Guide to the James Alexander Houston Incoming correspondence, 1845-1849

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Guide to the James Alexander Houston Incoming correspondence, 1845-1849

Collection number: M1171

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Houston, James Alexander. Incoming correspondence,
Date (inclusive): 1845-1849
Collection number: M1171
Creator: Houston, James Alexander.
Extent: .5 linear ft. (1 manuscript box)
Repository: Stanford University. Libraries. Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives.
Abstract: The collection includes incoming letters sent to James Alexander Houston, a medical doctor, the son and brother of Irish clergymen, and an emigrant from Ireland to the United States before 1845. Familiar with the Pitman method of stenography, Houston reported for both New York and Washington, D.C., newspapers. He had good friends in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, including Gamaliel Bailey and Louis Tappan.
Language: English.
Access Restrictions
None.
Publication Rights
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Acquisition Information
Preferred Citation
Biography
Much of what we know of this interesting man must be deduced from the letters he received from 1845 to 1849, and from resorting to the Encyclopedia Britannica. From the former source, we know, for example, that he was a medical doctor, the son and brother of Irish clergymen, and an emigré from Ireland to the United States during some period before 1845. Familiar with the Pitman method of stenography, Houston reported for both New York and Washington, D.C., newspapers. He had good friends in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, including Gamaliel Bailey and Louis Tappan.
system, which was used by Samuel Pepys in his Diaries of 1660. However, stenography reached its developmental zenith in England in the nineteenth century with the publication of Isaac Pitman’s method in 1837, which swept the British Isles and America, as well. One of its early uses was the verbatim transcription of clerical sermons for publication. Another was verbatim reporting for newspapers of the day. It was little wonder then that Houston found more work as a shorthand reporter than as Assistant Surgeon of the New York State Militia. The concession of vast amounts of land to the United States after the Mexican War (1848) rekindled the slavery question. Newly elected President Polk, whose views were expressed by the Union newspaper in Washington, D.C., publicly urged Congress to create Oregon, New Mexico, and California as territories, whereupon anti-slavery Congressmen persuaded Democratic Congressman David Wilmot, from Pennsylvania to add an amendment to a $2 million appropriation bill for boundary settlement. The "Wilmot Proviso" stipulated that slavery should not exist in any part of the territory acquired by the United States as a result of the Mexican War. Several times the House passed the amendment but it failed in the Senate. Yet it stimulated active debate between slavery proponents and anti-slavery forces. Throughout the electric days of 1846-47, Houston, the official Stenographer to the U. S. Senate, was kept busy reporting and publishing them in Houston’s Journal. Testimonials to his ability and accuracy rained on Houston from Congressmen and the leading eastern newspapers of the day. Dr. Houston also found work on the New York Herald, founded in 1845. In Washington D. C., he reported for the Union, for George Gideon’s Republic, and the Era, where he became close friends with its publisher, Gamaliel Bailey. The Era was the organ of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which began publication in 1844. Houston was also a friend of Louis Tappan, a major figure in anti-slavery ranks and a publisher (co-founder with his brother Arthur of the Journal of Commerce in 1827, and the Emancipator in 1833). Houston divided his time between between Washington and New York depending on the sessions of the Senate, moving in the circles of well known individuals of his time and place-political figures, judges, publishers. However, something seems to have occurred at the end of 1849, when he moves out of the Era offices one step ahead of the sheriff who arrives to attach his belongings for what appears to be a debt. He goes back to New York (see letter of December 12, 1849, from James W. Simonton). Perhaps his debt was settled, for the last letters of 1849, have him successfully applying to George Gideon for work to be sent to Washington D. C.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

The collection mainly contains letters to James Alexander Houston from 1845-1849, with a few published testimonials, and autographs of Horace Greeley, George Gideon, Charles A. Dana, and one or two others. The letters are arranged in numerical sequence for the years 1845 to 1949, and by day and month within the sequence of years. A fairly large number of the letters are undated and are filed at the end, with some dates suggested from the context of the letters. All letters are indexed and synopsized.

Access Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

Bailey, Gamaliel.
Tappan, Louis.
American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.
United States--History--1815-1861.

Box 1, Folder 1


Scope and Content Note

Please accept more money. The amount enclosed is according to Mr. "S's" orders. Sent to JAH with assurance that Mr. Bennett would see that JAH received the letter.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Morris, Henry
Bennett,[James Gordon]
New York Herald
Box 1, Folder 2  William [Inche ?], New York, to JAH in care of N.Y. Herald office 1845 Feb. 3
Scope and Content Note
Inche, a friend, asks JAH to find him a job. He is at the Alms House, Bellevue, N.Y.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Inche, William
New York Herald

Box 1, Folder 3  [J. A. Houston?] 1845 Dec. 19
Scope and Content Note
Partial note
Subjects and Indexing Terms
[J.A Houston ?]

Box 1, Folder 4  Henry [Thompson?] to JAH 1846 July 10
Scope and Content Note
He will prepare remarks on "Graduation Bill" for the Union.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
[Thompson?], Henry
The Union

Box 1, Folder 5  J. C. Houston, Ballymena, Ireland, to JAH 1846, July 23
Scope and Content Note
Mixed longhand and shorthand pertaining to family matters.
Added note in unknown hand "Dr J A Houston had three brothers, John Clarke, Gareth, {both} clergymen, Robert, was a Captain of Marines, U.S. Navy. [JAh] had one sister, Eliza Jane.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Houston, J. C.

Box 1, Folder 6  W. Hunt, House of Representatives, to JAH 1847 Feb. 4
Scope and Content Note
Testimonial to JAH's transcription ability.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Hunt, W.
House of Representatives

Box 1, Folder 7  C. J. Ingersole, House of Representatives, to JAH 1847 Feb. 4
Scope and Content Note
Testimonial to JAH's transcription ability.
Added note in unknown hand says Ingersole was a U.S. Senator [U. S. Congressman ?] and former Governor of Connecticut.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Ingersole, C. J.
House of Representatives

Box 1, Folder 8  M. S. Payne, Rep Hall, to JAH 1847 Feb. 4
Scope and Content Note
Testimonial to JAH's transcription ability.
Added note in an unknown hand, 'Ohio.'
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Payne, M. S.
Box 1, Folder 9  
**George Aikman, House of Representatives, to JAH**  
1847 Feb. 4

Scope and Content Note
Testimonial to JAH’s transcription ability.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Aikman, George
House of Representatives

Box 1, Folder 10  
**Ben E. Green, Washington D. C., to JAH**, as "Reporter for The Union"  
1847 Feb. 25

Scope and Content Note
Green understands JAH is being considered for shorthand reportorial functions for the Senate, but calls JAH's attention to the mistakes in a recent transcription of his speech in The Union, relative to "Mr. Marks. Asks that they be corrected in tonight's Union or he will be obliged to tell the Senate that JAH is not to be depended on.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Green, Ben E.
The Union newspaper

Box 1, Folder 11  
**G. B. Bailey, Washington, D. C., to JAH**  
1847 Mar. 28

Scope and Content Note
Instructs JAH to send a weekly letter/editorial to the Era.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Bailey, G. B.
The Era newspaper

Box 1, Folder 12  
**G. Bailey, Washington D. C., to JAH**  
1847 April 16

Scope and Content Note
Commends JAH on his letters to the Era.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Bailey, G.
The Era

Box 1, Folder 13  
**R. C. Wetmore to JAH**, Broadway [NY ?]  
1847 Apr. 21

Scope and Content Note
Please call for money due on charges for reporting the "Festival." Thanks very much.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Wetmore, R. C.

Box 1, Folder 14  
**G. Bailey, Washington, D. C., to JAH**  
1847 Jun. 3

Scope and Content Note
Bailey is pleased with letter for the Era from JAH. How would JAH like to do a column for the Era?

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Bailey, G.
The Era newspaper

Box 1, Folder 15  
**J. Marshall, New York, to JAH**  
1847 Jun 7

Scope and Content Note
The Graefenberg Health Manual is delayed and will not be published until some later time.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Graefenberg Company, 50 Broadway, New York
Box 1, Folder 15  
**J. Marshall, New York, to JAH1847 Jun 7**

Scope and Content Note
Qwing to a temporary misunderstanding we have to delay the publication of the Graefenberg Health Manual.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Marshall, J.
Graefenberg Company, 50 Broadway, New York
Graefenberg Heath Manual

Box 1, Folder 16  
**Clarke Houston, Ballybarkey, Ireland, to JAH, "Stenographer to U.S. Senate"1847 Aug. 24**

Scope and Content Note
Clarke Houston [father of James Alexander Houston] writes of family matters. Also reccomends "Mr. Peake", and hopes JAH can be of service to Mr Peake.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Houston, Clarke
The Era newspaper

Box 1, Folder 18  
**Eliza Houston, Ballymena, Ireland, to JAH 1847 Aug 25**

Scope and Content Note
Family matters
Added in unknown hand: " J's mother"

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Houston, Eliza

Box 1, Folder 19  
**Simon Harker, Liverpool, to JAH1847 Sept. 3**

Scope and Content Note
Harker saw JAH's ad in The Union for a reporter for the next session of the U. S. Senate, and wants to apply. Cites his qualifications.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Harker, Simon
The Union newspaper
The Liverpool Journal

Box 1, Folder 20  
**W.W. Veaho, Ballymena, Ireland, to JAH 1847 Sept. 3**

Scope and Content Note
Asks JAH to help his son, Henry, if he comes to America.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Henry Veaho

Box 1, Folder 21  
**Thomas DeWitt, New York, to JAH1847 Oct. 30**

Scope and Content Note
States that his sermon does not represent the discourse as delivered. Phraseaology is different. But h:e considers it well done in "full sketch."

Subjects and Indexing Terms
New York, settlement by Dutch, 1624.
Sermons in Dutch and in English.
Box 1, Folder 22  
**Prosper Wetmore, New York, to JAH 1847 Dec. 13**

Scope and Content Note
Wetmore says he is sorry not to have answered JAH's letter before. Is happy to be of service. Does not know what vacancies exist [in the Navy ?], but JAH can probably find out from the Navy Department.

Added note in unknown hand says Wetmore is the U.S. Navy agent for the Nicaragua Steamship Line.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Nicaragua Steamship Line

Box 1, Folder 23  
**John C. Fitzpatrick to JAH, "reporter to the U.S. Senate." 1847 Dec. 24**

Scope and Content Note
Fitzpatrick makes an index of the sessions of the Senate for JAH. For a "consideration" he will make a copy for JAH

Box 1, Folder 24  
**W. L. Shuttleworth, Washington D. C. (U.S. Hotel), to JAH 1848 Jan 8**

Scope and Content Note
He is returning JAH's shawl.

Box 1, Folder 25  
**D. Pope. New York, to JAH 1848 Jan 15**

Scope and Content Note
Discusses the cost of various papers in various amounts.

Box 1, Folder 26  
**Charles E. Ball to JAH 1848 Jan. 20**

Scope and Content Note
Salutation calls JAH "Bro. Houston." Writer sends JAH "rough sketch" of proceedings of District 10, presumably for publication.

Box 1, Folder 27  
**John Clarke Houston, Newcastle-on-Tyne, to JAH 1848 Feb. 16**

Scope and Content Note
John Clarke Houston, JAH's brother, discusses family matters. Refers to "Joseph" and their brother, Robert. Mentions JAH is to visit them soon.

Box 1, Folder 28  
**Hon. James W. Bradbury to William Johnson. 1848 March 9**

Scope and Content Note
Writer wishes to know, from JAH, answers to questions on how many words he can write in a minute while "following a speaker," what amount of practic is needed to reach that level of proficiency, can a shorthand manuscript be used with the same facility as it were written, and what are the comparative merits of stenography and phonography, and which does JAH use?

Added note in unknown hand says that either James W. Bradbury [or Wm T. Johnson] is from Middlesex Connecticut, is a law reporter (1770 to 1848), and is on the Supreme Court.

Box 1, Folder 29  
**Mr [Steit ?] to JAH 1848 March 22**

Scope and Content Note
Testimonial to his ability evidenced in recent report.
Box 1, Folder 30

[person], Cincinnatti, to JAH 1848 Jun. 26

Scope and Content Note
Regrets JAH did not attend convention. "It has decided Ohio against Taylor." Slavery versus anti-slavery politics discussion.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Zachary Taylor
Martin Van Buren
Slavery
Anti-slavery
Ohio

Box 1, Folder 31

[Henry ?] O’Riellly, Washington, to JAH 1848 Jul. 30

Scope and Content Note
Please accept the enclosed certificates.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Telegraph System

Box 1, Folder 32


Scope and Content Note
Please arrange to buy writer the "London Encyclopedia (English edition)". Get it for $25 or less. Writer will send JAH a draft on H. O’Rielly.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Thomas Cowperthwaite, Philadelphia

Box 1, Folder 33

W. A. Kennedy, Washington, D. C., to JAH 1848 Oct. 27

Scope and Content Note
Don’t pay your recent foreman, "Wilkinson", as he is in debt to writer. He also appropriated money from "Laurens" also in JAH employee, and used it for his own use.

Box 1, Folder 34

G. Bailey, Washington D. C., to JAH 1848 Nov. 7

Scope and Content Note
Discussion of money owed and accounting matters.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
The Era newspaper

Box 1, Folder 35

Joseph W. Dennis, New York, to G. Bailey 1848 Nov. 9

Scope and Content Note
Charged JAH for more bundles of papers that the man got from JAH

Box 1, Folder 36

S., D. Figham, New Hope, to JAH, Washington D.C. 1848 Nov 20

Scope and Content Note
Thank you for the U.S. Senate report.

Box 1, Folder 37

David [Sessions?], to JAH 1848 Nov. 24

Scope and Content Note
Am sending another manuscript.
Box 1, Folder 38  James W, Simonton, Washington, to JAH 1848 Dec. 12

Scope and Content Note
Simonton reports that Mt. Rives says "Wheeler & Miles need no help until after the holidays. " Fowler & Leeds have no engagement." "The Union has contracted with M. Parkhurst of Boston." Simonton "has done his best to remove prejudice against you in Washington." He will dispose of JAH's thing from the Era office. He offers his services to JAH.

Added note in an unknown hand states Simonton is a noted newsman of the time.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Wheeler and Miles
Fowler and Leeds
M. Parkhurst
The Union newspaper
The Era newspaper

Box 1, Folder 39  Anthony [Bantry?] New York, to JAH 1848 Dec. 14

Scope and Content Note
Writer will come late to New York Scottish Guard Ball.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
New York Scottish Guard

Box 1, Folder 40  G.B Moss, Washington, D. C., to JAH

Scope and Content Note
Writer is certain that their differences can be ironed out in an interview.

Box 1, Folder 41  James W. Simonton, Washington, D. C., to JAH 1848 Dec. 31

Scope and Content Note
All of JAH's books will be sent by express to New York. Writer will send accounts and disbursements. Please write if you are disposed to.

Box 1, Folder 42  G. Bailey, Washington D.C., to JAH?[?] 1848

Scope and Content Note
A sheriff came to the office to attach JAH's things. Wilkinson had eloped with Henry's money, and is now in New York City, at Mckay, 120 Prince Street. Bailey has guaranteed everything till JAH comes or answers at once. JAH's documents are in danger. JAH also ows bailey $191. The draft will reach Bailey at the Merchants Bank, New York.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Wilkinson
The Era newspaper

Box 1, Folder 43  JAH Accounts, January to September, 1848

Scope and Content Note
List of JAH accounts re paper and labor, January to September 1848
Box 1, Folder 44  
**Thomas Macaulay, Belfast, Ireland, to JAH**

**Scope and Content Note**

Chides JAH jocularly for having "repeatedly neglected to show me any kindness." Congratulates JAH on his work. Says Francis Finlay, the Whig. . . "speaks very harshly of Bennett" who, in a visit to Ireland, "allowed himself to be rejected by [ John] O'Connell."

Subjects and Indexing Terms

[James Gordon] Bennett
Francis Finlay
[John] O'Connell
The New York Herald

Box 1, Folder 45  
**William C. Lantzinger , Washington D.C., to JAH 1849 February 9**

**Scope and Content Note**

Remarks that a Couriers Passport would not do much for JAH. The rules for individuals bearing despatches are strict about proceeding directly to the destination.

Box 1, Folder 46  
**John Bryant, Washington D.C., to JAH, New York 1849 Mar 15**

**Scope and Content Note**

John Bryant, Jr., Treasurer of the 4th Presbyterian Church, writes JAH notifying him that he is in arrears in his pew rent.

Box 1, Folder 47  
**Charles B. Spicer, Colonel, New York , to JAH Lexington Ave and 26th Street, New York 1849 Mar 14**

**Scope and Content Note**

Regimental order naming James Alexander Houston to be Assistant Surgeon of the Second Regiment, New York State Militia. Note in unknown hand names the Adjutant signing the order to be William [Postty?], and makes mention that [Eugene Alex ?]

Houston was commissioned by Governor Cleveland to be Assist. Surgeon of 4th [__?__] Co. , N. Y. S. N. Y., 1880

Subjects and Indexing Terms

William C. [Postty ?]
New York State Militia, Second Regiment

Box 1, Folder 48  
**H. M. Garland, Jr., Baltimore, to JAH, Washington D.C. 1849 Mar 16**

**Scope and Content Note**

In the interest of speeding up work he may move his office to Washington,D. C. which is at the end of the "Northern Line" and the end of the "Southern Line" [telegraph line ?]. Could he not join JAH as a reporter from either Washington or Baltimore for the next session of Congress?

Subjects and Indexing Terms

America [Packet Ship]
The New York Herald

Box 1, Folder 49  
**G. Bailey, Washington, D.C., to JAH. 1849 Apr 4**

**Scope and Content Note**

Writer asks if JAH is going to Europe this spring, and has he decided the that the writer can do JAH's work in his absence ?

Subjects and Indexing Terms

The Era newspaper
Box 1, Folder 50  David [Seveves ?], Washinton, D. C. to JAH1849 May 24
Scope and Content Note
Informs JAH that the suit is won in Lee vs Houston, and renders his bill.

Box 1, Folder 51  S. B. Wylie, Philadelphia, to JAH1849 May 29
Scope and Content Note
Friend of JAH's father requests JAH intercede to arrange for discharge of an Irish boy, Samuel Smith, who joined the marines and now wants a discharge.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Hugh Smith
Samuel Smith

Box 1, Folder 52  Geo A. Gideon, Washington D. C., to JAH. New York1849 Jun 5
Scope and Content Note
Writer requests JAH to tell him what he expects to pay for "a letter every day"? Hurry, "we commence on June 13."

Box 1, Folder 53  Geo. A. Gideon, Washington D. C., to JAH1849 Jun 9
Scope and Content Note
Writer accepts terms ($10/week) and, "you must give us the first letter for Wednesday morning's paper so it must reach here by Tuesday evening."

Box 1, Folder 54  Wm. C. Lantzinger to JAH, New York1849 Jun 22
Scope and Content Note
JAH in arrears for membership of Masonic Lodge. Writer placed JAH's case before members and was selected to arrange application for JAH to renew his membership.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Masonic Lodge, New York

Box 1, Folder 55  Geo A. Gideon, Washington D. C., to JAH, New York1849 Jun 28
Scope and Content Note
Gideon reminds JAH not to forget the steamship letter. Plus Gideon sends him a check for his letters.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
The Republic newspaper

Box 1, Folder 56  Greeley, Horace, New York, to Russell Sturgis, London1858 Jun 14
Scope and Content Note
Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune introduces friends W.E, Robinson and R. M. Mellis who will visit "on a mission of the 'highest respectability."
Subjects and Indexing Terms
[B______?] Brothers, London, England
New York Tribune