

**Finding Aid for the BENJAMIN COATES AFRICAN
COLONIZATION COLLECTION, 1848 [1858-1869] - 1880
Collection No. 1190**

Two document boxes (one linear ft.)
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Abstract

Letters relating to the emigration of free Blacks to the West African colony of Liberia and establishment of Liberian institutions written to American Quaker reformer, Benjamin Coates (1808-1887) whose work toward the abolition of slavery led to a relationship with many prominent people connected to Liberia, a colony established to offer a new home and a fresh start away from slavery to free Blacks in the mid-19th century.

Information for Users:

While the bulk of letters is between 1858 and 1869, the year 1859 includes the greatest number of letters. Significantly, only the letters from J.J. Roberts date earlier than 1858, the first of these dated 1848.

Most of the letters in this collection are directed to Benjamin Coates, though a few are to other to other people, and one is by Benjamin Coates. In the finding aid, where there are multiple letters by one author, a recipient other than Coates is not noted.

All dates are standardized rather than transcribed, viz: yr mo/day.

The symbol + is for Haverford College use only.¹

¹ + suggests potential for History 361

Biographical Note:

Benjamin Coates (1808-1887), son of George Morrison and Rebecca Hornor Coates, Quaker members of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting for the Northern District, later Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (Arch Street), attended William Penn Charter School, entered the business world as a dry goods, later wool merchant. His next occupation was with the publishing firm, Porter & Coates of Philadelphia. He was also among a certain group of Philadelphia Quakers to become deeply involved in philanthropy, particularly those efforts dealing with abolition and education. He was a member of several organizations, including the Friends Freedmen, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, the Union Benevolent Association, the Institute for Colored Youth and others. The philosophical inclinations of Benjamin Coates were shaped in part by the abolitionist networks of his day. Coates was convinced that a new colony in West Africa, populated by black Americans, was the best strategy for ending slavery and giving African Americans a positive fresh start. In this regard, Coates was involved with the American Colonization Society, an organization which established the colony of Liberia to resettle free black Americans in West Africa

Coates forged an alliance with African American Joseph Jenkins Roberts, who emigrated to Liberia in 1829, and became a symbol of the personal, financial, and economic opportunities that could be had in Africa. From the 1840s until Roberts' death in 1876, Coates and Roberts collaborated to encourage emigration, advising their black correspondents to emigrate, and encouraging their white associates to help them do so. Coates was in a good position for this work, given his connections to philanthropists and social activists across the United States, Canada, England and Africa and his broad readings on the topic.

Recognizing that the cotton crop was an integral part within the issues of slave labor and export revenue, Coates envisioned limiting Southern profits, replaced by an international market to include Africa. Benjamin Coates propounded the abolition of slavery as the catalyst for worldwide change, viewing slavery as a problem that plagued his religious community, his business relationships, his country's political system, the world economy and his Quaker conscience.

Benjamin Coates was the author of "Cotton Cultivation in Africa, Suggestions on the Importance of the Cultivation of Cotton in Africa, in Reference to the Abolition of Slavery in the United States..." in 1858.

Ebenezer D.C. Bassett (1833-1908) was principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. He was the first black diplomat appointed by Pres. Grant minister to Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Edward Blyden (1832-1912) emigrated to Liberia where he gained an education and became a black Christian missionary, professor at Liberia College and Liberia's education minister.

Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893), a free-born black Pennsylvanian who was driven to Canada, in the wake of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, came slowly to approve the colonization movement, which she forwarded in her newspaper, *The Provincial Freeman*.

William Coppinger (1828-1892) rose in the ranks of the American Colonization Society, becoming its secretary/treasurer and secretary of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society]

Alex Crummell (1819-1898), born in New York, attended Yale Theological Seminary, was a clergyman, scholar and activist and involved in the struggle for black rights and education and the development of Liberia.

Thomas J. Durant (1817-1882), a lawyer and slaveholder who fought for the Confederate army, he came to believe in black suffrage.

Frederick Douglass (1817-1895), an antislavery worker with the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society beginning in 1841 and one of the most prominent abolitionists of his time, and was generally opposed to colonization.

Martin Freeman (1826?-1889) emigrated to Liberia in 1864 and taught math and natural philosophy at Liberia College.

Henry Highland Garnet (1815-1882), a freed slave, became the first president of the African Civilization Society which provided support for those black people who chose to go to Africa under its aegis.

William S. Hilles, (1825-1876) a Quaker, graduated from Haverford College in 1842, taught there from 1844-1845

John B. Pinney was in Liberia during the 1830s as a missionary and as temporary governor and it appears that in 1868 he returned there.

Joseph Jenkins Roberts (1809-1876), a successful entrepreneur who became Liberia's first president in 1848, he courted and counted on the support of philanthropists in the United States and Britain, including Benjamin Coates.²

Joseph Tracy (1793?-1874) was an author of such books as *Colonization and missions. A historical examination of the state of society in western Africa, as formed by paganism and Muhammedanism, slavery*

Information for biographical entries from: *Back to Africa: Benjamin Coates and the colonization movement in America, 1848-1880* / edited by Emma J. Lapsansky-Werner, Margaret Hope Bacon ; with Marc Chalufour, Benjamin B.

² Biographical notes from *Back to Africa: Benjamin Coates and the Colonization Movement in America, 1848-1880* / ed. by Emma J. Lapsansky-Werner & Margaret Hope Bacon. Penn State Pres, 2005

Miller, Meenakshi Rajan. University Park, Pa. : Pennsylvania State University Press, c2005

Subject Headings:

- 610 20 - American Colonization Society
- 650 0 – Quaker abolitionists
- 650 0 – Society of Friends – Antislavery movement
- 651 0 – Liberia – 19th century

Personal Names

- 700 1 - Bassett, Ebenezer D.C. 1833-1908
- 700 1 - Blyden, Edward 1832-1912
- 700 1 - Coates, Benjamin 1808-1887
- 700 1 - Cary, Mary Ann Shadd 1823-1893
- 700 1 - Coppinger, William 1828-1892
- 700 1 - Crummell, Alex 1819-1898
- 700 1 - Douglass, Frederick 1817-1895
- 700 1 - Freeman, Martin 1826?-1889
- 700 1 - Garnet, Henry Highland 1815-1882
- 700 1 - Hilles, William S. 1825-1876
- 700 1 - Pinney, John Brooke
- 700 1 - Roberts, Joseph Jenkins 1809-1876
- 700 1 - Tracy, Joseph
- 700 1 - Whipper, William, 1804-1876

Box Contents

- Box 1: Letters to Benjamin Coates, A-O
- Box 2: Letters to Benjamin Coates, P-Z

Collection Description:

The collection consists primarily of letters written to American Quaker reformer, Benjamin Coates (1808-1887) whose work toward the abolition of slavery led to a relationship with many prominent people connected to Liberia, a West African colony established by the American Colonization Society to provide a new home and a fresh start away from slavery to free Blacks in the mid-19th century. The letters show Coates to be a philanthropist who often donated books to the cause of African American/Liberian education.

Correspondents include: George N. Allen, E.D. Bassett, George Bethune, Edward Blyden, Robert? Campbell, John E. Carter, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, M.E. Bibb Cary, Thomas Chase, Benjamin Coates, A. Cope, William Coppinger, Alex Crummell, E.B. Darnell, Thomas I. Durante, Frederick Douglass, William Evans, M.H. Freeman,

Henry Highland Garnet, I. McD. Gurley, E.M. Gurley, Thomas Hamilton, Robert Harper?, J.D. Harris, Henry Hartshorne, Annie Heacock, W.S. Hilles, Joseph Hobbins, J.I. Holly, Ezra Johnson, Eleanor Ketchum, J.M. McKean, William F. Mitchell, Edmund Morris, J.B. Pinney, G.D. Pike, Evelyn E. Plummer, A. Prince, James E. Rhoads, Robert Carter & Bros., J.J. Roberts, Martin W. Roberts, J.B. Smith, D. Say?, M. Schofield, George L. Stearns, Joseph Tracy, Reuben Tomlinson, Thomas Tucker, Thomas Tucker, Alvin Varner, H.O. Wagoner, D.B. Warner, Jonathan Welsh, William Whipper, G. Whipple, Yates & Porterfield, John Young.

In a Miscellaneous folder are: A.S. Barnes & Co., Ohio State Anti-Slavery Society, Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, Union Benevolent Association

Box 1: Letters to Benjamin Coates, A-O

Letters to Benjamin Coates. A-B. 1 folder.

Allen, George N. Oberlin, 1863 4/23. [acknowledges Coates' gift of two books to Oberlin College Library, *Liberia's Offering* and *The Future of Africa*]

Bassett, E[benezer] D. New Haven, [CT], 1868 8/12. [appreciates Coates' request for his assistance, but declines]

Bethune, Geo[rge] W[ashington]. Brooklyn, L.I., 1852 1/20. [re monument to the memory of Thomas Buchanan, after whom a Liberian settlement was named]

Blyden, Edward W. New York and Monrovia, 1862-1869. 6 items. [establishing the "Book Concern" to make school books available and looking for funding; acknowledges donation from Coates for the Book Concern; missionary work among aborigines; permission to republish any of his work; confesses that instead of building up a "Negro nation" in Liberia, they are building an aristocracy, and little for the natives; importance of the native language and desire for Christian education]

Letters to Benjamin Coates. C. 1 folder.

Campbell, Robert. New York, 1859 7/14. [exploring the Niger Valley, notes trouble with Yellow Fever, few white settlers]

Carter, John F. 1869 4/29.

Cary M[ary] E[lizabeth] Bib Cary. [18]59 6/14. [asks if there are teaching or business opportunities in Africa for "colored persons" who do not want to work through the American Colonization Society]

Cary, Mary A[nn] S[hadd]. Chatham, C[anada] W[est], [18]58 11/20. [formation of an organization approved of by the *Freeman* (newspaper) office; many may emigrate to Yoruba country; opposition to and endorsement of colonization (by free African Americans)]

Chase, Thomas. Haverford, 1862 4/10 [nobleness and fruitfulness of Coates' efforts]

[Coates, Benjamin] to [Alfred Cope]. [1867 10/?]. [work Friends are called upon to do] (response to Alfred Cope's letter of 10/11/1867)

Cope, Alfred. Fairfield, [Germantown, Pa.], 1867 10/11. [parable on the nature of humans]

Coppinger, William. 1868. 4 items. [set of "Colonization Herald" for Liberia College; sending materials to Liberia and West Coast of Africa; refers to J.J. Roberts and Augustus Washington; keeping the "colored man" in America as laborer and voter, while Liberia not preparation for large emigration of our "best blacks"; charge of slavery in Liberia]

Crummell, Alex. Caldwell, nr. Monrovia, Liberia, W.A. [his good school has 30 pupils; great desire among Liberians for schools]

Letters to Benjamin Coates. D,E,F,G. 1 folder.

Darnell, S.B. Jacksonville, FL, [n.d.]

Douglass, Frederick. Rochester, 1859 5/2. [cannot attend examinations of classes at the Institute for Colored Youth; opposition to emigration of free blacks to Africa; thanks for reading material, though he will not be dissuaded from his position on the African Civilization Society]

Durant, Tho[ma]s J. Washington, D.C. 1869 2/15. [thanks for various publications; obligation of all to labor]

Evans, W[illia]m. Phil[adelphia], 1867 8/27.

Freeman, M[artin] H. Allegheny City, 1859 8/29. [hopes for a freer country, i.e. Africa, for his children than America]

Garnet, Henry Highland. 1859. 4 items. [the cause necessitating colonization; spoke on the African slave trade and has another speaking engagement; Rev. A A Constantine elected to office of corresponding secretary of their society; grateful for books sent; Frederick Douglass their "bitter enemy" and Robert Campbell cannot be relied on; asks how to lay foundation for African operation]

Gurley, E.M. Washington, [18]68 5/8. copy of the address of the people of Liberia to his son on his arrival there written by Dr Smith the society's Physician accompanies letter.

Gurley, I. McD. Washington, 1868 4/7.

Letters to Benjamin Coates. H. folder.

Hamilton, Thomas. New York, [18]59 9/19. [thanks for subscription to "Weekly Anglo African" and additional money toward their library fund; would like to publish news from Liberia]

H[arper?], R[obert?] A. Augusta, 1859 9/6. [Black fortunes will rise, despite any efforts to the contrary]

Harris, J.D. Cleveland, [18]59 6/7. Enclosed is a document from the Central America Land Company detailing the establishment of a colony for black Americans in Central America.

Hartshorne, Henry. [18]67 7/18.

Heacock, Annie. Clarendon, 1869 2/7. [people grateful for the seeds Coates sent] (Clarendon Plantation is on Port Royal Island, S. C.)

Hilles, W.S. Wilmington, 1867-68. 1 items. [manner in which New Bedford Friends First Day school is run and building up interest in First Day schools; time will not allow him to participate in the institute's work, as he is already involved in Friends Freedmen's Association, among other work]

Hobbins, Joseph. Madison, WI, 1859 3/2. [trying to establish a medical school and hospital in England, and glad to assist in other good works projects]

Holly, J.T. New Haven, 1859 9/13.

Letters to Benjamin Coates. J, K, M. 1 folder.

Johnson, Ezra. Sharpsburg, Md., 1868. 3 items. [grateful for the books Coates sent for the school for African American children in which Johnson teaches; for lack of funds the school must be abandoned]

Ketchum, Eleanor. Washington, D.C. [18]68 5/22.

McKim, J.M. New York. 1867. 2 items. [respect for Crummell; if money is raised for a professorship at Howard University, Crummell would be the professor]

Mitchell, William F. Haverford College, 1862 4/8.

Morris, Edmund. 1859. 3 items. [interested in the idea of African colonization]

Box 2: Letters to Benjamin Coates, P-Z & Miscellaneous

Letters to Benjamin Coates. P. 1 folder.

Pike, G.D. American Missionary Association, NY., 1880 4/8. [thanks for contribution to AMA]

Pinney, Annie. Clinton, [NJ], [18]69 3/26. [great concern for her family if her father (J.B. Pinney) decides to move all of them to a farm in the west]

Pinney, J[ohn] B[rooke]. 1859-1869. 8 items. [mentions secessionist Edmund Ruffin; Liberian trade; attempting to raise \$22,000 for Liberia College; contemplating a visit to Liberia in 1868 to investigate missions, education, college, population, commerce and agriculture; wishes Whipple could be their National Representative in Liberia; other ideas to forward work of ACS]

Plummer, Evelyn E. Nashville, 1865 1/28. [a teacher in a Freedmen's school, she requests drawing materials, maps and other things for her students]

Prince, A. Brookly, 1860 9/6. [as an agent of the African Civilization Society, is in need of the pamphlet "Cotton Cultivation in Africa"]

Letters to Benjamin Coates. R. 1 folder.

Rhoads, James E. Germantown, 1867. 2 items. [while the white race is duty-bound to aid the "coloured" one, he is too busy to attend meetings of the Institute for Colored Youth]

Robert Carter & Bros. New York, 1868 10/21. [reducing the price of their publications for Coates' important cause]

Roberts, Joseph Jenkins. 1848-1869. 7 items. [Liberian affairs progressing in positive manner; Mr. Roye's presidential candidacy does not appear hopeful; great interest in Liberia's welfare; prospect of obtaining recognition of the Independence of Liberia from several of the smaller German powers; met Capt. Adams bound for Japan with ratified treaty; interest in idea of colonization of Liberia; recognition of Liberia by U.S. is in the future; difficulties at Sinou; subject of a reciprocity treaty with Liberia; future prospects of the people of color in Louisiana and other Southern States and does not quite agree that the white race and the black race must go together;

fourteenth constitutional amendment on one person, one vote, unlikely to be adopted at present] Sept. 28, 1868 letter includes Liberian postage stamps

Roberts, Martin. New York, 1868 9/18. [joint U.S./Liberia stock companies; ex-president. Roberts has not been as successful pecuniarily as his friends could wish

Letters to Benjamin Coates. S. 1 folder.

Smith, J.B. 1859. 2 items. [arrival of Mr. Campbell in Africa and success of his mission to date; many other important people also in Africa that it will be good for its "Civilization"; wants to set up a meeting in Philadelphia]

Say, D.(or L.) R.M. New York, 1862 10/6. [regarding some property]

Schofield, M. St. Helena I., [18]68 3/12. [thanks for seeds and information on orphans, presumably under his care]

Shadd, Abraham. 1864. envelope only.

Stearns, George L. Boston, 1865 2/13. [explains and describes his antislavery circulars with which Coates apparently disagrees]

Letters to Benjamin Coates. T. 1 folder.

[Tomlinson, Reuben?]. Charleston, S.C., 1867 3/29. [seeds have been received and have gone with the colonists to Florida, the "interior" and elsewhere]

Tracy, Joseph. Boston, 1868-1869. 4 items. [Pres. Roberts, in Boston, to meet with American Board for Foreign Missions to talk of a plan for training missionaries at Liberia College; issue of emigration; William Whipper as possible U.S. Minister to Liberia; need for better teachers at the College; placing the work of giving civilization and Christianity to Africa to African Americans as empowering; Avery Fund; trustees of Liberia College are a corporation, must be Liberians and are appointed by the legislature in Liberia]

Tucker, Thomas. Oberlin Ohio, 1859 10/12. [came from Africa in 1856 to get an education with the idea of returning home to do good, but now needs financial aid to remain for the last 4 years of that education]

Letters to Benjamin Coates. U-Z. 1 folder.

Varner, Alvin. Appomattox, Va., [18]68 3/17. [progress made by freedmen whose mental capacity was once questioned and whose need for education was once questioned; seeds are received and used for a garden; his school is flourishing]

Wagoner, H.O. 1859. 3 items. [wishes that H.H. Garnet and W. Whipper could join the {Niger Valley Exploration?} Party; his "brethren" are vigorously opposed to the Colonization Society; if money from African Americans were to fund a line of steamers to Africa, affording visits by blacks to Africa, African Americans would look more positively at the Colonization Society; recognizes Coates' love for African and African American people; businessmen more important than literary men]

Warner, D.B. to Dr. Pinney. Monrovia, 1869 3/13. [thanks for donation of school books; glad Pres. Roberts corroborated all Pinney's statements]

Welsh, Jno. Philadelphia, [18]67 4/1. [appeals coming in and they will do their best for the relief of communities suffering from crop failures and effects of the war]

Whipper, W[illia]m. Columbia, [18]59 2/24. [has long wished that his race would be redeemed from the influence of prejudice and slavery; regard for Coates' work for the welfare of the "Colored" race]

Whipple, G. 1868. American Missionary Assoc., New York, 2 items. ["importance of making use of the best colored men in the great work of elevating the race"; if ever the Am. Missionary Assoc. appeared opposed to the work of the Colonization Society, it was only if men were compelled to go to Africa, and especially if they were unfit]

Yates & Porterfield. New York, 1868 7/30. [sending bills of lading for the box of books being sent by steamer to Liberia]

Young, John. Charlotte, N.C., 1866. 2 items. [crime in his state, much by blacks, but often under the bad influence of whites; "every good man in the South favours the education of the negro, as much as the white race," but recognizes prejudice exists from blacks and notes, and North using the issue of the "Negro race" to denigrate the South] attaches article about "ravishment" of a white woman by a former slave

Miscellaneous

A.S. Barnes & Co. New York, 1868 11/6. Receipt for 50 "Liberia special"]

Ohio State Anti-Slavery Society. Cleveland, 1859 11/29. Printed invitation to first anniversary event of the society

Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. Philadelphia, 1868 6/24. Printed announcement of a meeting

Union Benevolent Association. [n.d.] [notice of upcoming meeting with business of importance]

1859 clipping: "Liberia, a Permanent Success."

Three empty envelopes directed to Edmond Morris, Benjamin Coates and George M. Coates