

Henry William Parsons Correspondence and Diaries
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2016

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2010085562>

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Collection Summary

Title: Henry William Parsons Correspondence and Diaries

Span Dates: 1871-1887

ID No.: MSS85562

Creator: Parsons, Henry William, 1840-1913

Extent: 45 items

Extent: 2 containers

Extent: .4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2010085562>

Summary: English Congregational minister and temperance advocate. Diaries and correspondence documenting his temperance work for the International Order of Good Templars with African Americans in North Carolina, as well as his ministerial work in England and the United States, and his travels with the Fisk Jubilee Singers during their European tour of 1878.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Aldrich, Mathilda Parsons, approximately 1838- --Correspondence.

Bennett family--Correspondence.

Parsons family--Correspondence.

Parsons, E. Dudley (Ernest Dudley), 1876-1952--Correspondence.

Parsons, Henry William, 1840-1914.

Parsons, Sarah Bennett, 1842-1914--Correspondence.

Payne, Daniel Alexander, 1811-1893.

Tanner, Benj. T. (Benjamin Tucker), 1835-1923.

Toms, Elizabeth Parsons, approximately 1835- --Correspondence.

Organizations

African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Fisk University.

Independent Order of Good Templars.

Jubilee Singers (Fisk University)

Subjects

African American clergy.

African American musicians.

African American universities and colleges.

African Americans--North Carolina.

Congregationalists--England.

Congregationalists--Middle West.

Congregationalists--United States.

Temperance--North Carolina.

Temperance.

Voyages and travels.

Places

United States--Description and travel.

Occupations

Clergy.

Reformers.

Provenance

The correspondence and diaries of Henry William Parsons, Congregational minister and temperance advocate, were given to the Library of Congress by Janet Parsons Mackey in 2010.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Henry William Parsons is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The correspondence and diaries of Henry William Parsons are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Henry William Parsons Correspondence and Diaries, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1840, Mar. 1	Born, Devonshire, England; orphaned as a child, worked in his youth as a coal-worker and brickyard laborer
1862	Ordained a Congregational minister
1865	Married Sarah Bennett (died 1914)
1871	Initiated into the Independent Order of Good Templars, a temperance organization; became active in the temperance movement.
1876	Temperance work with African Americans in North Carolina sponsored by the Independent Order of Good Templars
1878	Escorted the Fisk Jubilee Singers in England during their European tour
1883	Immigrated to the United States along with his wife and eight children; served in several Midwestern churches before settling in Edina-Morningside on the border of Minneapolis, Minn.
1913, Sept. 15	Died, Minnesota

Scope and Content Note

The correspondence and diaries of Henry William Parsons span the years 1871-1887. Parsons's diaries comprise most of the collection, but also included are letters to his wife written in 1876 while Parsons was in North Carolina promoting temperance among African Americans. Other diaries document his life and work in England, his immigration to the United States in 1883, and his continued work in the ministry in the American Midwest.

Parsons was born and ordained a Congregationalist pastor in England. After becoming active in the temperance movement and under the sponsorship of the Independent Order of Good Templars, he sailed to the United States in 1876 to promote temperance among African Americans in North Carolina. The letters to his wife and the diary chronicle his round-trip

journey and experiences in the United States including his meetings with African Methodist Episcopal clergymen Benjamin T. Tanner and Daniel A. Payne as well as numerous African-American pastors in North Carolina. He returned to England the end of December. The diary for 1878 includes his time escorting the Fisk Jubilee Singers during one of their tours of Europe. Fisk University, the historically black college in Nashville, Tennessee, formed the a cappella singing group in 1871 and sent it on fund-raising tours. Parsons traveled with the group during the last tour using the original singers. The Fisk Jubilee Singers were instrumental in establishing the Negro Spiritual as an important genre in American choral literature.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Diaries Vol. I, 1871-1872 (3 folders) Vol. II, 1874, June-Dec. Vol. III, 1875 (2 folders) Vol. IV, 1876 (2 folders) Vol. V, 1878 (2 folders)
BOX 2	Vol. VI, 1880-1882 (5 folders) Vol. VII, 1883-1887 (2 folders) Letters to his wife, Sarah Bennett, 1876 (2 folders)