

Haverford College Library  
Special Collections

Finding Aid for the MEKEEL FAMILY PAPERS, 1824-1851

Collection No. 1138  
Accession #4311  
1 document box (.5 linear feet, ca. 120 items)  
©June 2006

**INFORMATION FOR USERS**

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

Though not all letters are listed individually, those that are highlighted are done so on the basis of content of the letter or historical importance of the letter writer.

**RESTRICTIONS**

No restrictions.

**ABSTRACT**

Correspondence of Quaker Mekeel family members and relatives in New York state, Ohio and elsewhere, 1824-51. Predominant among them are Arthur Mekeel (1826-1850), Caleb Mekeel (1743-1859), Isaac Mekeel (1797-1880), Isaiah Mekeel (1823-1844), Joshua Mekeel (1795-?) and Phebe Quinby Mekeel (1800-1861).

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Arthur Mekeel (1826-1850) was the son of Phebe Quinby Mekeel (1800-1861) and Isaac Mekeel (1797-1880). His mother, Phebe, was a member of Amawalk (New York) Monthly Meeting and upon her death, it was stated she was an "Elder worthy of double honor." Arthur's uncle, Caleb, was an Elder of Scipio (New York) Monthly Meeting.

(Information from internal evidence and necrology file)

## SUBJECT HEADINGS

Mekeel, Arthur, 1826-1850  
Mekeel Family  
Moses Brown School  
Nine Partners Boarding School (Washington, N.Y.)  
Quakers – New York (State)  
Society of Friends - Education  
Society of Friends - Wilburite controversy

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The collection revolves around the New York Quaker Mekeel family of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With Arthur Mekeel (1826-1850) at the core of the collection, letter writers include his parents, Phebe Quinby Mekeel (1800-1861) and Isaac Mekeel (1797-1880) as well as Caleb Mekeel (1793-1859), Joshua Mekeel (1795-?) and others.

Letters often detail issues of family, health and Meeting, but also about farming and business and the Quaker boarding school, Nine Partners in Poughkeepsie, NY. and Friends Boarding School in Providence, R.I. Some discussion of the split between Wilburites and Gurneyites is recorded. There is significant reference to Arthur Mekeel's health beginning in 1849, resulting in his death the following year.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Letters of Mary Jane Quinby Field to sister Phebe Quinby Mekeel, 1830-1850; Uriah Field, 1839; Mary Mekeel Griffin, 1848. 1 folder (ca. 15 items)

Note: Letters express concern and interest in her sister's family, health issues, travel and other family news. Some letters are in fragile or fragmented condition.

Some highlights include:

Field, Mary Jane to Phebe Mekeel. Tarry Town [NY], 1832 11/7. [were in New York which seemed healthy, hardly revealing recent suffering and desolation; hopes Phebe has gotten assistance with domestic work]

Field, Mary Jane to Phebe Mekeel. Tarry Town [NY], 1840 5/1. [mental condition of their sister, Sarah, who is in an asylum] Other letters continue this story

Field, Mary Jane to Phebe Mekeel. [n.p., n.d.] [discussion of bonnets, French modes and silks; her (husband?) has insisted she be vaccinated against pox]

Field, Uriah to Isaac Mekeel. New York, 1839 12/30. [state of sister-in-law Sarah may result in placement in asylum]

Letters of Anna, possibly Mekeel, 1848-1849. 1 folder (3 items)

Note: All three letters are dated Nine Partners (Poughkeepsie, NY)

[Mekeel?, Anna] to [Arthur [Mekeel]]. Nine Partners Boarding School, [spring 1849]. [refers to Arthur's sickness; mentions people at the school and her studies and whether she will return to work there]

Mekeel?, Anna to Mary Mekeel. Nine Partners, 1848 8/13. [mentions people and practices at the school]

Mekeel?, Anna to Arthur Mekeel?. Nine Partners, 1849 2/27. Sarah Smiley has decided to teach at the school; pay for different teachers]

Letters of Arthur Mekeel, 1846-1850 & n.d. 1 folder (ca. 20 items).

Note: Some letters are co-authored by other members of the Mekeel family. Letters offer a good view of daily life, all written from New York, a few from Brooklyn on health, including his own), clothing, exercise, activities, opinions, business, and a good deal about family

Mekeel, Arthur, Isaac and Mary to Jacob Mekeel. Somers, 1846 11/16. [Isaac (father) says he has not purchased any cattle or sheep, nor butchered any hogs, the price of which are low]

Mekeel, Arthur to Isaac Mekeel. New York, 1848 3/10. [description of procession to honor remains of John Quincy Adams in NYC.

Mekeel, Arthur to Isaac Mekeel. Brooklyn, 1848 10/1. [busy at the store where they had an auction sale and made \$15,000; trade also very brisk]

Mekeel, Arthur to parents. New York, 1849 6/14. [first intimation of his sickness – he visits homeopathic doctor who gives him medicine and will treat him through his blood, and he is feeling better, though his foot is swollen & sore; cholera does not increase or decrease]

Mekeel, Arthur to parents. New York, 1849 9/3. [10-15 cases of cholera reported in the city daily, less dysentery]

Mekeel, Arthur to father. New York, 1849 10/17. [prices of oil and linseed oil]

Mekeel, Arthur to Parent. New York, 1850 2/8. [explosion killing 100-150 people; marriage took place though groom had just had bilious fever]

Mekeel, Arthur to brother Jacob. New York, [1849] [news from France: Louis Napoleon elected President and David and family are settled in Limoges; 225 casks of china came from Bordeaux for his business]

Mekeel, Arthur to mother. New York, n.d. [various family members traveling to the west, including Ohio]

Letters of Caleb Mekeel, to Isaac and Phebe Mekeel, 1835-1850. 1 folder (7 items).

Note: Letters inform of family members, health, attending Meeting, traveling and visiting

Vernon, 1835 10/4. [discussion includes various family members moving west and on farming]

Auburn [NY], ? 4/12. [a suggestion that he start a school & villagers would pay \$120 per year]

Flushing, 1843 8/5. [trouble in the Meeting when John Word posed his query]

Ledyard, 1847 1/1. [his daughter attends school taught by a former student at Nine Partners School; Meeting turmoil has no reason, and John Wilbur was "laboured with" in the spirit of meekness, though there are those who would fan the flames and seem bent on separation; now has 250 hams put up]

1850 9/29. [their "Gr[eat?] Meeting has passed, with a lot of business transacted harmoniously]

Ledyard, 1851 3/31. [their daughter has attended Nine Partners School; Wilburites are building a Meeting house, leaving them (Gurneyite?) no alternative but to disown them]

Letters of Isaac Mekeel, 1838-1849 & n.d.. 1 folder (ca. 15 items).

Note: Letters are primarily to his son, Arthur, and refer to health issues, food and products, farming and bringing to market and sending to son (such as turkeys, pigs, cows etc.), family members & others of their acquaintance; occasionally written from Providence Friends School

To Wife. Somers, [1845]. [while wife is visiting her sister Hannah Haviland, he attends Yearly Meeting; also in note from Mary to Phebe, mentions Isaiah's death the previous year]

To Cousin. Providence, 1846 10/30. [Jacob is to give a lecture on oxygen and hydrogen; describes complicated electrical equipment; mentions Dougan Clark as one of their number and one of their best debaters; discussion of (Providence Friends) school and lessons: "I expect we have got one of the greatest Lyceums that ever was organized: it consists of about 13 numbers all nearly equal...I hold the office of President, Jacob vice Pres. \* Oliver Sect..."]

To Arthur. Somers, n.d. [query concerning amount of money for teachers that he received from the Somers Town Superintendent]

Letters of Isaiah Mekeel, 1840-1844. 1 folder (3 items).

To Brother. 1842 7/3. [school has been open 5 weeks, with 16 boarders and s day students, with more girls than boys, discusses courses of study and other aspects of the school]

To Parents. Hector, 1844 6/31. [reports on steamboat travel beginning at Troy, NY]

Letters of I.D. Mekeel and Jesse Mekeel. 1 folder (2 items).

Mekeel, I.D. to Isaac [Mekeel]. 1849 3/12. [re paying off mortgage]

Mekeel, Jesse to Jacob Mekeel. Providence, 1848 12/3. [Lindley Hoag visiting their Meeting; mentions superintendents of the Providence Friends School and that teaching honorable behavior leads to good scholars and more information about the school]

Letters of Jacob Mekeel, 1847-1851. 1 folder (3 items).

To Arthur Mekeel. Providence, 1847 1/6. [Isaac has entered the school and is well; subjects of study and food served]

To Arthur and Mary Mekeel. Somers, 1849 1/10. [heard lecture on phonography preparatory to course on that subject]

To Parents. New York, 1851 11/13. [commerce relating to poultry; many relatives visiting each other]

Letters of Joshua Mekeel, 1824-1854. 1 folder (10 items).

Note: Some letters written with his first wife Hester, some with his second wife Anna. All are directed to Isaac and Phebe Mekeel. Issues often address attending Monthly and Yearly Meeting and business.

Hector, 1824 4/20. [regarding the house in which Isaac Purdy could be residing; many business issues regarding family members; understands that the Troy and Albany markets were very much glutted]

[1830 3/21] [refers to growing lump in mother's breast; death of Elias Hicks noted in newspaper and some remarks about Hicks; reference to a school run by brother Caleb]

Hector, 1839 4/18. [George and Susan Howland from New Bedford have attended his Monthly Meeting; possible disownment of John Collins; bad feelings brought on by business; how his farm is faring; J.J. Gurney had good and satisfactory meetings ]

Hector, 1840 1/26. [his sons are attending Nine Partners School and are well contented; gang of counterfeiters uncovered at Seneca Lake]

Letters of Phebe Mekeel, 1849 & n.d.. 1 folder (7 items).

Note: Letters are all directed to family members and discuss illnesses and some cures and other family information, including attending Meeting and painting the house.

To Arthur. N.d. [father misses him more than anyone; suggests he come home to visit from school and that he must be sick of it; concern for his health]

Letters of Moses and Esther Quinby; also Mary Quinby and Walter Quinby, 1824-1839 1 folder (5 items).

Note: Letters directed to Isaac Mekeel and discuss family and health and business issues.

New York, 1839 12/5. [price of meat, sale of vegetables; scarcity of money]

New York, 1839 12/13. [asks if Isaac will take a nephew to teach him farming]

Letters of Jacob Shipley, 1843-1849 & n.d. 1 folder (4 items).

to Arthur Mekeel. Westtown, [Pa], 1843 12/31. [visited two prisons and other sightseeing, including description of Westtown School]

to Jacob Mekeel. Providence, 1848 12/8. [describes Providence Friends Boarding School]

Other letter writers. 1 folder (ca, 15 items).

Note: Letters speak of local events and mutual friends and health

Letter writers include:

John Griffin, Mary Mekeel [Griffin?], Carrie Haviland & Hannah Mekeel, Hannah Quinby Haviland, Charles W. Hoag, Catharine Irish, W.H. Ketcham, E.B. Underhill, Mary Underhill, Sarah Vanderbilt, Edward Wanzer

Hoag, Charles to Arthur Mekeel. Washington, 1846 1/13. [reports on some students and events at Nine Partners School in Poughkeepsie, NY]

Irish, Catharine to Mary Mekeel. N.p., n.d. Writes as a friend at Nine Partners Boarding School and refers to Mahlon Day

Ketcham, W.H. Washington to Arthur Mekeel. 1845 10/9. [responds to Mekeel's idea of teaching and names some students at the school]

Underhill, Mary. 1832 3/2. [sister Hannah contemplating second marriage; Uncle Caleb has given up his school at Skaneateles and will start a school for girls in Hector; a considerable amount of influenza reported]

Vanderbilt, Sarah to Isaac and Phebe Mekeel. New York, 1845 1/9. [death of some family members and the sinking of the steamship Lexington on Long Island Sound]

[?] to cousin. Limoges, 1846? 4/4. [tells of his passage on ship to Limoges which began with the firing of a cannon]

Letters re Arthur Mekeel's sickness and death, 1850-1851. 1 folder (5 items)

Note: Also includes Dr. Valentine Mott's directions, which were medical instructions, such as the application of leeches

Fountain, Hosea to "respected sir." West Somers, 1851 4/19. [apparently a physician, Fountain writes a lengthy diagnosis of the disease from which Arthur Mekeel died]

Nichols, M. to "Friend Haviland." B. Asylum, 1850 4/12. [assures the recipient that the medication prescribed for Arthur Mekeel, Nux Vomica, was not the cause of death]