

Achsa W. Sprague (1827-1861)
Papers, 1845-1862
Doc 181

Introduction

The papers of Achsa W. Sprague (1827-1861), a spiritualist from Plymouth, Vermont, were donated to the Vermont Historical Society in 1976 by Francis P. Twinem of Hackensack, New Jersey. The papers had been found in the Sharon, Connecticut, home of Twinem's brother L. Leonard Twinem, who died in 1968. Leonard Twinem had acquired the papers some time prior to 1941, and his collection included Sprague's diary and journal as well as the papers that are in this collection. Excerpts from the diary and journal were published in the September 1941 issue of *Vermont History* under Twinem's pen name Leonard Twynham. Francis P. Twinem did not know the location of the diary and journal when he donated this collection to the VHS.

The collection is housed in one box and occupies one linear foot of shelf space. This finding guide was prepared in 1995 as part of a project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Biographical Sketch

Achsa W. Sprague was born November 17, 1827, in Plymouth Notch, Vermont, one of several children of Charles and Betsy Sprague. She received a district school education and began teaching at age twelve. When she was twenty she began suffering from an unidentified disease which today might be diagnosed as arthritis. She investigated all types of cures, traditional and non-traditional, and when she regained her health in 1854, she credited the spirits. She became a trance medium and lecturer and traveled throughout the United States and into Canada. She wrote poetry and prose, both during period of illness and health, and was published in *The Banner of Light*, *the World*, and the *Green Mountain Sibyl*. Her health again deteriorated and she died in 1861. Achsa Sprague is buried in Plymouth, Vermont.

Scope and content

The Achsa Sprague papers, 1840-1862 (bulk 1852-1861), are primarily letters to Sprague during the period of her life when she was most actively touring and lecturing as a Spiritualist. Some of the correspondence is personal, telling of births, marriages, illnesses, and death, and providing local news about Ludlow, Plymouth, and Brandon, Vermont. Among family and friends who were regular correspondents are sisters Celia Sprague and Sarah Randall, cousin Ephraim Sprague, and Delia C. Pollard.

Other letters are from followers and fellow spiritualists discussing philosophy, mediums, seances, and trances. Repeat correspondents include Benjamin Starbuck of Troy, New York, Cyrus T. Parker, J. H. Crawford, Adolph Eiswald, and Ethan Allen Hitchcock. Many letters invite Sprague to lecture throughout the country; some have

details about specific dates, locations, and fees, while others are preliminary inquiries. There is mention of Spiritualists' conventions held in Rutland, Vermont, June 1858; Utica, New York, September 1858; Boston, Massachusetts, May 1859; South Royalton, Vermont, January 1860; and Oswego, New York, July 1861. Several letters in 1860 suggest that Spiritualists unite and even write a constitution, and again in June 1862 it is suggested that the mediums organize.

There is correspondence about articles Sprague wrote under the pseudonym Bell, for the *World's Paper*, a Spiritualist newspaper, published by A. C. Estabrook of Sandusky (East Granville), Vermont. Estabrook published the *Green Mountain Sibyl* beginning in 1858 and there is correspondence about that publication as well.

Primarily a Spiritualist, Sprague also was an advocate of Women's Rights, an abolitionist, and was very aware of the political and economic unrest of the time; these topics are covered in her correspondence.

There are several folders at the end of the collection that contain fragments of letters, essays, and poetry. Most of it was sent to Sprague but some of the poetry may have been written by her. There is also a folder of deeds and receipts, 1845-1854.

Inventory

Doc 181:1	Letters from Achsa Sprague, n.d., 1854-1855
2	Letters to Achsa Sprague, n.d.
3	_____, n.d.
4	_____, n.d.
5	_____, 1849, 1855-56
6	_____, 1857 January-May
7	_____, 1857 June-August
8	_____, 1857 September-October
9	_____, 1857 November
10	_____, 1857 December
11	_____, 1858 January
12	_____, 1858 February
13	_____, 1858 March
14	_____, 1858 April
15	_____, 1858 May-June
16	_____, 1858 July
17	_____, 1858 August
18	_____, 1858 September
19	_____, 1858 October
20	_____, 1858 November
21	_____, 1858 December
22	_____, 1859 January
23	_____, 1859 February
24	_____, 1859 March

- 25 _____, 1859 April-May
- 26 _____, 1859 June
- 27 _____, 1859 July-August
- 28 _____, 1859 September
- 29 _____, 1859 October
- 30 _____, 1859 November
- 31 _____, 1859 December
- 32 _____, 1860 January
- 33 _____, 1860 February
- 34 _____, 1860 March
- 35 _____, 1860 April
- 36 _____, 1860 May-June
- 37 _____, 1860 July-August
- 38 _____, 1860 September
- 39 _____, 1860 October
- 40 _____, 1860 November
- 41 _____, 1860 December
- 42 _____, 1861 January
- 43 _____, 1861 February
- 44 _____, 1861 March
- 45 _____, 1861 April-May
- 46 _____, 1861 June
- 47 _____, 1861 July-August
- 48 _____, 1861 September-December
- 49 _____, 1862 January-April
- 50 _____, 1862 May-1864
- 51 Unidentified fragments of letters, poetry, writings, etc.
- 52 _____
- 53 _____
- 54 Deeds, receipts, etc., 1845-1854

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