

Guide to the Josiah Dexter Cotton Family Collection

- Repository:** Marietta College Library, Slack Research Collections
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- Creator:** Cotton, Josiah Dexter; Cotton, Ann M. (Steece); Cotton, Ella; Cotton, Mary; Cotton, Willia D.
- Title:** Josiah Dexter Cotton Family Collection
- Dates:** 1848 – 1921
- Bulk Dates:** 1848 – 1868
- Quantity:** .25 linear feet (1 mss box)
- Abstract:** The Cotton Collection contains letters written in southern Ohio, between the years of 1848 and 1921, most from 1848 to 1868. The majority of the correspondence is between Ann (Steece) Cotton (1828-1911) and her husband, Dr. Josiah Dexter Cotton (1822-1903), of Marietta. Ann traveled frequently to visit family and friends, and the couple stayed in touch by mail. The letters are rich in the detail of daily life as experienced by a small-town physician's family during the middle of the nineteenth century. Also included is a diary kept by the couple's daughter, Mary Cotton, during the 1870s.

Identification:

Language: English

Biography

Josiah Dexter Cotton was born in Marietta, Ohio, May 19, 1822. The son of Dr. John Cotton and Susan (Buckminster) Cotton, he graduated from Marietta College in 1842 and obtained his medical degree from the University of Louisville in 1847. Dr. J. D. Cotton practiced medicine in Marietta for many years, and he served as a surgeon in the 92nd Ohio Infantry Regiment of the Union army during the Civil War. He died August 6, 1903, in Marietta.

Ann M. Steece married Josiah Dexter Cotton, July 6, 1848, in Lawrence County, Ohio. She was born in Adams County, Ohio, September 5, 1828, the daughter of George and Polly (Burkitt) Steece. Her father was an iron manufacturer with the firm of Campbell, Ellison & Co. Ann (Steece) Cotton died in Marietta, May 17, 1911.

Josiah D. Cotton (called "Dexter" by the family) and Ann (Steece) Cotton were the parents of eight children, four of whom (John, Anna, Alice, and Maud) did not live to adulthood. The oldest child, Ella (1849-1908), married Major C. H. Conrad, who became a victim of the Spanish-American War. Ella died in New York City, May 13, 1908. Mary Cotton (1854-1881) married Fred E. Sterns of Rapid City, South Dakota, and died shortly after her marriage. George Dexter Cotton (1861-1927) moved to Holt County, Nebraska, in 1884, where he homesteaded. He died at his farm on August 11, 1927. Willia Dawson Cotton (1868-1942), an 1898 graduate of Marietta College, remained in Marietta and became the first librarian of the Washington County Public Library. She was active in preserving local history and was instrumental in the founding of Campus Martius Museum. Willia Cotton died in Marietta, June 7, 1942.

Scope and Content

The collection contains 95 letters written in southern Ohio, between the years of 1848 and 1921, most from 1848 to 1868. The majority of the correspondence is between Ann (Steece) Cotton and her husband,

Dr. Josiah Dexter Cotton. The letters are rich in the detail of daily life as experienced by a small-town physician's family during the middle of the nineteenth century. Also included is a 192-page journal written in Marietta by daughter, Mary Cotton, 1870-1875. Daughter Willia Cotton was the family genealogist, and several folders contain fragments of her research notes.

The Civil War correspondence between Josiah Dexter Cotton and his wife Ann is held by the Library of Congress as the "Josiah Dexter Cotton Papers." The letters are between Cotton and his wife during his service as surgeon of the 92nd Ohio Infantry Regiment and of Turchin's Brigade, and describe his care for sick and wounded soldiers.

Statement of Arrangement

Photographs and ephemera are housed in envelopes at the beginning of the collection, as is the journal of Mary Cotton. The correspondence is arranged first in chronological order, from 1848 to 1868, followed by the undated letters. Miscellaneous notes and genealogical information are at the end of the collection.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection. Copyright restrictions may apply to materials. Permission to publish materials must be obtained from the repository and from the copyright holder.

Indexing Terms

Subjects:

Medical care
Physicians

Persons:

Cotton, Ann Steece (1828-1911)
Cotton, Ella (1849-1908)
Cotton, Josiah Dexter (1822-1903)
Cotton, Mary (1854-1881)
Cotton, Willia D. (1868-1942)

Places:

Lawrence County (Ohio)
Marietta (Ohio)
Washington County (Ohio)
Zanesville (Ohio)

Material Types:

Correspondence
Diaries
Photographs

Preferred Citation

Josiah Dexter Cotton Family Collection, Marietta College Library

Detailed Description of the Collection

Box 1/Envelope 1

1. Photograph – Mary Cotton
2. New Year calling cards (2) – Ed. C. Brush, January 1, 1872

Box 1/Envelope 2

Pressed plant stem from the Journal of Mary Cotton, 1870-1875

Box 1/Envelope 3

Photograph – Ann (Steece) Cotton

Box 1/Envelope 4

Journal of Mary Cotton, 1870 – 1875. Started on Mary's sixteenth birthday, the journal describes her friendships and interest in young men. It provides an interesting account of the social life of teenagers in Marietta, Ohio, during the time period. 192 pages.

Box 1/Folder 1: October 1848 – April 1849

1. Ann S. Cotton to her husband, Dr. J. D. Cotton, Marietta, O. Describes her trip on the boat. October 7, 1848.
2. Ann S. Cotton, Campbell, O., to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "Mr. Leet lectured to night on the Free Soil question. . . . It's quite an exciting theme in this part of the county." October 10, 1848.
3. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, Ann S. Cotton, Lawrence County, Ohio. "I was very glad to find that the woman I went to see the night I left had got along very well. . . . I was afraid she might get worse and perhaps die and that I should be blamed for leaving her." March 4, 1849.
4. Ann S. Cotton to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Friendly letter. March 11, 1849
5. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "There is quite a revival going on in all the churches." March 12, 1849.
6. Ann S. Cotton to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "I've a pretty good novel to take with me – *Mount Echo* – have you read it?" March 14, 1849.
7. Josiah Dexter Cotton to Ann S. Cotton. "You must write to me from the city as well as telegraph." March 14, 1849.
8. Josiah Dexter Cotton to Ann S. Cotton. "Mr. Creighton told me that Bond had settled his difficulty with that girl by paying her three hundred dollars." March 18, 1849.
9. Ann S. Cotton, Cincinnati, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. ". . . I have begun to think it was all foolishness for me to be so very afraid of dying on a certain time, not that I do not think of it a tall now, for I often do." March 21, 1849.
10. Josiah Dexter Cotton to Ann S. Cotton. "I was very much surprised on receiving the Bill of Lading of the furniture you sent. What put it into your head to get it at present? I thought I told you that it would be better to wait until there was some prospect of our going to housekeeping before you got it." March 25, 1849.
11. Josiah Dexter Cotton to Ann S. Cotton. "I have got the Bedstead up. It is a very fine one, but needs a good mattress." March 27, 1849.
12. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "What a place a furnace is to raise children. It is sad to think that there are many here who would have made good men & women, had they been living where influences of a better nature surrounded them, that are now ignorant and wicked." March 29, 1849.
13. Ann S. Cotton to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Describes the trouble of "Bond" and a girl who gave birth to an infant. April 1849.

14. Josiah Dexter Cotton to Ann S. Cotton. "Mr. Henry Rossiter preached this afternoon. He preached so well that he almost kept me awake!" April 1, 1849.

Box 1/Folder 2: November – December 1849

1. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "You'd be surprised to see Ella. She sits up as well as a child six months old. And she is now lying in the cradle kicking hard . . ." November 11, 1849.
2. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "There was six Osage Indians on the boat on which I came up on. The great chief of the nation was one of them. His name was White-hair . . ." November 11, 1849.
3. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Writes about their baby, Ella. November 18, 1849.
4. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. Tells about a party where they played "chirades" [*sic*]. November 18, 1849.
5. Ann S. Cotton to her husband Josiah Dexter Cotton. Describes the illness of their daughter, Ella. November 25, 1849.
6. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. Writes about family and social affairs. November 26, 1849.
7. Ann S. Cotton to her Josiah Dexter Cotton. Writes that she will be ready to start home in seven weeks. "I believe that will make the three months, for I'm determined to stay that long and no longer." December 2, 1849.
8. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. Describes his Thanksgiving holiday. December 2, 1849.
9. Ann S. Cotton to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "Tell Mary Jane that I say she must not and shall not have a beau to Singing school or any other place. And if our father knew how she was acting he would take her home . . ." December 9, 1849.
10. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I went up to the dedication of the dutch church this morning. The exercises were all very interesting to me as they were in dutch." December 9, 1849.
11. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. ". . . I hope you will not skate on the ice this winter. . . . It is so dangerous – you might get drowned." December 16, 1849.
12. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. Describes family and social affairs. December 16, 1849.
13. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I do [not] suppose it does any harm to 'sleeve' and kiss a girl if you are engaged or expect to be, but I think it too much for them to allow every young man who may go home with them to take such liberties." December 23, 1849.
14. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I went up to judge Nyes last Friday night to the regular Friday evening party. . . . I like to hear Mrs. Nye talk. She has the real French style of talking about her husband just as she pleases. I pity her for I know she must be very unhappy to live as she does. He won't let her go out even in the day time, let alone at night." December 30, 1849.

Box 1/Folder 3: 1850

1. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "Do you still think of going into the drug business on a larger scale, if you can get a partner?" January 6, 1850.
2. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "I can hardly realise that father is dead. It seems as though he was on a visit from home & would soon return." July 29 1850.
3. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "Mother says if George has a room and she does his washing that she can not afford to board him for less than 2.25 a week. That is as low as anyone boards in town." August 4, 1850.

4. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Plans to start for home next Thursday. August 6, 1850.
5. Ann S. Cotton, Charleston, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "I was on the boat much longer than expected to be, and it was the most unpleasant little Cabin I ever had the misfortune to meet with. Dirt abounded in very quarter I assure you." November 24, 1850.
6. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, Ann S. Cotton. "I had to have the feather bed put on the next night after you left, I slept so cold." November 25, 1850.
7. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I have got you a twenty dollar Christmas gift... It is a landscape painting by Mr. Sullivan. He put up eleven paintings valued at one hundred twelve dollars. The tickets were two dollars each. I was persuaded to take one as he had been a very good customer, and I was so fortunate as to draw the highest prize." December 22, 1850.
8. Ann S. Cotton to Josiah Dexter Cotton. [James] left home last Friday week – with Mr. Frailey – with the intention of going after father. . . He said also, if there was any difficulty in getting the corpse on board a boat, he should remove it to some grave-yard. Almost every one has tried to persuade James not to go, as there will be great danger of his taking the cholera if he assists in getting the corpse in the lead coffin." December 24, 1850.
9. Josiah Dexter Cotton to Ann S. Cotton. "The tannery was burnt night before last. It was discovered to be on fire about 11 o'clock at night. It made a big fire." December 26, 1850.
10. Ann S. Cotton to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Friendly letter. December 31, 1850.

Box 1/Folder 4: 1851

1. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I was out hunting to day and killed some squirrels and pigeons. Wish you and Ella was here to help eat them." Contains a note written by Ann Cotton in July 1898. September 30, 1851.
2. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Expresses concerns about her mother's situation and the settlement of her father's estate. October 5, 1851.
3. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "They will commence laying brick next week. I have concluded to have porches on both sides of the house as you wished." October 7, 1851.
4. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I am building the house to please you and want to have every thing done that you wish provided it does not cost to much. I am going to have a nice porch on both sides and windows go down to the floor so that you can raise them up and walk out on to the porch." October 14, 1851.
5. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "Jim just got home. He says the furnace company have petitioned court for to sell Vernon Property, cash down and it's to be done in thirty days." October 20, 1851.
6. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I think we will be able to get in our house if we have good luck by the middle of July." October 21, 1851.
7. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "I have given up all thoughts of going to the water cure establishment . . ." [October?] December 1851.

Box 1/Folder 5: 1853 – 1857

1. Ann S. Cotton, Marietta, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Writes about family and friends. April 30, 1853.
2. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Philadelphia, to Ann S. Cotton. Writes about the places of interest which he had visited in Washington. May 2, 1853.
3. Ann S. Cotton, Marietta, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "We heard of the Cars running off the Drawbridge on Friday and as that was the day on which you were to leave N.Y. I felt sure you were killed. The very thought was agony." May 7, 1853.

4. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Weston, to Ann S. Cotton. "I suppose you have heard of the dreadful accident at Norwalk. . . . Had I left N.Y. on Friday morning I might have been killed but thanks to providence I did not leave until Saturday morning." May 8, 1853.
5. Ann S. Cotton, Ironton, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "The Cistern water smells so badly we can scarcely use it & . . . the water has to be carried from the river. I expect we will all be sick drinking it." April 30, 1855.
6. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Philadelphia, to Ann S. Cotton. Writes about things of interest to the family. May 1, 1855.
7. Ann S. Cotton, Ironton, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "There was a death by Cholera last Friday here, & it is said to be on the river below here." May 6, 1855.
8. Ann S. Cotton, Ironton, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Writes about family and friends. May 13, 1855.
9. Josiah Dexter Cotton to Ann S. Cotton. Writes about family and friends. February 25, 1856.
10. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I get up at ½ past five and take care of my horses and get down to Hannah's to breakfast at ½ past six." May 21, 1857.
11. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. Talks of an upcoming railroad excursion and celebration. "Pres. Buchanan is expected to be here on Monday but it [is] very doubtful about his coming." May 27, 1857.
12. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Burnet House, to Ann S. Cotton. Writes briefly on his way to St. Louis. June 5, 1857.
13. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Gives instructions about taking care of her flowers and vegetables during her absence. October 30, 1857.

Box 1/Folder 6: 1858 – 1868

1. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I have to stay home every evening, so that I can be found by my patients . . . I get up at 6 in the morning, feed my horses and then go down to Hannah's to get my breakfast." February 8, 1858.
2. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Writes that she had planned to leave for home but that travel on the river is closed. February 16, 1858.
3. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "There is no prospect at present of the river's opening and as far as I can see I may be here a month yet." February 21, 1858.
4. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "The thermometer was 6 degrees below 0 this morning . . . I hope you will stay contented and not think of coming home by land." February 23, 1858.
5. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Mentions things of interest to their family and friends. February 24, 1858.
6. Josiah Dexter Cotton to his daughter, Ella Cotton. "You will see that I am not very good at Printting [*sic*]." February 25, 1858.
7. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "The weather is very pleasant & if it would only get a little warmer the River might open soon but there is no telling when it will be navigable." February 26, 1858.
8. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "I think now that I was very foolish to leave home in the Winter time." February 28, 1858.
9. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Mentions things of interest to their family. March 3, 1858.
10. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. "I never knew the river to be frozen over so late in the season, did you? Samuel says I'll get away on the 25th of this month." March 7, 1858.
11. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Friendly letter. March 9, 1859.
12. Ella M. Cotton to her mother, Ann S. Cotton. "We had a great deal of fun burning bonfires with Uncle Bartlett in the garden . . . one of the flames rose higher than Mr. Judd's barn." March 12, 1859.

13. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to her daughter. "Aunt Eliza has a beautiful baby, a boy—it weighs eleven pounds." March 13, 1859.
14. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to Josiah Dexter Cotton. Writes about a "discovery" they had found "in an old day book . . . on a page by themselves are these two –presented to J. D. Cotton twenty five hundred dollars & just below it loaned to you sixteen hundred dollars." September 23, 1860.
15. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. Discusses their relationship and his love for her. August 19, 1866.
16. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "I think your diagnosis of your mother's case will prove more correct that the Drs., and I hope it is so, for there is some prospect of doing something for enlargement of the liver and there is not for Cancer of the Stomach, except to relieve pain." November 29, 1866.
17. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Ann S. Cotton. "Mrs. Jno. Barker has been very sick. She had four severe puerperal convulsions on Saturday. I bled her freely three times within nine hours and thus think I saved her life. She was confined last night, but her child as was expected was dead." April 21, 1868.

Box 1/Folder 7: Undated

1. Ann S. Cotton, Columbus, to her husband, March 10. "I noticed the State House as I passed it, it is a splendid building indeed." C-30
2. Ann S. Cotton, Campbell, to her husband, March 11. Writes about her family and friends. C-31
3. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to her husband, November 6. Tells of her family and friends. C-32
4. Ann S. Cotton, Zanesville, to her husband, December 5. Tells of her mother's illness. C-33
5. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, March 14. "Mrs. Stanwood is not expected to live long. . . . Dr. Beckwith is her physician and I do not think him capable of telling whether a person is very sick or not." C-34
6. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Washington, to his wife, Saturday morn., April 30. "I had the pleasure of sitting in the chair in which John Hancock and the other signers of the declaration sat." C-35
7. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, May 12. Writes about family and friends. C-36
8. Josiah Dexter Cotton to his wife, Sunday, July 29. "I am sorry you are not hear [*sic*] to make blackberry jam, as blackberries are selling for 7 to 8 cents per quart." C-37
9. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Mary (his daughter), August 1. Writes about the family and friends. C-38
10. Josiah Dexter Cotton to his wife, August 12. "I did not go to Mrs. Evans tin wedding as I had rode about twenty miles in Virginia . . . She had a very select party, only three hundred invitations." C-39
11. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to Mary (his daughter), August 16. "Our town is pretty healthy, but there was one death from cholera this morning. . . . There has been quite a rush at the Drug Stores for Cholera Medicine." C-40
12. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, September 23. "I got Ella a paint box and in a day or two Anna said you owed her five cents for picking beans and I must get her a paint box with it." C-41

Box 1/Folder 8: Undated

1. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, October 27. "The ladies of the place are to meet at the Episcopal church tomorrow afternoon to form a union society to make arrangements to make up things for the sick soldiers . . ." C-42
2. Josiah Dexter Cotton to his wife, Sunday, November 3. "Lucy Dawes told Ella that Mary S. was going to Cincinnati to get her wedding clothes. Mrs. Dawes says Mrs. Slocomb is fixing out

Mary in New England style. She has more quilts, bedclothes &c than she can use for twenty years.” C-43

3. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to her husband, December 23. “Father went out to the ‘Rock’ to see about Arch. He is working there, and is at present doing well.” C-58
4. Ann S. Cotton, Mt. Vernon Furnace, to her husband, December 30. Writes about family and friends. C-59
5. Ella M. Cotton to her father (Josiah Dexter Cotton), Tuesday morning. “The horsie is getting along pretty well. Uncle Dave feeds him as much as you do.” C-60
6. Josiah Dexter Cotton to his wife, Tuesday night, 9 o’clock. “Judge Nash is to lecture to morrow night at the Library Hall.” C-61
7. Josiah Dexter Cotton to his wife, Wednesday night. Family interests.
8. Josiah Dexter Cotton to his wife, Marietta, February 17. “Mary Slocomb was married yesterday morning. She was married at Mr. Silas Slocombs as her mother would not let her be married at home.” C-62
9. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, March 5. “I hope you will not try and come before the river opens. It would be very unsafe for you and the children to come by stage and I hope you will not try to do so.” C-63
10. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, March 7. Writes about things of interest to the family. “Geo. Dodge died a week or two since. You know he was living in Iowa. . . . It is said that George was engaged to Mrs. Cadwallader.” C-64
11. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, March 10. “You know a Doctor can not leave home when he wants to. He is always certain to have some patients that he cannot leave.”C-65
12. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, March 10. Family interests. C-66
13. Josiah Dexter Cotton, Marietta, to his wife, March 10. “They are to play Macbeth to night. Gurly is to play Macbeth and Rubecky is to play Macduff.” C-67
14. Ann S. Cotton, Campbell, to her husband, March 19. “I thank you very much for the Lemons & Oranges, we will have some nice lemonade now.” C-68

Box 1/Folder 9: 1921

Willia D. Cotton to President and Members of the Alumni Association of Marietta College, Marietta, O. Regarding the presentation of a portrait of her grandfather, Dr. John Cotton, first President of the Board of Trustees of Marietta College. February 14, 1921.

Box 1/Folder 10

Willia Dawson Cotton – Miscellaneous typescripts of documents.

Box 1/Folder 11

Willia Dawson Cotton – Miscellaneous notes, mostly genealogical.

Box 1/Folder 12

Willia Dawson Cotton – Miscellaneous notes, mostly genealogical.

Box 1/Folder 13

Willia Dawson Cotton – Miscellaneous notes, mostly genealogical.