

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the New York State Agricultural Society Records, 1792-1856

Summary Information

Repository

Albany Institute of History & Art Library

Creator

New York State Agricultural Society

Title

New York State Agricultural Society, Records, 1792-1856

Identifier

DH 566

Date

1792-1856

Physical Description

1 linear foot; 1 Hollinger box

Physical Location

The materials are located onsite in the Museum.

Language of the Material

English

Abstract

Organized in 1832, the New York State Agricultural Society was formed to bring farmers together to share their ideas, techniques, and experiences. At that time, New York was an agrarian state, leading the nation in agricultural production. One of the predecessors of this society formed in 1791, was The Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures, which eventually became the Albany Institute of History & Art.

The New York State Agricultural Society has played a vital role in New York. Among other initiatives, the society played an instrumental role in establishing the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in the 1860s, established and managed the New York State

Fair for nearly sixty years, and promoted and formed numerous food and agriculture-related organizations.

This collection contains essays on topics including terrestrial magnetism, whitewash, French agricultural techniques, dyes and paints, machines, and hat making, 1795-1840; and letters discussing agricultural processes, machines, and animal medicine, 1792-1810, from James Wight, John Watkins, Reuben Hopkins, Samuel Mitchell, Robert Johnston, and Andrew Billings.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

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None.

Restrictions on Use

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Processing Information

Processed by A. Kutryb; completed June 2008. Finding aid updated May 2020.

Biographical/Historical

The first agricultural society formed in New York State was The Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures, begun in 1791, which would eventually become the Albany Institute of History & Art in 1829. At that time, some members felt that a strictly agricultural society was still necessary, and organized the New York State Agricultural Society as a private, volunteer membership society in 1832.

The first president was James Le Ray de Chaumont from Jefferson County, with Jesse Buel serving as the secretary. The Society aimed to “improve the condition of agriculture, horticulture, and the household arts,” very similar to their intent today to “foster, promote, and improve the New York State Food and Agriculture industry through education, leadership development, and recognition programs.”

Within a few years of forming the New York State Agricultural Society had two publications: *the Cultivator*, which became *the Country Gentleman*, and *Transactions of the New York Agricultural Society*. *The Cultivator* and its later iterations were monthly publications dealing with farming, gardening, and a section on entertaining reading, such as new book excerpts. *Transactions of the New York Agricultural Society*, published on a yearly basis, provided detailed information from each year’s fair, the Society’s activities, and information on agricultural experiments from across the world.

Following a reorganization in 1841, the New York State Agricultural Society, one important aim was to work with the Legislature to provide money for state fairs. The Legislature passed a bill allotting \$8,000 per year for five years (distributed across both the Society and each county). This led to the first New York State Fair, held in Syracuse on September 29 and 30, 1841. The Society continued to hold the State Fair each year until 1899, when the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets began running it. They also lobbied for state aid for county agricultural societies and fairs, and the creation of an agricultural college.

The society meets yearly to present awards, conduct business, and share a forum on agricultural trends and innovations. (from Boardman, Kathryn. *New York State Agricultural Society*. The Encyclopedia of New York State. Syracuse University Press: 2005.)

Scope and Contents

This collection contains miscellaneous items regarding the New York State Agricultural Society and their work such as growing vegetables, wheat production, and scientific essays and studies. Also included are plowing techniques, and letters of correspondence among members. Essay topics include plowing techniques, oil abundance, clover types, the drill plow, wheat, hay, hat making, soda nitrate, the whalebone, manganese, Asiatic Society, United States population, wood preservation, and the climate. Letter topics consist of sheep, ox sled, winter graft, crop production, plant husbandry, manure, wheat and the activities of the Agricultural Society. Scientific data cover a variety of topics such as weather observations, meteorological data, the ocean, chemical composition of bronze, classes of salamander, and the observations of the rattlesnake.

Contents List

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

Description

Box Folder

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| <p>1) Invention of a new sleigh by Frederick Frey; with a pictorial diagram by Col. John Beardslee (1 page in four parts).</p> <p>2) Tale of Captain John Endecott [later governor of the Massachusetts Bay settlement destroying a May-pole and other events at Merry Mount around 1628-1629.] Two excerpts are included. One from <i>Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay</i> by Jacob Bailey Moore, 1851. The other excerpt is from <i>Twice Told Tales</i> by Nathaniel Hawthorne, unknown edition. This story of The May-pole of Merry Mount was first published in <i>Token</i> in 1836 (two handwritten pages, and one typewritten page with a portion of line 8 to line 13 of page 2 on it).</p> <p>3) Essay on terrestrial magnetism explaining it's physical principles and applications in lengthy detail; includes observations on this subject by scientific scholars.</p> <p>4) Description of the crustacean (Genus <i>Brong artia</i>) and its unique characteristics by James Eights. A Jonathan Eights was active in the Society around 1814 and after.</p> <p>5) Preservation of fences and outhouses through the whitewashing process.</p> <p>6) The purpose and duties of New York State Agricultural Society expressed in a petition to the New York State Legislature in a request for a more liberal support (2 copies). Full name is given as Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures, instituted in the State of New York, circa 1794-1804.</p> | <p>1</p> <p>1</p> |
| <p>1) Description of plowing and pasturing techniques by M. DeChancer, Mayor of Lyons, France.</p> <p>2) An essay on Gallium Tinctorium, a vegetable substance used as red dye for wood [wool] by James (?). An article, "On the Properties of Gallium Tinctorium," by James Woodhouse was published in the revised edition of the 1801 Transactions, part 4, pages 367-337.</p> <p>3) A comparison and contrast of plowing methods used by American and European farmers by [M. Patterson].</p> <p>4) An essay on the decay of woods and forests with a focus on nutritional problems leading to their ruination [Labagan May].</p> <p>5) A treatise on the economic advantage of clearing bushes and shrubs by James G Graham. James G. Graham was an author of an article on protecting seed corn in the revised edition of the 1801 <i>Transactions</i>, Part III, pages 256-257.</p> <p>6) An essay on the abundance of oil and lead for painting by Pzru Lttommed. An Ezra L'Hommedieu was first vice-president of the Society and wrote many articles in the revised edition of the 1801 <i>Transactions</i>.</p> | <p>1</p> <p>2</p> |

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| <p>1) An essay on the use of hops through history and its agricultural preparation by Labigarre. Peter La Labigarre was author of four articles published in the 1801 revised edition of <i>Transactions</i>, pages 152-158, 159-162, 187-191, and 394-418.</p> <p>2) An essay on the cultivation of Esparette and Luzerne, two types of clover, (illegible). Note: Robert R. Livingston (President of the Society) wrote an article on Lucerne clover that was published in <i>Transactions</i>, Part Two, 1792-1799, pages 65-91.</p> <p>3) An essay on the domestication of the elk and wolf [moose] by Chancellor Robert Livingston. Note: Livingston also wrote an article in <i>Transactions</i> on Elk and Moose, Part Four, 1799.</p> <p>4) An essay on manure by Livingston. Note: Livingston also wrote an article on manure in <i>Transactions</i>, Part Four, pages 60-66.</p> <p>5) A structural analysis of a thrashing machine owned by James Tod. James Tod was a tenant of the Duke of Buccleugh. Constructed by Chap. Umpherston upon the estate of Sir John Clarke of (?) in Scotland.</p> <p>6) An essay on the advantages and disadvantages of a drill plow.</p> | <p>1 3</p> |
| <p>1) Questions about sheep drawn up by John Sinclair (circular) 1p. broadside. Printed in Whitehall, London, May 15, 1792.</p> <p>2) Letter from Ebenezer Belknap to President of the Society (Livingston) on the value of the mulberry tree for silk products, November 20, 1792.</p> <p>3) Letter from John Porteus to Doctor Samuel Latham Mitchell, [Mitchill], Columbia College, Secretary of the Society concerning the improvement of an ox sled, October 13, 1794.</p> <p>4) Letter to the Agricultural Society at the Senate Chamber from James Wright concerning an improved thrashing machine, February 23, 1795.</p> <p>5) Letter to Doc. S.L. Mitchell, secretary of the Agriculture society from John Watkins on the physical characteristics of winter graft and also on the wild pea, January 7, 1798.</p> <p>6) Letter to Robert R. Livingston, President of the Agricultural Society of the State of New York, from Reuben Hopkins explaining the protection of crops, March 2, 1796.</p> | <p>1 4</p> |
| <p>1) Letter to the President of the Society, (Livingston) from Samuel L. Mitchell on white (?) clover, March 19, 1796.</p> <p>2) Letter to Samuel L. Mitchell from Amos (Kaermhin) on worms and or houseflies and Chrysalis milkweed. A note on the back of the sheet indicates the subject is the transformation of insects, March 7, 1798.</p> <p>3) Letter to Robert R. Livingston from Robert Johnston [Johnson] about the location of marle, a substance used in manure preparation, January 30, 1799.</p> <p>4) An article from the <i>Journal de Physique</i> in 1798 on the effects of oxygenium in the acceleration of seed germination. Communicated by Robert R. Livingston and read to the Society, February 27, 1799. See</p> | <p>1 5</p> |

letter published in the revised edition of the 1801 *Transactions*, p. 340-341, February 27, 1799.

5) From Robert Johnson. Comments and explanations on the growth of wheat through nitre. Read to the Society, February 27, 1799. See article published in the revised edition of the 1801 *Transactions*, page 342, February 27, 1799.

6) To Robert Livingston from Dr. Recketson of Dutchess]County. On the cultivation of the poppy plant. See article in the revised edition of the 1801 *Transactions*, pages 264-265 by Dr. Ricketson, March 9, 1799.

1) A letter to Robert R. Livingston from Andrew Billings of Poughkeepsie about the death of his horse from worms known as bots. Livingston wrote about bots worms in *Transactions*, Part Four, 1799, page, 174-178. or 1801 revised edition of *Transactions*, 391-392. Note: this letter is spilt into two parts, November 22,1799.

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2) A broadside distributed to the farmers of Massachusetts by John Lowell, President of the Agricultural Society of Massachusetts. Printed in Boston, January 1800.

3) Letter to the President from M. DeMonchatte on unusual specimens of wheat from Sicily, January 20, 1800.

4) The fattening of swine and hogs and its planting of lettuce between rows of potatoes, March 19, 1800.

5) Letter to the Society from Robert Johnson [Johnston]. Difference in the volume of iron manufacturing in various American cities, April 2, 1800.

6) Names of the members of the Agricultural Society elected in the year 1801 (20 names given). List of members elected in the year 1802. (21 names given, these names seem to be different from the 1801 list), 1801-1802.

1) From Ezra Hermodien. An essay on winter and summer blends of wheat. Note: in *Transactions* 1807, an Ezra L'Hommedieu is listed, February 24, 1802.

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2) Communicated by J (?) Langer. An essay on the growing of hay through the use of slat [salt], March 27, 1802.

3) A letter from K.K. Van Rensselaer to David Abbey requesting payment of \$125 for rent from May 1, 1809 to May 1, 1810 for a house in Maiden Lane in Albany, May 1, 1810.

4) Letter to Mr. Poindexter written anonymously, seeks payment of a debt owed by David Abbey, a carpenter, May 17, 1810.

5) Report by Charles [D.] Cooper, Treasurer of the Society for the Promotion of the Useful Arts. Total of \$1270.48. Signed by Isaac Hutton, Jacob Green, and George Webster, February 17, 1814.

6) The process of hat making through an explanation of the use of furs and chemicals, by Mr. Mayele, Jul 24, 1824.

- 1) By H.[R.] Beck. The origin of soda nitrate's usage, Oct. 13, 1824. T. 1 8
 Romeyn Beck was vice-president of the Albany Institute in 1824. See page 19 of the *Albany Institute of Art and History, 200 Years of Collecting*.
- 2) From John Shaw to M.H. Webster. The use of whalebone in the prevention of evaporation of spirits, March 2, 1824.
- 3) From D. McKercher. An essay on Manganese, March 2, 1825.
- 4) A table exhibiting the variation of the compass in Boston, 1672-1800, April 27, 1825.
- 5) By M.H. Webster. Translation of a report on insects to the French Institute by Cuirer, February 15, 1826.
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- 1) Translation by R.V. DeWitt of Baron Sylvestre De Saey's address before the Asiatic Society of Paris. This address was on the establishment and importance of the society, April 19, 1826. 1 9
- 2) Meteorological Table for the year 1826, kept for Cambridge, Washington County, New York by Mr. (illegible), 1827.
- 3) By Lieut. Thomas R. Ingalls of the US Army. Some observations on the luminous appearances of the ocean, March 26, 1828.
- 4) By Mr. McKercher. The chemical composition of Bronze and its various chemical forms, April 25, 1827.
- 5) Made by James Eights. A table of observations using a thermometer, in the South Atlantic Ocean, December 1829.
- 6) By Jacob Green, M.D. In a letter on the various classes of salamanders, June 7, 1830.
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- 1) By W. H. Fondey. Comparative Population of the United States from 1790 to 1830, with an estimate for 1840, 1830's. 1 10
- 2) By Richard Taylor, civil engineer. Report on extracting bituminous coal and comments on its supply near Blossberg, Tioga County, Pennsylvania, 1856 [1832].
- 3) By Dr. E. (?) Jewell Semell. A reading on observations on rattlesnakes in the Lake George area, Warren County, and its effects on farm animals, February 20, 1840.
- 4) Observations presented to the society. Marked No. IV. A report on the preservation of wood and the propagation of trees, undated.
- 5) By Noah Webster, Jur. of New York City. An essay on climate, "On the effect of the great number of evergreens in American, compared to Europe." The signature seems to be the same as Noah Webster, notable for his dictionary. Much of Webster's papers are in the New York Public Library, March 6, 1795.
- 6) To Dr. Sam L Mitchill, Secretary of the Agricultural Society from Noah Webster, jur. This letter was on growing potatoes, based on his experience. See Revised Edition of the 1801 *Transactions*, pages 262-263 on publication of a letter from Noah Webster on growing potatoes, April 28, 1797.

