

Archives and Special Collections

Dickinson College

Carlisle, PA

**COLLECTION REGISTER**

Name: **Ayer, Dr. Joseph Cullen (?-1846)** **MC 1999.4**

Material: Family Papers (1836-1918)

Volume: 0.25 linear feet (1 Document Box, 1 Oversize Folder, 1 Photograph Folder)

Donation: Gift of Samuel & Anna D. Moyerman, 1967

Usage: These materials have been donated without restrictions on usage.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer was a medical doctor from Boston. He was married to Rachel Ellis, and they had two children, Ellen Corinna Ayer and Joseph Cullen Ayer, (often called "Cullen"), the latter of whom was born in 1839. In 1846, Dr. Ayer died and Rachel was made legal guardian of the children. She later remarried to Joshua Washburn. Her daughter Ellen Corinna married Charles H. Wheeler. Her son Cullen attended Harvard College and went on to enlist in the United States Army on August 20, 1861. He achieved the rank of First Lieutenant in the 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry and worked as an ambulance officer. While still in the service, he married Carolyn Elizabeth Roberts (referred to as "Carrie"), and the couple spent much of their early marriage apart due to the war. Cullen finally resigned from the Army on December 17, 1863. He worked as a land speculator in Tennessee and later as a businessman in Boston. He and Carrie had two sons, Joseph Cullen Ayer, Jr. and John L. Ayer. Joseph, Jr. married Cora Julia, and the couple had two children, Richard G. L. Ayer and Carolyn E. Ayer.

Apparently Cullen and Carrie Ayer had a very unhappy marriage from the beginning. Only a few years into their marriage she accused him of being "uncommunicative, selfish, and indifferent to her feelings," and on another occasion she cited his "vindictiveness against her family." In 1876, Cullen had "left her with no clue to his whereabouts." By the early 1880's he obviously was not living with the family any longer, and Carrie had apparently given up hope of maintaining a home with him. Letters from her became brief and curt as the two battled over the schooling and custody of their children. In the winter of 1883 Cullen and Carrie were living separately in Boston, he apparently not knowing that she was there.

Some confusion may arise as to who is being referred to by the name "Joseph Cullen Ayer" as this same name is found in three successive generations. To clarify, Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer, the patriarch of the family, is referred to by his medical title throughout the collection. His

son, Joseph Cullen Ayer (husband of Carrie (Roberts) Ayer) is referred to either with his military title of Lieutenant preceding his name or simply by the name "Cullen." His son, Joseph Cullen Ayer, always used "Jr." after his name to distinguish himself from his father.

## COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer Family Collection is housed in one document box, one oversized folder, and one photograph folder, and is arranged into the following four categories: Correspondence, Financial Material, Legal Material, and Miscellaneous Material. The collection contains the papers and associated materials of the immediate family of Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer, his wife, Rachel Ellis Ayer Washburn (remarried), and their son, Joseph Cullen Ayer, dating between 1836 and 1918.

The section entitled Correspondence contains letters, primarily from Carolyn "Carrie" (Roberts) Ayer to her husband, Joseph Cullen Ayer, dating between 1859 and 1891; Joseph spent a great deal of his time living apart from his family. None of his letters of reply to which Carrie refers are present in this collection. The Correspondence section also contains several miscellaneous letters to and from members of the Ayer family and close business associates. When more than one letter appears within a single folder, the number of letters for that folder can be found in parentheses to the right of the range of dates for those letters.

The section entitled Financial Material contains several records of the debts of Dr. John Cullen Ayer as well as an appraisal of his estate. Also included are miscellaneous receipts of business conducted by Rachel Ayer Washburn.

The section entitled Miscellaneous Material includes the report books of Cullen & Carrie Ayer's grandchildren Caroline and Richard, Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer's medical thesis entitled "Nephritis," three military instructional and drill books that belonged to Lieutenant Ayer (Cullen) while he was enlisted in the Army, and some poetry composed by Cullen.

The Legal Material has been separated from the collection and is contained in one oversized folder designated OC 1999.4. The Legal Material contains mostly quit-claim deeds and probate papers associated with Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer, his wife Rachel Washburn, and their son Joseph Cullen Ayer.

One photograph, perhaps of Cullen, has been designated PC 1999.4 and is separated from the collection in a folder housed with the Dickinson College photo collection.

## COLLECTION INVENTORY

### BOX 1 - MC 1999.4

#### CORRESPONDENCE

Ayer?, Addie

Folder 01) Letter to her cousin, Joseph Cullen Ayer - Mar. 4, 1863

Ayer, Carolyn Elizabeth (Roberts)

Folder 02) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Aug. - Oct. 1859 (3)

Folder 03) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Mar. - Nov. 1860 (9)

## BOX 1 - MC 1999.4 (cont.)

- Ayer, Carolyn Elizabeth (Roberts)
- Folder 04) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Dec.1861 - Oct.1862 (6)
  - Folder 05) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Mar. - Sept.1863 (2)
  - Folder 06) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Aug.1864 - Feb.1865 (9)
  - Folder 07) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - July 1876 - Nov.1891 (6)
  - Folder 08) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - undated (3)
  - Folder 09) Letter to Edward Page - Nov. 23, 1860
- Ayer, John L.
- Folder 10) Letter to his father, Joseph Cullen Ayer - Dec. 18, 1891
- Ayer, Joseph Cullen
- Folder 11) Letter to Edward Page, Jr. - Feb. 27, 1860
  - Folder 12) Letter to Charles H. Wheeler – Feb. 27, 1860  
Letter to Ellen Corinna (Ayer) Wheeler - Apr. 14, 1888
  - Folder 13) Miscellaneous letters received - Dec.1861 - June 1894 (6)
- Brown, E.
- Folder 14) Letter to Capt. R.A. Bright - Sept. 12, 1900
- Copeland, F.
- Folder 15) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Nov. - Dec.1864 (2)
- Lewis, Winslow, Jr.
- Folder 16) Letter to the Boston Dispensary - Mar. 24, 1836
- Roberts, Mrs.
- Folder 17) Letter to Joseph Cullen Ayer (son-in-law) - Sept. 15, 1865
- Roly, Henry C.
- Folder 18) Letter to J. E. Dutcher - Dec. 21, 1860
- Washburn, Rachel (Ellis) Ayer
- Folder 19) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer (son) - May 1865 - June 1883
- Wheeler, Charles H.
- Folder 20) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Feb.1865 - Nov.1868 (3)
- Wheeler, Ellen Corinna (Ayer)
- Folder 21) Letters to Joseph Cullen Ayer (brother) - 1869-1894 (3)

### FINANCIAL MATERIAL

- Ayer, Dr. Joseph Cullen
- Folder 22) Records of debts and an estate appraisal - 1834-1841
- Washburn, Rachel (Ellis) Ayer
- Folder 23) Receipts - 1860-1867

### MISCELLANEOUS MATERIAL

- Ayer, Caroline Elizabeth
- Folder 24) Report Book from Miss Hill's School for Girls - 1917-1918
- Ayer, Dr. Joseph Cullen
- Folder 25) Medical Thesis on Nephritis – 1836

### **BOX 1 - MC 1999.4 (cont.)**

- Ayer, Joseph Cullen  
Folder 26) Original poetry - 1859-1860  
Folder 27) "Hardee's Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics, etc." New York - 1861  
"U.S. Volunteer: A Book of Instructions for Officers and Soldiers,  
Comprising the Principles of Aiming and Target Practice,  
etc." Boston - 1861  
"The Zouave Drill Book: French Bayonet Exercise and  
Skirmisher's Drill." Philadelphia - 1861
- Ayer, Richard G. L.  
Folder 28) Report Book from The Phillip Brooks School - 1912-1913  
Report Book from William Penn Charter School - 1917-1918

### **OVERSIZED - OC 1999.4**

#### **LEGAL MATERIAL**

- Folder 01) Ayer, Dr. Joseph Cullen  
Mortgage contract with Uriah Ritchie - Sept. 15, 1835  
Ayer, Joseph Cullen  
Quit-claim deed to Rachel (Ellis) Ayer - Dec. 21, 1860  
Ayer, Luther  
Deed of sale to Joseph Cullen Ayer - Sept. 14, 1844  
Dawes, Henry  
Quit-claim deed to Joseph Cullen Ayer - May 1, 1841  
Quit-claim deed to Rachel E. Ayer - Nov. 25, 1846  
Emerson, Sally  
Bill of Sale to Dr. Joseph Cullen Ayer - May 28, 1838  
Sibby and Soving  
Contract to build two houses - Jan. 14, 1841  
Washburn, Rachel (Ellis) Ayer  
Bill of Sale to E. Corinna Wheeler - Jan. 5, 1885  
Bond agreement (copy) with Caroline E. Roberts - Dec. 1, 1860  
Probate papers of the estate of Dr. John Cullen Ayer - Feb. 2, 1846  
Wheeler, Charles. H.  
Quit-claim deed to Rachel E. Ayer - Dec. 21, 1860.

### **PHOTOGRAPHS - PC 1999.4**

- Folder 01) Unknown, possibly Joseph Cullen Ayer

This collection register was prepared by Sarah W. Dunham, March 1999.