

Guide to the James Wesley Cooper Papers

MS 791



compiled by Ruth Gay

June 1980

Yale University Library
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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 791

CREATOR: Cooper, James W., 1842-1916

TITLE: James Wesley Cooper papers

DATES: 1787-1925

BULK DATES: 1787-1916

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Chiefly correspondence and diaries of James Wesley Cooper documenting his career as a Congregational minister, and his service as a Fellow of Yale University (1886-1916). The only personal correspondence are forty-four letters from Cooper to his fiancée in 1865 and fourteen additional letters (1877-1905). The diaries (1869-1914) provide a daily record of his work as a minister and of his visits to churches and schools in the South supported by the American Missionary Association. He was an officer of the Association between 1903 and 1914. Also in the papers are a letter from Richard Ely to Elizur May, 1787 Jun 3, a resolution of the Hartford South Association, 1819 Jun 1 and minutes taken by Noah Porter of an ecclesiastical council meeting, 1837 Nov 13.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0791>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0791>.

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of James Wayne Cooper, 1975.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

James Wesley Cooper Papers (MS 791). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

James Wesley Cooper, B.A. 1865

Born October 6, 1842, in New Haven, Conn.

Died March 16, 1916, in New York City

James Wesley Cooper was the son of James Ford Cooper, a carriage manufacturer, and Cornelia (Walkley) Cooper, and was born October 6, 1842, in New Haven, Conn., where he was prepared for college at the Hopkins Grammar School. His father was the son of Timothy and Sarah (Ford) Cooper and a descendant of Timothy Ford, who came to this country from England in 1639. Through his mother, who was the daughter of Joel and Sybil (Austin) Walkley, he was descended from Richard Walkley. At Yale, he was a member of Linonia and the Beethoven Society, and received a Dispute appointment in Junior year, in the latter part of which he withdrew to accept a commission as assistant adjutant general of Connecticut with the rank of captain. On petition of his classmates, the degree of B.A., with enrollment in the Class of 1865, was voted to him by the Yale Corporation in 1879, because of the fact that he had seen service in the Civil War.

In 1868, Mr. Cooper was graduated from Andover Theological Seminary, and, following his ordination to the Congregational ministry in September of that year, he served for three years as pastor of the Congregational Church at Rockport, Mass. He held the pastorate of the Lockport (N. Y.) Congregational Church from 1871 to 1878, and in the latter year accepted a call to the South Congregational Church of New Britain, Conn. He held that charge for the next twenty-five years, and during his pastorate the church membership increased until it became one of the largest in the state. In 1903, he resigned to become senior corresponding secretary of the American Missionary Association, with headquarters in New York City. For the next seven years, while directing the home mission work of the Congregational Church in America, he traveled extensively in the interests of the association. He was made one of its vice presidents upon his retirement in 1910, and held that office until two years ago. For the past six years, he had made his home at Hartford, Conn., and had given most of his time to writing on theological subjects, although he continued to preach occasionally.

From 1884 until 1914, Dr. Cooper was a corporate member of the American Board of commissioners for Foreign Missions, and in 1891 he was sent as a delegate to the International Council of Congregational Churches at London. From 1878 to 1888, he acted as chaplain of the First Regiment, Connecticut National Guard. He was a member of the Governor's Staff Association. Dr. Cooper had served as a Fellow of Yale University since 1885, being also a member of the Prudential Committee. He was a trustee of Hampton Institute, Piedmont College, Atlanta Theological Seminary, Fisk University, Talladega College, Tougaloo University, Straight University, and Tillotson College. In 1886, Olivet College conferred the honorary degree of D.D. upon him.

Dr. Cooper's death occurred very suddenly, from heart trouble, March 16, 1916, in New York City, where he was staying for a few days. His body was taken to New Britain for burial in Fairview Cemetery.

He was married August 13, 1868, in Manchester, Conn., to Ellen M., daughter of Elisha Edgerton and Charlotte Day (Spencer) Hilliard, who survived him. He also left his two sons: Elisha Hilliard (B.A. 1892) and James Earnest, who received the degree of B.A. at Yale in 1895 and that of LL.B. at Harvard three years later.

From *Obituary Record of Yale Graduates, 1915-1916*, pp. 61-62

Scope and Contents

The James Wesley Cooper Papers consist of four archive boxes and are almost entirely made up of letters and diaries. There are also two essays in manuscript, two printed sermons and newspaper clippings documenting Cooper's career as a preacher, with reports on sermons, on special events and on his changes in pulpits.

The papers are largely a record of his service as a Congregational minister (1868-1903), his work for the American Missionary Association (1903-1910) and his participation in the affairs of Yale University as a Fellow (1885-1916) and as Acting Secretary of the University (1911-1912). The papers are divided into three series.

Series I, CORRESPONDENCE, is chiefly made up of letters from fellow clergymen on questions of arrangements for meetings, invitations to preach and discussions of conferences. Under the heading Yale University are numerous letters received by Cooper during his service as a member of the Corporation. While some are routine announcements, others discuss substantive matters. Among these are a letter from Albert S. Wheeler, enclosed in a letter from A.F. Beard (1899 May 16), explaining the resignation of Arthur T. Hadley as dean of the Graduate Department, another from Timothy Dwight (1886 Oct 19) on the change of name from Yale College to Yale University, and a letter from Williston Walker discussing the possibility of a union between the Hartford Theological Seminary and the Yale Divinity School. The correspondence is arranged alphabetically by sender.

The CORRESPONDENCE series also contains a collection of Cooper's letters to his wife. The largest group (44) were written in 1865, the year in which they were engaged. The remaining fourteen letters were written between 1877 and 1905.

Series II, PERSONAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL, consists of material on Cooper's life before entering the ministry and of obituaries. Among the items are papers relating to his service during the Civil War as assistant adjutant general of Connecticut (with the rank of captain), papers on his attendance at Yale College and his honorary degree (1879), and two essays.

Series III, CHURCH ACTIVITIES, is made up of papers relating to his life as a minister and is arranged by the congregations he served. After leaving his last congregation in New Britain, Connecticut in 1903, he joined the American Missionary Association to become senior corresponding secretary. In this capacity, he made several trips to the South to inspect schools and churches supported by the Association. Two letters to Cooper from Booker T. Washington, which were written in this connection are filed in CORRESPONDENCE. The major part of Series III is made up of thirty-nine brief-entry diaries and travel record books (1869-1914) documenting Cooper's daily life as a minister, his visits to the South and to theological conferences abroad. Three early items on church affairs are also included in this series: a letter from Richard Ely to Elizur May (1878 Jun 3) on his joining "the Association," a resolution adopted at a meeting of the Hartford South

Association (1819 Jun 1), and minutes kept by Noah Porter of a meeting of an Ecclesiastical Council in Berlin, Connecticut (1837 Nov 13).

Arrangement

Arranged in three series: I. Correspondence. II. Personal and Biographical. III. Church Activities.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence

A - B		
b. 1, f. 1	Abbott, Lyman	1879 March 14, 1894 December 31
b. 1, f. 1	Armstrong, Samuel C.	1888 December 31, 188? June 13
b. 1, f. 1	Bacon, Leonard Woolsey	1879 August 21
b. 1, f. 1	Baldwin, Simeon E.	1899 November 17
b. 1, f. 1	Beecher, Thomas K.	1878 January 5
b. 1, f. 1	Brooks, Phillips	1883 December 6
b. 1, f. 1	Burton, Nathaniel J.	1877 March 8
b. 1, f. 2	Cooper, James W. to Ellen E. Williard Cooper [44 items]	1865 June 26- December 30
b. 1, f. 3	Cooper, James W. to Ellen E. Williard Cooper	1877 August 3-1905 February 6
b. 1, f. 3a	Courtenay, Mayor, to James W. Cooper	November 10, 1881
F - R		
b. 1, f. 4	Fairbanks, Horace	1887 August 31
b. 1, f. 4	King, Henry C.	1902 December 1
b. 1, f. 4	Moody, Dwight L.	1885 September 4, October 5, October 6
b. 1, f. 4	Ogden, Robert C.	1902 April 1, [1902] May 16
b. 1, f. 4	Palmer, Ray	1877 June 11
b. 1, f. 4	Robinson, Henry L.	1887 February 9
S - W		
b. 1, f. 5	Shipman, Nathaniel	1893 September 30, 1898 April 25
b. 1, f. 5	Trumbull, Henry Clay	1897 March 28

S - W (continued)

b. 1, f. 5	Twichell, Joseph H.	Undated
b. 1, f. 5	Ward, William Hayes	1900 January 25
b. 1, f. 5	Washington, Booker T.	1903 January 16, 1904 January 5
b. 1, f. 5	Wright, Henry P.	1890 February 4
Yale University		
b. 1, f. 6	Beard, Augustus H.	1898 December 1-1899 May 16
C - D		
b. 1, f. 7	Curtis, Edward Lewis	1912 October 6
b. 1, f. 7	Dexter, Franklin Bowditch	1885 October 29, 1897 July 7
D		
b. 1, f. 8	Dwight, Timothy	1882-1901
E - H		
b. 1, f. 9	Embree, Edwin Rogers	1911 December 16, 1916 February 24
b. 1, f. 9	Fisher, George Park	1883 September 28-1900 November 21
b. 1, f. 9	Hadley, Arthur Twining	1901 May 24-1907 January 28
M - W		
b. 1, f. 10	Munger, Theodore T.	1893 April 12, 1901 February 28
b. 1, f. 10	Parker, Edwin Pond	1904 December 12-1910 January 24
b. 1, f. 10	Porter, Noah	1880 June 3, July 5
b. 1, f. 10	Phelps, William Lyon	1902 May 24
b. 1, f. 10	Seymour, T.D.	1898 January 20
b. 1, f. 10	Stokes, Anson Phelps	1906 December 24-1912 September 4

Yale University > M - W (continued)

b. 1, f. 10	Thomson, Elihu	1890 June 17
b. 1, f. 10	Twichell, J.H.	1902 February 7, 10
b. 1, f. 10	Walker, Williston	1907 February 6, 25, December 10
b. 1, f. 10	Woolsey, Theodore D.	1907 June 15

Series II: Personal and Biographical

b. 2, f. 11	Ms, "Life", Hopkins Grammar School. 2 p.	1859
b. 2, f. 12	Yale University. Bill and correspondence re: leaves of absence (1864-1865) and award of honorary M.A. (1879)	1864-1879
b. 2, f. 13	Connecticut. Adjutant General's office. Correspondence and legal papers	1864-1868, undated
b. 2, f. 14	Certificate of licensure	1867 December 10
b. 2, f. 15	Ms commonplace book	1868
	Yale University. Memorabilia	
b. 2, f. 16	Autographed menu	1901
b. 2, f. 16	Photograph	1907
b. 2, f. 17	Ms, "Some observations of a pew-holder." [2 versions]	[after 1903?]
b. 2, f. 18	Obituaries and dedication of church tablet	1916, 1925
b. 2, f. 19	Yale University. Letters to Elisha Cooper concerning his father, James Wesley Cooper	1942, 1945

Series III: Church Activities

b. 2, f. 20	American Missionary Association. Letter, report, printed matter	1903-1905, undated
b. 2, f. 21	Canandaigua, N.Y. Correspondence re: Call Lockport, N.Y.	1878 January 22- February 13
b. 2, f. 22	Correspondence, memoranda	1871-1878
b. 2, f. 23	Clippings	1871-1878
	New Britain, Conn.	
b. 2, f. 24	Correspondence re: Call and installation notes	1878 February 11-March 20
b. 2, f. 25	Correspondence	1879-1903
b. 2, f. 26	Photograph. Washington St. Parsonage occupied by J.W. Cooper	Undated
b. 2, f. 27	Sermons	1883-1884
b. 2, f. 28	Clippings	[1878-1903]
b. 2, f. 29	Rockport, Mass.	
	Papers of others	
b. 2, f. 30	Edwards, Timothy. Ms sermon notes	1713
b. 2, f. 30	Ely, Richard. ALS to Elizur May	1787 June 3
b. 2, f. 31	Fenn, Nathan. Sermons	1748 March 6, 1756 February 1, 1766 November 9, 1783 December 19
b. 2, f. 31	Hartford South Association, Bristol, Conn. Ms, resolutions	1819 June 1
b. 2, f. 32	Porter, Noah. Ms, minutes of a meeting of the Ecclesiastical Council, Berlin, Conn.	1837 November 13
	Diaries	
b. 3, f. 33-37	1861, 1868, 1870-1884	1861, 1868, 1870-1884
b. 4, f. 38-40	1886, 1890-1896, 1901-1903	1886, 1890-1896, 1901-1903
	James Wesley Cooper. Diaries	
b. 4, f. 41-43	1905-1909, 1911-1914	1905-1909, 1911-1914

b. 5, f. 44	First Congregational Church, Lockport, N.Y. Records, two volumes	1871-1902
b. 5, f. 45	Scrapbook containing clippings relating to Connecticut militia's trip to Charleston, 1881 S.C.	

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Clergy
Congregational churches -- Connecticut
Courtship
Missionaries
Religion -- Connecticut

Geographic Names

Berlin (Conn.)
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

Genres / Formats

Diaries
Sermons

Names

Abbott, Lyman, 1835-1922
Armstrong, S. C. (Samuel Chapman), 1839-1893
Bacon, Leonard Woolsey, 1830-1907
Baldwin, Simeon E. (Simeon Eben), 1840-1927
Beard, Augustus Field, 1833-1934
Beecher, Thomas Kinnicut, 1824-1900
Burton, Nathaniel J. (Nathaniel Judson),
1822-1887
Cooper, James W., 1842-1916
Curtis, Edward Lewis, 1853-1911
Dexter, Franklin Bowditch, 1842-1920
Dwight, Timothy, 1828-1916
Edwards, Timothy, 1738-1813
Ely, Richard, 1765-1816
Embree, Edwin R. (Edwin Rogers), 1883-1950
Fenn, Nathan, 1750 or 1751-1799
Fisher, George Park, 1827-1909
Hadley, Arthur Twining, 1856-1930
King, Henry Churchill, 1858-1934
May, Elizur
Moody, Dwight Lyman, 1837-1899
Munger, Theodore Thornton, 1830-1910
Ogden, Robert C. (Robert Curtis), 1836-1913
Palmer, Ray, 1808-1887
Parker, Edwin Pond, 1836-1920
Phelps, William Lyon, 1865-1943
Porter, Noah, 1811-1892

Shipman, Nathaniel, 1828-1906
Stokes, Anson Phelps, 1874-1958
Thomson, Elihu, 1853-1937
Trumbull, H. Clay (Henry Clay), 1830-1903
Twichell, Joseph Hopkins, 1838-1918
Walker, Williston, 1860-1922
Ward, William Hayes, 1835-1916
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915
Wayland, Francis, 1826-1904
Wheeler, Arthur M. (Arthur Martin), 1836-
Woolsey, Theodore Dwight, 1801-1889

Corporate Bodies

American Missionary Association
Yale Corporation
Yale University. Divinity School
Yale University -- Officials and employees
Yale University -- Students