CALEB MILLS FAMILY PAPERS, 1834–1880

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 3 document cases, 2 oversize folders, 1 bound volume, 3 reels of microfilm

COLLECTION DATES: 1834–1880

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Helen Condit, Crawfordsville, Indiana; Mrs. Fred G. Deal,
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Caleb Mills (1806–79) is best known for his theories and activities concerning public education in the state of Indiana as an educator, administrator, minister, and writer. He was born in Dunbarton, New Hampshire, and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1828. Mills then entered Andover Theological Seminary, but took leave in the midst of his training to travel to Kentucky and southern Indiana for two years as Sunday School agent for the Presbyterian Church. During this period Mills saw the need for the improvement in the state’s educational programs, especially in common schools and mass education. In December 1833 he accepted a position at the newly opened Wabash Teachers Seminary and Manual Labor College (later Wabash College).

Public education continued to be a concern of Mills while teaching at Wabash. In six addresses to the Indiana state legislature from 1845–50, he presented his proposal for an educational system that would provide a free education for every child by instituting a tax for its support. This tax was to be used to support schools, train and compensate teachers, provide text books, establish the office of state superintendent, and set standards for institutions of higher education. Mills’ ideas were the model for the education system adopted by Indiana. Mills served as the state’s second Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1854–57. He then returned to Wabash College, where he remained until his death.

Mills married Sarah Marshall in September 1833 and moved to Crawfordsville, Indiana, two months later. Their son, Benjamin Marshall Mills (1846–69), figures prominently in the collection. Benjamin Mills first enrolled in Company C, 108th Indiana Regiment, and then served as a first lieutenant, Company F, 49th U. S. Colored Infantry, stationed in Mississippi, 1864–65. Mills returned to Crawfordsville and attended Wabash College after the war.

Sources:
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection centers on the papers of Caleb Mills but includes those of his son, Benjamin Marshall Mills, as well.

Among the Caleb Mills letters are those between Mills from personal friends and colleagues, 1834–76; the Civil War letters from his son Benjamin Marshall Mills, 1864–65; letters from General John P. Hawkins, 1863–64; and letters between Mills and his former students serving in the Union Army during the war, 1862–64. Several of the letters to Mills from his students deal with the recruitment of blacks such as those of James Meteer of the 70th Indiana Regiment and the 14th U. S. Colored Infantry, 1862–64. The letters of General John P. Hawkins, brigadier general in charge of organizing black troops, address the same topic, as well as the subject of the procurement of officers for the regiments.

The Caleb Mills portion papers also contain a significant amount of information regarding his efforts to improve the state’s educational system. Among these items are addresses and lectures, 1845–55, and published writings, 1859–80. Also included are items pertaining to Mills’ religious vocation. Among the materials are letters received from missionaries in India and Persia, 1836–46, and sermons 1832–71.

Benjamin Mills’ letters and accompanying documents of service contain detailed information about the 49th U.S. Colored Infantry, 1864–67. Two diaries from 1864–65 are also included among the material. The majority of the letters were written by Caleb Mills at Wabash College to Benjamin in Mississippi, 1864–65, but there are letters to Mills from other family members and friends in or near Crawfordsville. Additional materials include Mills’ class writings while a student at Wabash, 1866–68.

Included with the original manuscripts are photocopies made in 1963 from selected Mills items in the Lilly Library, Wabash College. There are twenty-four items including the letters of Mills to Edmund O. Hovey (1801–77), one from Selina Wyatt concerning the establishment of a female seminary in the Wabash valley in 1849, and several sermons.

Included in the unnumbered collection guide folder is a clipping from the Indianapolis News, 8 March 1958, regarding the Caleb Mills house.

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CONTAINER

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Series 4: Photocopies of Materials from Lilly Library, Wabash College

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: http://157.91.92.2/
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0207).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.