

Collection #:
SC 2297

WILLIAM S. HARBERT PAPERS, 1858-1870

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 4 folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1858-1870

PROVENANCE: Barry Cassidy Rare Books, 2003 T Street, Sacramento, California 95814, 26 November 1990, 2 July 1993

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBERS: 1991.0104, 1993.0517

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Soesbe Harbert, a lawyer, social activist, and philanthropist was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, 17 September 1842, a son of Solomon and Amadine [Watson] Harbert. He was educated in the public schools of Terre Haute, Franklin College, and Wabash College in Indiana and the University of Michigan. In 1862 Harbert enlisted in the 85th Indiana Infantry and was mustered out as a Lieutenant in July 1865. Following the war, Harbert enrolled first (1866) at Indiana University, Bloomington and later (1867) transferred to University of Michigan from which he received his law degree in 1867. Admitted to the Iowa Bar, Harbert practiced law in Des Moines, Iowa for seven years in the firm of Harbert and Clark. In 1874 he moved to Chicago, practicing first as senior partner in the firm of Harbert and Daley and later as senior partner in firm of Harbert, Curran and Harbert. In 1906 he retired to Pasadena, California where he died 24 March 1919.

Harbert was a leader in community affairs in Iowa, Illinois and California. Some of his activities included serving as president of the Board of Managers for Forward Movement, a social settlement organization; interest in municipal control of public utilities; and establishment of the Juvenile Court and other legal reforms. As a member of the Universalist Church in Chicago he established a "Study of Civic and Humanitarian Questions Club". In California he worked with John H. Braley to secure the right for women to vote.

On 18 October 1870 Harbert married Elizabeth Morris[s]on Boynton, an author, lecturer, and social reformer. Boynton was born in Crawfordsville, Indiana, 15 April 1845, a daughter of William and Abby Upton [Sweetser] Boynton. She attended Female Seminary, Oxford, Ohio, and graduated from Terre Haute Female College in 1862. Later in life she was awarded a doctorate from Ohio Wesleyan University. She was editor for eight years of *Woman's Kingdom* the woman's department of *Chicago Inter Ocean*, *The New Era* for one year, and contributed to such publications as *The Arena*, *The Coming Age* and *Woman's Journal*. Her published works include, *The Golden Fleece* (Boston, 1867); *Out of Her Sphere* (Des Moines, Ia. 1871), *Social Economy of Illinois* (1879), *Amore* (New York, 1892) and numerous songs both words and music. She served on the Board of Managers for the Girl's Industrial School at Evanston, Illinois and was a social activist. She held leadership rolls or was active in such organizations as: Women's Suffrage Association of Indiana, Women's Suffrage Association of Iowa, Illinois Woman's Suffrage Association, Evanston Woman's Club; National Household Economics Association; Woman's Civil League of Pasadena; Southern California Woman's Press Association and World's Unity League (formed at the World's Parliament of Religion). She died, 19 January 1925, in California. Collections of her papers are located in the Huntington Library (1863-1925) and in the Schlesinger Library (1870-1921).

The Harbert's had three children: Arthur Boynton Harbert an attorney who died in 1900, Corinne Boynton Harbert a social worker in the Chicago area; and Boynton Elizabeth Harbert (Mrs. Ashley D. Rowe) who was active in the Pasadena, California community.

Sources:

McGroarty, John Steven, *Los Angeles from the Mountains to the Sea*, 1921

The National Cyclopaedia.

Who Was Who in America Vol. 1, p. 518

Women's History Sources, Vol. 1, p. 80 & 400

Indiana Authors and Their Books, 1816-1916

The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, p. 705.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection was acquired in two groups, the first of which was the diary, the second, correspondence. The materials have been arranged chronologically by format.

Folders 1-3 contain thirty four letters and three letter fragments, primarily written to Harbert and dated 1858-1870. Twenty-two of these are from former roommates at Franklin College; William R. Hardy (20); G. W. Grubbs (1) and Charlie Bale (1). Two letters are from W. T. Stone, a business partner from Terre Haute, 1866, and three from Eli B. Hamilton. There is one letter from the portrait artist James D. Wright which mentions a painting Harbert commissioned. There is a four page letter fragment written by Harbert to his future wife, Lizzie [Elizabeth Boynton], beseeching her to be his friend and another letter by Harbert to a friend James F. as well as several letters from friends advising Harbert about business conditions in Des Moines, Iowa, where Harbert moved in 1867. Correspondents also include Frank P. Dean, [A.?] A. Dudley, and J. K. Marsh.

The diary (folder 4) records the events in Harbert's life for the year 1866 and begins with his first year of law school in Bloomington. Later in the year he returns to Terre Haute where for six months he is partner with W.T. Stone in a wholesale shoe and footwear store. After selling the store to the Boyle Brothers, he moves to Ann Arbor, Michigan to continue law school. In the diary Harbert debates his future, whether he should be a merchant or a lawyer, debates what philosophy or religion can be the source of a moral code and a peaceful existence. He appears to have been an active participant in the events and life around him. He attended plays and lectures and commissioned a painting by Terre Haute painter James D. Wright. [James Wright exhibited at the Indiana State Fair in 1857; is listed in Terre Haute in 1860 and 1868 and was working in Zionsville in 1860.] Harbert also mentions several individuals who became important in his life. His future law partner in Chicago, Daley, apparently was a classmate at law school in Bloomington. On a trip to Greencastle, he mentions meeting a Miss Lizzie Boynton (his future wife).

FOLDER LIST

Folder

1. Correspondence, 1858
2. Correspondence, 1859
3. Correspondence, 1860-1870, n.d.
4. Diary, 1866

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://opac.indianahistory.org/>
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, SC 2297).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.