

**THE REV. GEORGE WASHINGTON STAFFORD
PAPERS, 1836-1917**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 manuscript boxes, 1 photograph folder

COLLECTION DATES: 1836-1917

PROVENANCE: Gift of Robert R. Rhodehamel, 8527 Quail Hollow Road, Indianapolis, IN 46220, 12 June 1987

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 87.0483

NOTES: Photographs are stored in Visual Collections and one box was transferred to Printed Collections.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

George Washington Stafford (9-24-1815 - 2-1-1902) was born in Virginia, the son of Thomas Stafford, a native of Ireland who came to America at the age of three, and Ruth Neel Stafford. In 1832 he came with his parents to Attica, Indiana. He was converted at a Methodist camp meeting in Virginia in 1836; the following year he was licensed in January to exhort and in June to preach in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Unable because of illness to fulfill his first assignment in North Carolina, he began to preach in Indiana in 1838. In addition to studying with several preachers, he is said to have attended classes at Wabash College. He had early assignments in Newtown and Rensselaer, and seems also to have lived in Crawfordsville.

In 1842 Stafford married Rachel Stitt, daughter of James Stitt of Crawfordsville. They had eleven children, four of whom died in infancy and two became preachers.

From 1850 to 1852 Stafford was stationed in Richmond; from 1852 to 1854 in Crawfordsville; in 1855-1856 in Frankfort; from 1856 to 1858 in Valparaiso; in 1858-1859 in Greencastle; in 1860-1861 in Rockville. In 1862 he moved to a farm near Crawfordsville and preached from there until he was superannuated at his own request in 1878. In 1863 he served as chaplain of the 40th Indiana Volunteers, and was with them at the battles of Chickamauga and Lookout Mountain. He continued to live in Crawfordsville until his death.

One of his sons, the Rev. John M. Stafford (1845-1899), was converted at sixteen. In 1867 he was licensed to preach in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and served two years at Zionsville. In 1868 he was transferred to the Northwest Conference in Indiana, where his early assignments were at Clinton (1868-1869), Sandford (1869-1871), Chauncey (1871-1873) and Goodland (1873-1875). As a preacher he was said to have been "plain, Scriptural, earnest, and often preached with great power."

Sources

Materials in collection
Methodist Episcopal Church, Northwest Indiana Conference
Minutes, 1899, 1902

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection, filling three manuscript boxes, contains correspondence and some documents. This material dates mainly from the period 1850-1875, though some items date as early as 1836 and a few as late as 1913 and 1917. The collection has been separated into two main categories: 1) family and personal correspondence; and 2) matters relating to Stafford's work in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Within these two categories the material is arranged chronologically. At the end there are two folders of the correspondence of Stafford's son, the Rev. John M. Stafford.

The family and personal correspondence is preponderantly from members of the Stafford family at Attica and from members of the Stitt family at Crawfordsville, and is filled with family news about such things as visits and sicknesses. There are documents from the estates of Stafford's father and father-in-law. There is also material from agents and relatives about Stafford's real estate dealings in Indiana and Wisconsin. His brother, Oscar Stafford, was a particularly active correspondent, writing from Attica, from Chicago, and from Janesville, Wisconsin, as he engaged in a number of commercial pursuits.

The church material deals partly with Stafford's work in his own church and partly with his activity in the different Methodist conferences with which he was associated. There are arrangements for pulpit supply, for the purchase of church furnishings, for protracted meetings (apparently a synonym for revivals), for quarterly meetings, and for the examination of candidates for the ministry.

The letters of John M. Stafford, from school (probably at Thorntown Academy) and from his early preaching assignments, give an unusually intimate view of a young preacher's living arrangements (for example with a kindly widow in Clinton), brushes with laggards in his congregation, and plans for revivals.

As a whole, the collection gives an interesting view of a devoted Methodist family and of the workings of this rather tightly organized circuit-riding church.

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BOX 1: The Rev. G.W. Stafford –Personal and Family Correspondence

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| 1850 | Box 1, Folder 5 |
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| 1853 | Box 1, Folder 8 |
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| n.d., Miscellaneous | Box 1, Folder 38 |
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BOX 2: Church Material

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| n.d., Church | Box 2, Folder 25 |

Rev. John M. Stafford, Early, 1867-1870

Box 2, Folder 26

Rev. John M. Stafford, 1872-1876

Box 2, Folder 27

Photograph of Closed Coffin

Visual Collection:
Photographs, Folder 1