and Fields, and his first volume of poetry ran for ten reprintings.

Saxe became a highly-sought after speaker. He toured and wrote prolifically throughout the 1850s. In 1859, Saxe ran for governor of Vermont. He lost due to his Democratic leaning, particularly on issues of slavery and his support of “popular sovereignty.” Following his defeat, he left Vermont for Albany, New York, in 1860, where he continued to contribute articles for Harper’s, The Atlantic, and The Knickerbocker.

The death of his oldest brother in 1867 made Saxe’s already unsteady temperament even more erratic. His son took control of the family’s finances and business interests. Starting the 1870s, Saxe experiences a series of unfortunate events. In the earlier part of the decade, his youngest daughter died of tuberculosis. In 1875, he suffered head injuries from which he never fully recovered. Over the next several years, his two oldest daughters, his oldest son, and his daughter-in-law also died of tuberculosis. In 1879, his wife died from a burst blood vessel in her brain. Saxe began to suffer from a deep depression. Saxe eventually died in 1887. The New York State Assembly, sympathizing with the poet’s swift decline, ordered Saxe’s likeness to be chiseled into the “poet’s corner” of the Great Western Staircase in the New York State Capitol.

Scope Note

The John Godfrey Saxe Collection contains five letters written by Saxe. The letters are addressed to Edward Salisbury Dana (1849-1935), an American mineralogist and physicist, and Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833-1908), a fellow American poet and scientist. The letter to Stedman is printed on paper bearing Saxe’s monogram. Some of the letters are undated, but all are believed to date from 1857 to 1875.

The collection was previously part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/scrc/findingaids/topics.php>

Subject Headings

- Saxe, John Godfrey, 1816-1887
- Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 1833-1908
- Dana, Edward Salibury, 1849-1935
-
-
- Poets, American
-
-

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

John Godfrey Saxe to E.S. Dana, 1857-1860

- Letter, May 21, 1857
- Letter, July 13, 1860
- Letter, September 20, 1860
- Letter, Wednesday Morning, undated

Box 1

Folder 2

John Godfrey Saxe to Edmund Clarence Stedman, November 23, 1875