

Archives and Special Collections

Dickinson College

Carlisle, PA

**COLLECTION REGISTER**

Name:           **Johnson, Herman Merrills (1815-1868)**   **MC 2003.9**

Material:       Papers (1852-1868)

Volume:        0.5 linear feet (1 Document Box and 1 Oversized Folder)

Donation:      Original accession

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

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Herman Merrills Johnson was born on November 25, 1815 in Butternut Township, New York, near Albany. He attended Casenovia Seminary and then went to Wesleyan University, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and graduated with an A.B. degree in 1839. Following graduation, he became a professor of ancient languages at St. Charles College in Missouri until 1842. At that time he moved on to be a professor at Augusta College in Kentucky where he remained for only two years. In 1844, Johnson began teaching at Ohio Wesleyan University and would remain there until coming to Dickinson in 1850, when he took up the post of professor of English literature under the administrations of Jesse Truesdell Peck and Charles Collins. In 1852, Johnson was granted a D.D. degree from Ohio Wesleyan University.

During his ten years as a professor at Dickinson College, Johnson worked with three students to organize the "Eclectic Society of Dickinson College." This society became active on May 12, 1852 as a chapter of Wesleyan University's Phi Nu Theta, a fraternity to which Johnson belonged during his college days. This group marked the first fraternity at the College, but was soon followed by others such as Phi Kappa Sigma in 1854 and Sigma Chi in 1859.

Following Collins' resignation in 1860, Johnson was elected as the twelfth president of Dickinson College. Much of his presidential term was occupied with the effects that the American Civil War had on the College. At the outbreak of war, students from both sides left the College. Johnson moved swiftly, with the aid of Governor Andrew Curtin, to persuade the younger enlistees to return. Classes continued for the most part, but with some difficulty. In 1863, Lee's invasion of the North brought the town of Carlisle and the College under confederate shellfire and brief occupation in the

days immediately preceding the battle at Gettysburg. Following the battle, federal authorities commandeered most college buildings for use as hospitals for the wounded of both sides. No students were present at this time since graduation had been hastily moved up before the action took place.

Following the war, the student body had lost most of its usual influx from the southern states and was only three-fourths of the size it had been in 1860. Johnson continued to battle the deficits which had plagued his entire presidency. He sought money constantly from the Methodist Conferences, and tried to modernize the curriculum to make the College more attractive. With the help of the science faculty, including the young and influential Charles Francis Himes, areas of study such as chemistry, geology, and metallurgy were incorporated into the program. A business school, known as the Dickinson Commercial College, operated as part of the College for a short time before moving to Hagerstown, Maryland.

The centenary of the Methodist Church in 1866 finally offered some relief by the significant endowment of new funds, although Johnson never saw their effects. Exhausted by his years of effort and virtual poverty, he contracted a cold and died two weeks later at his home in Carlisle on April 5, 1868. He had married Lucena Elizabeth Clark whom he met in New York during their education. She survived him, as did six of their seven children, one of whom was the novelist Mary Dillon, author of *In Old Bellaire*.

#### COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The Herman Merrills Johnson Papers Collection is housed in one document box and one oversized folder. These papers were left with Dickinson College after Johnson's death in 1868. The materials in this collection are divided into the following four series: Correspondence, Financial Papers, Manuscripts, and Oversized.

The series entitled Correspondence consists of four letters to or from Herman Merrills Johnson. The correspondence is first arranged by letters sent or letters received and then chronologically.

The series entitled Financial Papers comprises the bulk of the collection and consists of various account books and ledgers. The series is arranged chronologically by the start date of the account books. One book had been previously disbound and individual folders are arranged alphabetically according to the entity with whom the business of those papers is transacted.

The series entitled Manuscripts consists of five folders of unpublished materials written by H. M. Johnson. These papers include, among other items, an obituary written for Johnson's mother, Chloe Church, and various examples of poetry written by Johnson.

One oversized folder, designated as OC 2003.9 and maintained separately from the rest of the collection, contains an 1868 notice of sale for the library of H. M. Johnson following his death.

## COLLECTION INVENTORY

### BOX 1 - MC 2003.9

#### CORRESPONDENCE

Johnson, Herman Merrills

- Folder 01) Letters Sent
  - To Methodists of England - Sep. 23, 1861
  - To John Francis Bird - Dec. 14, 1864 (2)
- Folder 02) Letters Received
  - From M. E. Clark - Mar. 3, 1860
  - From S. H. Nesbit - May 16, 1865

#### FINANCIAL PAPERS

Account Book, 1852-1856

- Folder 03) D. Appleton & Co.
- Folder 04) E. H. Butler & Co.
- Folder 05) Henry Cohen
- Folder 06) Harper & Brothers
- Folder 07) Higgins & Perkinpins
- Folder 08) Charles Megarge & Co.
- Folder 09) J. W. Moore
- Folder 10) John Penington & Son
- Folder 11) Personal investments
- Folder 12) Miscellaneous

Account Book, 1853-1858

- Folder 13) Cash book

Account Book, 1854-1859

- Folder 14) Ledger, Accounts with faculty, book publishers, etc.

Account Book, 1855-1857

- Folder 15) Accounts for books and stationery

Account Book, 1857

- Folder 16) Carlisle Land Association

#### MANUSCRIPTS

- Folder 17) Obituary of Chloe Church
- Folder 18) Miscellaneous papers
- Folder 19) Addresses to the Eclectic Society of Wesleyan University
- Folder 20) Poems
- Folder 21) Poem book

### OVERSIZED - MC 2003.9

- Folder 01) Notice of sale – Library of Late Rev. H. M. Johnson - 1868

This collection register was prepared by Robert K. Reeves, September 2003.