

Collection #
M 0752
CT 0932-0940

**REVEREND JEAN SHEPARD MILNER
PAPERS, 1932-1967 (BULK 1932-1960)**

Collection Information	1
Biographical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	4
Series Contents	5

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Manuscripts and Archives Department
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 10 boxes, 3 photograph folders, 9 audiocassettes

COLLECTION DATES: 1932–1967 (bulk 1932–1960)

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Susannah Day, 7603 N. Pennsylvania, Indianapolis, IN, 46240

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Milner, Jean Shepard, *Your Old Man: Sermon*, Spectator Co., 1929

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1999.0499 and 2000.0195

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jean Shepard Milner was born on 18 November 1893 in Atlanta, Georgia. As a child his family moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where he spent the remainder of his childhood.

Milner's father was an engineer, and as a beginning college student Jean Milner enrolled for engineering classes at Georgia Tech and Purdue University. Influenced by the religious views of botanist Stanley Coulter, then Dean of Science at Purdue, Milner decided instead on a career in religion. He left Purdue and earned a bachelor's degree in science from the University of Louisville and then a theology degree from Kentucky Theological Seminary in Louisville. After graduating from the seminary, Milner served in the Red Cross during World War I.

After two early positions in Edinburg, Indiana, and Ashland, Kentucky, Milner was appointed as minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis in 1921. He was chosen to lead a spiritual revival in the church. He arrived at a time when churches were divided on the Darwinian theory of evolution and the place of science in modern society in general. With a background in both science and theology, Milner was a liberal, or modernist, not a fundamentalist. According to a biographical sketch in the collection (Box 10, folder 14) written by his daughter, Mrs. Susannah Day, Milner "preached and lectured extensively on science and religion, showing they were not opposed to each other He defended man's intellectual freedom to pursue scientific knowledge." Influenced by the Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick of the First Presbyterian Church in New York, Milner gave a series of lectures on "Christianity and Evolution" in the mid-1920s, firmly established himself as an opponent of fundamentalism. His book, *The Sky is Red* (1935), argued the modernist position as well.

Milner's sermons, transcriptions of many of which can be found in this collection, were a high point of his ministry, especially in their delivery. He retained something of a Southern accent, and his speaking style was vivid. To quote again from the biographical sketch written by his daughter, Milner's "preaching style was polished and dramatic, and he was skillful in relating universal problems to his listeners' personal needs." A selection of his sermons on the topics of faith, spiritual life, and hope can be found in *Selected Writings and Favorite Quotations of Jean Shepard Milner, D.D.* (1967), a photocopy of which is in Box 10, folder 11 of this collection. Selected audio recordings of his sermons form Series 3 of the collection.

When Milner became minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in 1921, it was located at Vermont and Pennsylvania streets. He faced a land disagreement among his own church, a nearby Baptist church, and the Indiana War Memorial Commission, whose property was located between the two churches. All three were hoping to expand their facilities, but there was not enough room for everyone's expansion plans. This conflict turned into one of Milner's greatest successes during his tenure as pastor. After years of debating a solution to the problem, the state finally agreed to buy the land belonging to both churches in 1956, forcing Milner's congregation to relocate. The original church was demolished in 1960.

Milner and the congregation had already started working on plans for a church at a new site before the state agreed to buy the property. Now with \$600,000 from the sale of the old property, they began to raise the rest of the money to build their new, much larger church. One step in the process was made easier when Charles J. Lynn, former vice-president of Eli Lilly and Company, deeded the site for construction to the congregation. The congregation's new home would be located at 77th and Meridian streets. The congregation was successful in raising the rest of the \$2.1 million needed for construction and moved into the new facility debt-free on 4 October 1960.

Soon after Milner had his congregation settled in the new church building, he decided to retire, after 39 years of service (the longest tenure of any pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church) in 1960. His successor was William H. Hudnut III, a future mayor of Indianapolis.

Milner was also active in other aspects of the community. He was a member of the Board of Trustees for Hanover College, Madison, Indiana, as well as for Methodist Hospital. Milner was also associated with the Rotary Club, the Indianapolis Literary Club, and the Contemporary Club of Indianapolis.

Milner was awarded honorary degrees from both Purdue and Butler universities. He received an honorary Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) degree from Butler, and, according to his daughter, preferred to be called "Doctor" rather than "Reverend."

Jean Shepard Milner died on 25 June 1964, after a brief illness, in Methodist Hospital, Indianapolis, at the age of 70.

Sources:

George W. Geib, *Lives Touched by Faith: Second Presbyterian Church, 150 Years* (Indianapolis: Second Presbyterian Church, 1988); William Isley, Jr., "Second Presbyterian Church," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 1246-1247; materials in the collection; telephone conversation with Mrs. Susannah Day (25 October 2001).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Series 1 contains the sermons and speeches prepared by Rev. Jean Shepard Milner during his career at the Second Presbyterian Church from 1932–1960 (earlier sermons have not survived). The bulk were delivered as sermons at the church located on Vermont and Pennsylvania Streets. Some of the materials were also delivered for groups throughout the community at various dates. Some of the sermons are out of chronological order. It was decided to keep the original filing system used by Milner in order to preserve the provenance of the material in question.

Series 2 contains miscellaneous materials relating to Milner’s career. Within this series are items such as newspaper clippings and photographs. The photographs are housed in Visual Collections and need to be requested separately from the manuscript material.

Series 3 contains audiocassette recordings made of select sermons delivered by Milner between 1956 and 1960. These materials have a separate call number and need to be requested independently of the manuscript material in the collection.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Sermons and Speeches

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Sermons # 629–637 and 639 (20 March 1932–29 May 1932)	Box 1, Folder 1
Sermon #640–649 (12 June 1932–6 November 1932)	Box 1, Folder 2
Sermon #650–659 (13 November 1932–29 January 1933)	Box 1, Folder 3
Sermon #661–665 and 667–671 (19 February 1933–14 May 1933). #671 is slightly out of chronological order. The date on this sermon is listed as 21 March 1933.	Box 1, Folder 4
Sermon #672–682 (4 June 1933–26 November 1933)	Box 1, Folder 5
Sermon #684–693 (17 December 1933–25 February 1934)	Box 1, Folder 6
Sermon #694–703 (4 March 1934–13 May 1934)	Box 1, Folder 7
Sermon #704–706 and 708–714 (20 May 1934–4 November 1934)	Box 2, Folder 1
Sermon #715–724 (11 November 1934–20 January 1935)	Box 2, Folder 2
Sermon #725–734 (3 February 1935–31 March 1935)	Box 2, Folder 3
Sermon #735–744 (7 April 1935–9 June 1935)	Box 2, Folder 4
Sermon #745–751 and 754 (16 June–13 October 1935)	Box 2, Folder 5
Funeral Notes from October 1935, #756.	Box 2, Folder 6
Vespers 1934–1935, #757.	Box 2, Folder 7
Vespers 1934–1935, #758.	Box 2, Folder 8
Vespers 1935–1936, #760.	Box 2, Folder 9

Sermon #761–768 (3 November 1935–15 December 1935)	Box 2, Folder 10
Sermon #770, 772–779, and 781 (22 December 1935–5 April 1936)	Box 2, Folder 11
Sermon #782 (12 April 1936)	Box 3, Folder 1
Necrology, #783 (date?)	Box 3, Folder 2
Sermon #784–793 (19 April 1936–21 June 1936)	Box 3, Folder 3
Sermon #794–796 and 799–802 (28 June 1936–15 November 1936)	Box 3, Folder 4
Vespers October 1936–April 1937, #803.	Box 3, Folder 5
Sermon #805–806 (22 November 1936–29 November 1936)	Box 3, Folder 6
Sermon #807, 809–811, 819–820, 822–823, and 826–827 (6 December 1936–6 June 1937)	Box 3, Folder 7
Sermon #828–829, 832–833, 846–847, 849, 853–854, and 857 (4 July 1937–17 April 1938)	Box 3, Folder 8
Sermon #860–864, 866–867, and 871–872 (8 May 1938–23 October 1938)	Box 3, Folder 9
Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, Indiana, 100 th anniversary notes, 17 November–20 November 1938, #875.	Box 3, Folder 10
Sermon #880–881, 887, 891–893, 899, and 905–907 (24 December 1938–17 September 1939)	Box 3, Folder 11
Sermon #908–911 and 913–918 (24 September 1939–17 December 1939)	Box 4, Folder 1
Sermon #919–921, 923–925, 927–929, and 931 (24 December 1939–14 April 1940)	Box 4, Folder 2
Sermon #933–936, 938–940, and 944–946 (12 May 1940–27 October 1940)	Box 4, Folder 3
Sermon #947, and 949–957 (10 November 1940–2 February 1941)	Box 4, Folder 4

Sermon #962–965, 967, 969–972, and 975 (16 March 1941–29 June 1941)	Box 4, Folder 5
Sermon #979–982, 984, 987–989, and 992–993 (28 September 1941–8 February 1942)	Box 4, Folder 6
Sermon #994, 996–998, and 1000–1005 (15 February 1942–12 May 1942)	Box 4, Folder 7
Sermon #1006–1008, 1010, 1012, 1014, 1016, and 1018–1020 (24 May 1942–1 November 1942)	Box 5, Folder 1
Sermon #1022–1027 and 1029–1032 (22 November 1942–14 February 1943)	Box 5, Folder 2
Sermon #1033, 1035–1036, 1039, 1041–1042, and 1045–1048 (21 February 1943–1 June 1943)	Box 5, Folder 3
Sermon #1051, 1054, 1058–1060, 1062, 1064–1065, 1067, and 1072 (4 July 1943–27 February 1944)	Box 5, Folder 4
Sermon #1073, 1075–1076, 1078–1079, 1085–1087, 1090, and 1092 (5 March 1944–15 October 1944)	Box 5, Folder 5
Sermon #1093–1094, 1096, 1098–1101, 1116–1117, 1119, and 1121 (22 October 1944–28 May 1945)	Box 5, Folder 6
Sermon #1125, 1129–1130, 1134, 1142, 1144, 1147 a&b–1148, and 1150 (14 October 1945–3 November 1946)	Box 6, Folder 1
Sermon #1151–1152, 1160–1162, 1164–1167, and 1170 (17 November 1946–21 September 1947)	Box 6, Folder 2
Sermon #1171, 1173, 1175–1178, 1181, 1183–1184, and 1186 (28 September 1947–15 February 1948.)	Box 6, Folder 3
Sermon #1187, 1191, 1198, 1201–1202, 1204–1205, 1208, and 1211–1212 (28 February 1948–14 November 1948)	Box 6, Folder 4
Sermon #1217, 1219, 1222–1224, 1226, 1228, 1230, and 1233–1234 (2 January 1949–29 May 1949)	Box 6, Folder 5
Sermon #1237, 1239, 1243, 1245, 1253, and 1255–1259 (19 June 1949–5 February)	Box 6, Folder 6

Sermon #1260–1261, 1264, 1266, 1269, and 1271–1275 (12 February 1950–4 June 1950)	Box 7, Folder 1
Sermon #1276–1277, 1281–1283, 1285, 1288, 1291, 1293–1294, and 1298 (11 June 1950–4 February 1951)	Box 7, Folder 2
Sermon #1303, 1307–1309, 1311–1313, 1318–1319, and 1321 (11 March 1951–28 October 1951)	Box 7, Folder 3
Sermon #1322–1323, 1325, 1327–1328, and 1331–1335 (4 November 1951–10 February 1952)	Box 7, Folder 4
Sermon #1337, 1341–1342, 1345, 1349, and 1357–1361 (2 March 1952–9 November 1952)	Box 7, Folder 5
Sermon #1362–1365 and 1368–1373 (16 November 1952–25 February 1953)	Box 7, Folder 6
Sermon #1375–1377, 1379, 1381, 1383, 1385, 1387, 1392, and 1399 (8 March 1953–15 November 1953)	Box 8, Folder 1
Sermon #1401, 1404–1405, 1415, 1426, 1431, 1436, 1438–1439, and 1441 (13 December 1953–9 January 1955)	Box 8, Folder 2
Sermon #1444–1448 and 1450–1454 (30 January 1955–24 April 1955)	Box 8, Folder 3
Sermon #1458–1459, 1461, 1464, 1472–1474, 1476–1478 (4 May 1955–22 January 1956)	Box 8, Folder 4
Sermon #1480–1481 and 1483–1490 (19 February 1956–6 May 1956)	Box 8, Folder 5
Sermon #1491–1493, 1495, 1497, 1500–1503, and 1505 (13 May 1956–11 November 1956)	Box 8, Folder 6
Sermon #1506–1509, 1511–1512, 1514–1515, and 1518 (18 November 1956–24 February 1957)	Box 8, Folder 7
Sermon #1519–1524, 1526, 1529, 1531, and 1533 (3 March 1957–2 June 1957)	Box 9, Folder 1
Sermon #1534, 1537–1538, 1540, 1543, 1547, 1550, 1553, 1558, and 1560 (9 June 1957–2 March 1958)	Box 9, Folder 2

Sermon #1561–1562, 1564–1565, 1568, 1570, 1572, 1574–1575, and 1577 (9 March 1958–6 July 1958)	Box 9, Folder 3
Sermon #1580–1581, 1583–31584, 1586–1589 , and 1591–1592 (12 October 1958–12 April 1959)	Box 9, Folder 4
Sermon #1593–1595, 1598, 1600–1601, 1603–1606 (19 April 1959–6 December 1959)	Box 9, Folder 5
Sermon #1607–1608 and 1610–1617 (20 December 1959–13 March 1960)	Box 9, Folder 6
Sermon #1618–1621, 1623, and 1625 (20 March 1960–29 May 1960)	Box 9, Folder 7

Series 2: Miscellaneous

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
<i>Your Old Man</i> , sermon by Jean Shepard Milner, dated 1926.	Box 10, Folder 1
Typed transcript of Milner’s holy land travel journal, 1931.	Box 10, Folder 2
Correspondence, 1941 sporadically through 1999.	Box 10, Folder 3
Holiday Programs and Notes from Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, 1937–1948.	Box 10, Folder 4
Palm Sunday Programs and Notes from Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, 1939–1946.	Box 10, Folder 5
Easter Programs and notes from Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, 1941–1945.	Box 10, Folder 6
Second Presbyterian Church Programs, 29 April 1945 sporadically through 3 July 1960.	Box 10, Folder 7
<i>We Build the New Church</i> , ca. 1950’s.	Box 10, Folder 9
<i>A Tribute to the Memory of the Reverend Jean Shepard Milner, D.D.</i> , 27 June 1964.	Box 10, Folder 10
<i>Selected Writings and Favorite Quotations of Jean Shepard Milner, D.D.</i> , 1967.	Box 10, Folder 11

Miscellaneous Materials, undated.	Box 10, Folder 12
Newspaper Clippings	Box 10, Folder 13
“Wedding held at 2 nd Presbyterian Church” 2 February 1957	Visual Collections Photographs, Folder 1
“2 nd Presbyterian Church at Pennsylvania and Vermont Streets, Indianapolis, Ind. Torn down in 1957”	Visual Collections Photographs, Folder 2
“Dr. Jean Milner – cook out on the beach, Harbor Springs, MI. ca. 1940’s.”	Visual Collections Photographs, Folder 3

Series 3: Audio Recordings

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

"Longinus the Roman Centurion at the Crucifixion," 14 April 1957, Palm Sunday.

CT 0932

"Moody People," 16 December 1956;"A Great Church," Rev. 2:1–6, 16 March 1958.

"On Being Human," 27 January 1957 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 8, folder 7, #1514.)

CT 0933

"The Most Admirable People," 17 March 1957 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 9, folder 1, #1521.)

"Have You Forgotten?," 28 February 1960 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 9, folder 6, #1615.)

"When Christianity Becomes Internal," Personal, 1 July 1956 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 8, folder 6, #1497.)

CT 0934

"What Makes a Great Church?," 16 September 1956.

"The Humble and the Proud," 21 October 1956 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 8, folder 6, #1502.)

"Recipe for Happiness," 22 April 1957. CT 0935

"There is a Tomorrow," Easter 1956 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 8, folder 5, #1487.)

"Why Be Religious?," 3 November 1957.

"Immortality, Why," Easter, 29 March 1959. (This is the last Easter service at the church located on Pennsylvania and Vermont streets, Indianapolis, Indiana before it was torn down in 1960.) CT 0936

"Some Good in Evil," 5 July 1959 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 9, folder 5, #1595.)

"The Call of the Church, Our New Church Home," 11 October 1959.

"Why the Church?," 4 November 1956. CT 0937

"Learning," 24 February 1959.

"Interpretations of History," 18 November 1956 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 8, folder 7, #1506.)

"Too Thin a Religion," 11 May 1958 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 9, folder 3, #1570.) CT 0938

"Our Family Heritage," 26 January 1958.

"We Say Good-Bye," 27 September 1959. (This is the last sermon delivered at the church located on Pennsylvania and Vermont Streets, Indianapolis, Indiana.)

"Does God Guide Us?," 22 May 1960. CT 0939

"Meeting Our Test," 27 March 1960 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 9, folder 7, #1619.)

"Are We There (Lord's Prayer)," 10 April 1960 (See also the original transcript of this sermon located in box 9, folder 7, #1621.)

"Ass't Oakal Hall Music and Scripture–Luke 2,"
Easter 1956.

CT 0940

"There is a Tomorrow," Easter 1956 (See also the
original transcript of this sermon located in box 8,
folder 5, #1487.)