

The Jonathan P. Webster Papers

The Oskar Diethelm Library
DeWitt Wallace Institute for the History of Psychiatry
Weill Cornell Medical College
525 East 68th Street
New York, New York 10065

Arranged and described by:
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Provenance

The Jonathan P. Webster Papers were purchased in June 1968 from Howard S. Mott Rare Books in Sheffield, Massachusetts with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Blatt.

There are no restrictions on use of this collection.

The collection occupies 1 cubic ft. and is housed in one .4 cubic ft. box and one print box.

Biography

Jonathan Palmer Webster (sometimes called "Dr.") was a New Englander and a practitioner in spreading the popular fame of mesmerism, now called hypnotism. He was interested in its medical aspects. Webster gave many public lectures and demonstrated experiments on mesmerism along the Eastern seaboard. He also taught courses in this subject. His other interests, pursued prior to his involvement in mesmerism, were phrenology and penmanship, for which he also taught courses.

Scope and Content

Most of the Webster collection dates from the 1840's when he was actively engaged in presenting lectures and demonstrations on mesmerism. Manuscript material includes his writings on mesmerism and phrenology, prospectuses with names of subscribers to the courses and record of payment, testimonials signed by participants in his courses, and a record book indicating places Webster practiced phrenology, amount of money received, and names of some individuals examined. There is also some material relating to his career as an instructor of calligraphy, such as examples of his penmanship style.

Printed and published material encompasses broadsides and some posters announcing lectures on mesmerism, with a few on phrenology, including demonstrations of painless dentistry. Most of the broadsides advertise Webster's presentations. Some announce other practitioners, Dr. Boynton and Louis De Bonneville. The collection includes a scrapbook of news clippings about his courses on mesmerism, in addition to publications about various aspects of mesmerism, magnetism, and phrenology. He wrote one himself, entitled "A Treatise on Phrenology." These publications date from 1824-1849, with the majority from the 1840's. The collection also includes a cigar case with a portrait presumably of a figure in the history of mesmerism.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1	Cigar case with a portrait, presumably of a figure in the history of mesmerism	n.d.
2	Admission tickets to Webster's lectures on mesmerism	n.d.
3	"A Treatise on Phrenology embracing a Chart, By P. Webster, Professor of Phrenology"	1843
4	Webster's writings on phrenology	n.d.
5	Prospectus for Webster's course on mesmerism, with names of subscribers and record of payment	1840's
6	Testimonials for Webster's course on mesmerism, signed by subscribers to the lectures	1843-1847
7	Record book indicating places Webster practiced phrenology, amount of money received, names of some individuals examined	after Feb 1840
8	List of debtors at Webster's writing schools	1837-1842
9	Essay on colic written by Mr. Dow	n.d.
10	Notes about nitric muriatic acid, not written by Webster	n.d.
11	Webster's drawing of a phrenological chart	n.d.
12	Broadsides announcing Webster's writing and drawing academy	1842
13	Three examples of Webster's penmanship	n.d.
14	Broadsides announcing lectures and exhibitions on phrenology given by Webster	n.d.

15	Broadsides announcing lectures and experiments on mesmerism given by Webster	1843
16	Broadsides announcing lectures and experiments on mesmerism given by Webster	1844
17	Broadsides announcing lectures and experiments on mesmerism given by Webster	1845-1847
18	Broadsides announcing lectures and experiments on mesmerism given by Webster	n.d.
19	Posters announcing lectures and experiments on mesmerism given by Webster	n.d.
20	Broadsides announcing lectures and experiments on mesmerism and phrenology given by Dr. Boynton and Louis De Bonneville	1844-1847
21	Publication on phrenology including etchings. By D. C. Johnston	1837

Box 2

Folder 1	Scrapbook of newsclippings of Webster's course on mesmerism	1843-1847
2	Publication, "A Treatise on Phrenology" by J. Palmer	1843
3	Publications on magnetism and mesmerism C – D	1843-1847
4	Publications on magnetism and mesmerism E – H	1843-1846
5	Publications on magnetism and mesmerism M	1824-1849
6	Publications on magnetism and mesmerism N – W	1843-1846
7	Publications on phrenology	1837-1843
8	New York Magnetic Journal	1845
9	Catalogs of medical instruments and books	1846
10	Publication re: phonetic stenography	1847
11	Miscellaneous letters	1840s
12	Miscellaneous letters	1840s