

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historical note 2. Scope and content 3. Provenance 4. Processing note 5. Inventory 6. Subjects <p>List of finding aids R.I.H.S. Library page R.I.H.S. home page</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Christopher A. Greene Family Papers</h2> <p>Educator, Providence and elsewhere. Family papers, 1830-1921 Size: 0.5 linear feet Catalog number: MSS 1003 Processed by: Rick Stattler, August 1997</p> <p style="text-align: center;">©Rhode Island Historical Society Manuscripts Division</p>
---	---

Historical note:

Christopher A. Greene (1816-1853) was a son of sea captain Nathaniel Greene (1789-1841) and Abby Sophia Casey (1794-1838) of East Greenwich, R.I. His great-uncle was the famous general Nathanael Greene. Christopher graduated from West Point in 1836, and served as a lieutenant in the Topographical Engineers, but resigned in protest against the Seminole War. He then worked briefly in his uncle's law office in Providence before settling upon teaching as his true calling. He also became an active abolitionist and Transcendentalist. In 1841, he helped publish *The Plain Speaker*, a short-lived Transcendentalist journal in Providence. One of its stated precepts was that "Chattel slavery will not be abolished until heavy and earnest blows have been struck at the entire system of labor for wages." Among his partners in this venture were wool and dye dealer William Chace (1786-1875) and his five children. Christopher married one of his daughters, Sarah Chace (1818-1904), in 1842. They had five children as follows:

Abby Sophia (Chace) Atwater (b.1844), married Richard Atwater.

Sarah Anna Chace (1846-1847)

Christopher W.C. Greene (1848-1862)

Eliza C. (Greene) Chace (1851-1924), m. Arnold B. Chace. Had son, Malcolm G. Chace.

William Chace Greene (1852-1928), married and had children.

For two years, the family lived at the Holly Home, a small communal farm in North Providence with Sarah's two sisters and their husbands. In 1843, Christopher and Sarah left to begin a school in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts. His unorthodox teaching style often brought him in conflict with town elders, though he was remembered fondly by his students. Over the next ten years, Christopher and Sarah lived in several towns. They may have lived briefly in Amos Bronson Alcott's famous Fruitlands utopian community. Christopher opened a school in Nashua, New Hampshire (1844), taught at a Normal School in Bridgewater, Mass. (1845), helped start a private school in Boston (1847), served as headmaster of the Milton Academy in Massachusetts (1849-1851), and founded a military academy, the Mt. Ida School in Dorchester, Mass. (1851-1852). His health, which had been poor since his military service in Florida, began to fail, and he took a position at a military academy in Marietta, Georgia (1852-1853), hoping the climate would help. He returned to Providence for his final months, and died in November of 1853 at the age of 37. Sarah operated a school for girls in Providence for many years afterward.

Bibliography:

Clarke, Louise Brownell. *the Greenes of Rhode Island...* (New York: Published by author, 1903), pages 334, 503, 643

Stoller, Leo. "Christopher A. Greene: Rhode Island Transcendentalist", *Rhode Island History*, October 1963, 97-116.

Webster, Joseph R. *Christopher Albert Greene: A Teacher in Milton from 1849 to 1851*. (Reprinted from the Milton Record, 1915). An informative short biography of our diarist's husband.

R.I. Cemetery Database.

[Return to top](#)

Scope and content:

The most important items in this collection are probably two diaries kept by Christopher and Sarah. Sarah's diary extends from 1843 to 1854, but deals almost exclusively with the growth and development of her five children. Christopher's was written entirely during the last months of his life. Neither sheds much light on their involvement with Transcendentalism or utopian communities.

There are also eight letters received by a Henry D. Sellman of Baltimore: three from Christopher and five from Sarah. Sellman had been a student of the Greenses in Milton, and had boarded with them there as well (see his comments in Webster's book above). These letters are a good source on the Greenses' teaching activities.

The collection also includes records of Christopher's military training and teaching, three poems, and a folder of letters to the Atwater family, including two from Sarah Greene, and several discussing the Greenses.

[Return to top](#)

Provenance:

The bulk of this collection arrived in two gifts of Sarah A.G. Smith (great-granddaughter of the author) of the Atwater Archives in 1972 and 1991. One West Point textbook and one folder of letters from Christopher A. Greene to Henry Sellman arrived as a gift from Greene's great-great-grandson Malcolm G. Chace III in 1997. The donor of the photocopies of Greene's military record is unknown, but the originals are at the National Archives.

[Return to top](#)

Processing note:

[Return to top](#)

Inventory:

Folder 1. CAG: Military service record, 1830-1837. Photostat from National Archives.

Folder 2. CAG: Artillery textbook from West Point, 1833, with humorous annotations.

Folder 3. CAG: Notebook from West Point, ca. 1834 (marked "circa 1816")

Folder 4. CAG: Record book of school in Tyngsboro, Mass., 1843-1844.

Folder 5. CAG: Diary and student records, 1/15/1853 - 8/1/1853.

Diary continued by Sarah, 8/1/1853 - 11/28/1853.

Folder 6. CAG: Will, 11/27/1853.

Folder 7. Letters from CAG and Sarah, to Henry Sellman of Baltimore, 1851-1854, 1868.

Folder 8. Diary of Sarah Chace Greene, 1843-1854.

Folder 9. Poems:

"Song for June", Sarah A. Chace, 1838. Note reads "Published in Prov. Journal!"

Begins "My blessed child...", addressed to Sarah A. Greene, undated
"Choice Expressions", unsigned, undated

Folder 10. Atwater family letters (mostly Abby S. Greene Atwater)
William Maxwell Greene to niece Abby S. (Greene) Atwater, undated fragment
Aunt Matty to Abby Sophia (Greene) Atwater, undated
Richard Ward Greene to cousin Abby Sophia (Greene) Atwater, 7/28/?
Richard Ward Greene to cousin Abby Sophia (Greene) Atwater, 8/11/?
William Maxwell Greene to Richard Atwater, 12/7/1918
Richard Ward Greene to cousin Abby Sophia (Greene) Atwater, 3/18/1917
Charles C. Greene of Chile to Richard Atwater, 10/8/1893
Charles C. Greene of Chile to Richard Atwater, 4/8/1894
Elena C. Greene of Chile to Abby Sophia (Greene) Atwater, 4/20/1921
Seven letters from uncle Charles C. Greene of Chile to ASA, 1895-1907
Sarah A. Greene to granddaughter Anna D. Atwater, 5/18/1903 and 7/11/1904
Alice Atwater to ASA on death of Sarah A. Chace Greene, [1904].
"Washington as a Statesman", address, R.M. Atwater to American Club, Paris, 1906.

[Return to top](#)

Subjects:

Atwater, Abby Sophia (Greene)
Atwater, Richard M.
Children - Massachusetts
Diaries - 1843-1854
Diaries - 1853
Greene, Christopher A. (1816-1853)
Greene, Sarah (Chace) (1818-1904)
Greene, William Maxwell (b.1832)
Military education
Teachers - Massachusetts
Transcendentalism - Rhode Island
Tyngsboro, Mass. - Schools
West Point Military Academy

[End of finding aid - return to top](#)

RIHS1822