

1805-1873

Physical Description: Letters and miscellaneous documents. c. 275 items.

Acquisition: Received from Miss Penelope Norcom, Hertford, North Carolina, 1916-1918.

Description: James Norcom, son of Miriam Standin and John Norcom, was born December 29, 1778, in Chowan County. He attended the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania, and received his M. D. degree in 1797. He was married in 1801 to Mary Custus. They had one son, John, born 1802. They were divorced c. 1805. James Norcom married Mary (Maria) Horniblow on July 24, 1810. Their children were James, Jr. (b. 1811), Benjamin Rush (b. 1813), Caspar Wistar (b. 1818), Mary Matilda (b. 1822), Elizabeth Hannah (b. 1826), H. Standin and Abner (twins), and William Augustus B. (b. 1836).

Dr. Norcom spent most of his life practicing medicine in Edenton. He served as army surgeon during War of 1812. He was member of the Board of Trustees of the Edenton Academy. He died in Edenton on November 9, 1850.

Dr. Norcom's early correspondence includes two letters to his brother, Edmund, and several to Maria Horniblow and her mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Horniblow.

Most of his letters are to his children, particularly to John, Rush, and Mary Matilda, beginning while they are in school, and to Elizabeth, and give instructions in many areas, reflecting the customs of that day, in letter-writing, what to read, how to study, use of vacation, caring for their health, obedience to parents, religion, social behavior, marriage, etc. He also gives family and neighborhood news and occasional political news. With his sons who are doctors or studying medicine he discusses his patients and various diseases and treatments, including one to John on treatment of cholera, there being an epidemic in Washington where John was practicing.

In a letter of February, 1832, he writes Rush describing the new Bishop,

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[Levi S.] Ives. In a letter of June, 1841, Dr. Norcom writes Wistar from Washington City, describing various figures in the political scene there, Secretary of the Navy [George E.] Badger, Col. [?] Hayne, Senators [William C.] Preston, [Thomas Hart] Benton, [Henry A.] Wise, [John Quincy] Adams. The letter also includes a discourse on Lord Chesterfield.

There is one letter (1848) to his granddaughter, Emily (John's daughter). Other correspondents include Miss Mary Harvey, D[avid] Hosack, M.D., [Bishop Ives], Nat'l Potter, S. T. Sawyer, Frederick Beasley, Dr. Benjamin Rush, J. T. Pickett, J. C. Slade, Dr. John Redman Coxe, Dr. J. Bigelow.

There are letters of John Norcom to the family, two letters of A[nn] E. Norcom, wife of John. There is a letter of Rush to Wistar and a copy of one to his mother. Other correspondents of Rush are J. C. Slade, Rev. James Montgomery, W. M. Green, Cameron T. MacRae, E. A. Valentine, Joseph H. Saunders, John Cox. There are two letters of James Norcom, Jr., and one from Mary Matilda Norcom. Standin's correspondence includes a letter to his father from Philadelphia in which he mentions the visit of Jenny Lind in that city. There are several letters from William to his mother (1863-1864) written from Petersburg where he was a doctor in the North Carolina hospital. Wistar's correspondence includes letters to his family from Raleigh, Philadelphia, Chile, San Francisco, and Paris. Among the correspondents of Mrs. Norcom are Sally Burgwin, Rev. Sam I. Johnston, Susan A. Moore, and Charles H. Disbrow.

Miscellaneous documents include a printed copy of the North Carolina University Magazine, March, 1856; "Thesis on Acute Gastritis by Wm. A. B. Norcom of N. C. Submitted to the Medical Faculty of the Univ. of Pa."; a message "To the Whigs of Beaufort," John Norcom; "An Essay on Remitting Pleurisy," April 16, 1805, by James Norcom for the Edenton Gazette; an address to the Clay Club, James Norcom; "The last appeal to the Public," for funds on behalf of the Trustees of Edenton Academy, James Norcom; announcement about dates of term, and teachers, for Edenton Academy; advertisement by James Norcom that he is now recovered from his illness and his services as physician are again available; a statement of James Norcom re his association, as physician, with Richard Armistead and attesting to his sanity; poems and paraphrases; Circular of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the University of the State of New York, 1820.

There is some genealogical information on the following families: Norcom, Horniblow, Bunch, Meard, Weddell, Hoskins, Messmore, and Blount.