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Cannon and Cole Families Collection MS-948

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English
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Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country
Historical Collections

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Summary Information

Repository:	Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections
Creator:	Cannon and Cole Families
Title:	Cannon and Cole Families Collection
ID:	MS-948
Date [inclusive]:	1840-2012
Physical Description:	1.15 cubic feet (2 manuscript boxes and 1 flat box)
Language of the Material:	English
Mixed Materials [box]:	1-2
Mixed Materials [box]:	3
Abstract:	Collection, 1840-2012, documenting the Cannon and Cole Families.

Preferred Citation

MS-948, George H. Cannon Collection, Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Houghton, Michigan.

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Biography

George Henry Cannon was born to Pearl and Mary (Fuller) Cannon in Day, New York on December 30, 1826. He was one of eleven children. In 1833, the large family joined the vast wave of westward American migration, taking up residence in the town of Saline in Washtenaw County, Michigan. Four years later, the Cannons relocated to the small settlement of Bruce in Macomb County. Young George received a hard-won education in the rural schools, working for his teachers in exchange for tuition and for local families to compensate for his board.

In the early spring of 1846, nineteen-year-old Cannon signed on with the American Exploring Company to participate in a survey of the Lake Superior mineral region. Reports of abundant copper resources had sparked a frenetic rush to establish mines in the region just three years earlier, but the lackluster returns of most early endeavors had left would-be investors skeptical of the Upper Peninsula's mineralogical potential. The American Exploring Company--armed with abundant capital from the East Coast and outfitted with a charter from the state legislature of Vermont--proposed to resolve the uncertainty with a more extensive exploration of the region. More than sixty men set out under the company's auspices, dividing into seven teams of engineers, woodsmen, and adventurous but inexperienced youth like Cannon. As a member of the expedition, Cannon extensively traveled the shores of Lake Superior, visiting Wisconsin's Apostle Islands and various areas of the Upper Peninsula, including the Keweenaw Peninsula, the Porcupine Mountains, Pictured Rocks, and Sault Ste. Marie.

Upon his return to the Lower Peninsula in 1847, Cannon furthered his education at an advanced academy in Rochester, Michigan. He subsequently taught school in Oakland and Macomb counties before being hired by Judge W.A. Burt to conduct additional surveys in 1849. Following his successful work in the Saginaw region, Cannon was named a United States Deputy Surveyor in August 1850; his career through the mid-1850s took him to the Grand Traverse Bay, Cheboygan, and across the Upper Peninsula, where he completed the mineralogical survey interrupted by the death of Douglass Houghton. After the government discontinued public surveys in 1857, Cannon returned to Macomb County and engaged in selection and analysis of pine and farming lands in Michigan and Wisconsin.

In 1852, Cannon married Lucy Marie Cole, also a native of New York. The couple had six children, three of whom died in childhood. Of their surviving children, Howard Burt Cannon (b. 1868), married May Varney in 1892. Some of Howard and May's descendants are represented in this collection, including their son, Guy Henry Cannon (b. 1897) and his wife, Carrie Alta Bullock, as well as Guy and Carrie's daughter, Leah Cannon Atwater, and their son, Glen, and his wife, Linda.

George H. Cannon died in Shelby Township near Detroit on December 11, 1909 at the age of eighty-two.

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Collection Scope and Content Summary

Collection, 1840-2012, documenting the Cannon and Cole Families. The collection principally consists of correspondence, field notes, and maps created and assembled by George H. Cannon, documenting his work as a land surveyor in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Included in the collection are some of Cannon's diaries, as well as a memoir Cannon penned around 1906 using notes from his 1846 surveying journey around Lake Superior. The memoir details his encounters with native and European residents of the settlements his party visited

and commenting on such matters as the geology and terrain of the Upper Peninsula. Near the time of his death, Cannon wrote out the contents of his memoir in the style of popular contemporary narratives, but the manuscript remained unpublished until 1982, when a senior student at Kalamazoo College transcribed it as "A Narrative of One Year in the Wilderness." This bound volume includes illustrations, explicative footnotes, and an elaboration on the history of Cannon and the project.

Also included in the collection are several objects relating to Cannon's surveying work. Cannon worked closely with many surveying and geological contemporaries, including Douglass Houghton and William A. (Austin) Burt, the latter who was responsible for the invention of a solar compass in 1835 and the prime surveyor of the Wisconsin-Michigan boundary in 1847. Included in the collection is a solar compass, slide rule, and book on surveying owned by Cannon. Documents, essays, and correspondence in the collection document Burt's invention of the solar compass and his surveying work in the region, particularly related to the Wisconsin-Michigan border, of which, Cannon sought to demonstrate deprived Michigan of nearly six hundred square miles of territory.

While the vast majority of the collection consists of records created and retained by George H. Cannon, there is a small subset of records created following Cannon's death in December 1909. This material consists mostly of notes, correspondence, and a self-published manuscript on the Cannon and Cole family genealogies and dates from approximately 1915-1916, 1930 and 1976-1983. Included is a self-published family history written by Carrie Alta Bullock Cannon, the mother of Glen H. Cannon, a great-grandson of George Cannon. Correspondence from this period documents family genealogical research conducted by various Cannon descendants who retained Cannon's papers and along with their own research.

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Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series: SERIES I: George H. Cannon Papers and SERIES II: Cannon and Cole Families Genealogy.

Series I included original correspondence, notes, diaries, and maps; as well as a solar compass and slide ruler with case, used by George H. Cannon during his lifetime. The maps in this series include a geological and industrial map of the Grand Traverse Region (1865), the boundary line between Michigan and Wisconsin (1847), and a geological map of the Lake Superior Land District (1847); the fourth map is an unidentified and undated surveying map.

Series II consists of genealogical material created and assembled by Cannon's descendants regarding the family history of the Cannon and Cole Families. Included is correspondence, notes, family trees, publications, and photographs.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access

Available for use in the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections.

Processing History

Emily Riippa, 11/16/2016; Allison Neely, 06/22/2021

Conditions Governing Use

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Controlled Access Headings

- Genealogy
- Indians
- Indians of North America -- Michigan -- Upper Peninsula
- Surveying -- History
- Surveying -- Instruments
- Voyages and travels
- Copper Harbor (Mich.)
- Keweenaw Peninsula (Mich.)

- L'Anse (Mich.)
- Ontonagon (Mich.)
- Sault Sainte Marie (Mich.)
- Superior, Lake
- Wisconsin -- Description and travel
- Madeline Island (Wis.)
- Clippings (Information artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Letters (Correspondence)
- Maps
- Memoirs
- Notes
- Personal papers
- Photographs
- Publications
- Slide-rule
- Solar compass
- Cannon, George Henry
- Burt, William Austin

Collection Inventory

George H. Cannon papers		
Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence and notes, 1840-1908	box 1	folder 1-5
Diaries, 1882, 1884-1886	box 2	folder 1
Essays by George H. Cannon, 1848	box 2	folder 2
Field notebooks, undated, 1884	box 2	folder 3
Narrative of One Year in the Wilderness, A, approximately 1906	box 2	folder 4
Plane Surveying: A Text-Book and Pocket Manual, 1907	box 2	folder 5
Solar compass, dates	box 3	item 1
Slide ruler, undated	box 3	item 2
Slide ruler case, undated	box 3	item 3
Maps, undated, 1847-1965	folder 1	

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Cannon and Cole families genealogy

Title/Description	Instances	
Cannon and Cole families genealogy correspondence and notes, 1915-1916	box 2	folder 6
Home farm, Lapeer County, Michigan 1837-1920 by Carrie Alta Bullock Cannon, 1978	box 2	folder 7
Narrative of One Year in the Wilderness, A by George Cannon, published by Leah Cannon Atwater, 1982	box 2	folder 8
Wisconsin-Michigan border newspaper clipping and correspondence, 1906, 2012	box 2	folder 9

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