

MS-117, Derostus F. Ladley Papers

Collection Number: MS-117

Title: Derostus F. Ladley Papers

Dates: 1821-1867

Creator: Ladley, Derostus F., 1806-1858

Summary/Abstract:

Born April 10, 1806 in Virginia, Derostus Ladley was a minister and prominent member of the Christian Connection / Connexion (also called the Christian Church). From 1838-1852, the Ladley family moved around Ohio as he preached and founded churches. In 1852, the family settled in Yellow Springs, Ohio where he founded the First Christian Church, and the Second Christian Church. He was also involved in the founding of Antioch College. His papers consist primarily of letters between Derostus and his wife, Catherine, and their family, and letters relating to church affairs and Antioch College. Also included are some financial records, personal notes, and diaries.

Quantity/Physical Description: 1 linear ft.

Language(s): English

Repository:

Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092.

Restrictions on Access: There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

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Preferred Citation:

[Description of item, Date, Box #, Folder #], MS-117, Derostus F. Ladley Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Acquisition:

The Derostus F. Ladley Papers were donated to Wright State University, Special Collections and Archives by his great-great-granddaughter Corrine Odiorne Pelzl on March 16, 1980.

Other Finding Aid:

The finding aid is available on the Special Collections & Archives, Wright State University Libraries web site at http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collection_guides/guide_files/ms117.pdf. It is also available in the OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/>.

Related Material:

MS-138 Oscar D. Ladley Papers

MS-155: Ladley/Carr/Totten/Harris/Odiorne Families Photographs

MS-161: Louise Harris Odiorne Papers

The Horace Mann Papers, Antiochiana Collection, Antioch College Library, Yellow Springs.

Revisions: The finding aid revised according to DACS standard by Craig Finnell, April, 2018.

Processed by: Processing was completed by Diana L. Good, June 5, 1984.

Arrangement:

The papers are arranged into 9 series:

- Series I: Personal Letters between Derostus and Catherine Ladley, 1836-1856
- Series II: Letters to Derostus and Catherine Ladley from Family, 1828-1867
- Series III: Derostus Ladley Professional Licenses and Commendations, 1828-1857
- Series IV: Sermons and Sermon Notes, 1821-1855
- Series V: Financial Records, 1834-1859
- Series VI: Letters of Introduction, 1840-1856
- Series VII: Letters to Derostus Ladley Concerning Church Affairs, 1835-1860
- Series VIII: Diaries, 1842-1852
- Series IX: Miscellaneous

Biographical Note:

Derostus F. Ladley was born on April 10, 1806. During his early life he lived for a time in Virginia and in the Welsh Hills section of Chester County in eastern Pennsylvania. He had no formal education or theological training but became quite religious at an early age. Ladley's outlook was influenced by the preachers during the Second Great Awakening. He became an early member of the Christian Connection/Connexion, also known as the Christian Church. The Christian Connection claimed to have no creed, instead professing to rely strictly on the Bible. Each church in the denomination at the onset was autonomous, not answerable to any national authority, thus the ministers of this Christian denomination had an enormous amount of power and influence within individual churches. In 1838, Derostus became an Elder and minister. In this capacity he traveled extensively throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New York on a Church circuit.

The Christian Connection held regional and national meetings in order to promote good will and understanding among the participating churches, but participation within the Christian Connection was always voluntary, and the policies and determinations of the Connection were never binding. Derostus Ladley was a frequent delegate to the conferences of the Christian Connection, often serving as president of the conference and was frequently a member of the many working committees which reported to the convention. He also was a regular contributor to the Connection/Connexion's periodical, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, and the religious newspaper *The Christian Palladium*.

Ladley's first wife died shortly after their marriage, and in 1834 he married Catherine Griffith. Derostus and Catherine had five children. Oscar, referred to as "Auscar", was born in 1837. Arthur died at birth in 1841. Derostus Jr. was born in 1842 and died in 1851. Mary was born in 1844, and Sarah Alice in 1846.

Throughout 1838 through 1852, the Derostus Ladley family moved throughout Ohio as he preached and founded new churches. The family lived in several places including Hebron, Cincinnati, Enon, Springfield, Sidney, Piqua, Rocky Springs, and Ripley before settling in Yellow Springs in 1852. Catherine was an educated woman who several times established a school in communities where they lived. She also appears to have been a capable business woman, though she did not seem to take an active part in church controversies.

Ladley was a delegate to the General Convention of the Christian Church held in Marion, New York in 1850. The Convention passed a resolution calling for the establishment of Antioch College and Ladley was selected as a member to committees designated to select a site and obtain funding. Ladley was instrumental in obtaining a promise of \$30,000 and 20 acres of land from Judge William Mills of Yellow Springs, Ohio.

In 1852 Derostus Ladley moved his family to Yellow Springs and founded the First Christian Church of Yellow Springs. Antioch College opened the same year, under the direction of President Horace Mann. Mann was appointed by Reverend Eli Fay (1822-1899), Mann demanded, and was granted by Fay, substantial control of Antioch College. Mann wanted to ensure a nonsectarian college independent from church control. Fay promised Mann this control, but without the knowledge of the rest of the Christian Connection leaders, whose churches provided the money needed to build and run the school. Disputes over sectarian control and financial problems plagued Antioch from the beginning.

From the onset Ladley and his followers in Yellow Springs found fault with the college and Horace Mann. They disliked his educational techniques, his lack of devotion to strict religious dogma, and the frequent parties at his house. Derostus Ladley and Horace Mann criticized each other with increasing hostility. As the controversy escalated both began writing articles and speaking at conventions and meetings attacking each other and the institutions they represented.

Ladley, in poor health, was forced to resign as pastor of the First Christian Church in 1854. The Church employed a succession of ministers, all on a temporary basis until 1856 when controversy over appointment of a permanent minister established demarcation lines and put the residents of Yellow Spring and Antioch College at odds. In 1858, over the objection of Ladley and his supporters, Eli Fay was appointed permanent minister.

Ladley however was able to purchase the defaulted mortgage on the church building where the First Christian church met. The church was forced to dissolve as they no longer owned a building in which to meet. Ladley then founded the Second Christian Church of Yellow Springs in early 1858, excluding Horace Mann and all of his sympathizers from membership. Ladley passed away shortly after on October 6, 1858.

Scope and Content

These papers show signs that they might have been curated, with some records possibly discarded, before coming into possession of the archive. Many have the word "save" written on the back, presumably by Bessie Totten, Ladley's granddaughter and College Librarian at Antioch for 41 years in the beginning of the 20th century.

Series I, Personal Letters between Derostus and Catherine Ladley, 1836-1856, contain some of the letters written between Derostus and his wife, Catherine, while Derostus traveled on church business. The following trips are documented: Ladley's trip to Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York in 1836; Derostus' stay in Cincinnati in 1837 while Catherine remained in Hebron; Catherine's visit with her family in the Welsh Hills in 1839; Derostus' trip to Virginia in 1842; and Derostus' trip to visit family and friends in Virginia in 1856.

Series II, Letters to Derostus and Catherine Ladley from Family, 1828-1867, contains family letters which are annotated in pencil by Bessie Totten, Ladley's granddaughter, describing the relationship of the correspondent to her grandparents and, sometimes, the content of the letter. The first entry in this file is a family tree prepared by Bessie Totten.

Correspondents and references include:

- Catherine Griffith Ladley's family
 - Ann Rogers Griffith
 - William R. Griffith, Catherine's parents
 - Mary Rogers Whitney, Catherine's aunt (mother's sister)
 - Hannah Whitney, Catherine's cousin (Mary Whitney's daughter)
 - Ann Griffith Buckland, Catherine's sister
 - William Griffith, Catherine's brother
 - Thomas Griffith, Catherine's nephew (William Griffith's son)
 - John Griffith, Catherine's brother
 - Esther Rogers, Catherine's aunt (mother's sister)
- Derostus Ladley's family
 - Thomas Ladley, Derostus' Father
 - Elizabeth Ladley, Derostus' Mother
 - George W. Ladley, Derostus' brother
 - Hannah Ladley, Derostus' sister-in-law (George W. Ladley's wife)
 - George Ladley, Derostus' nephew
 - Ann Ladley Rodman, Derostus' sister
 - William Rodman, Derostus' brother-in-law (Ann Ladley Rodman's husband)
 - Mary Rodman Holmes, Derostus' niece (Ann & William's daughter)
 - Rachel Ladley Martin, Derostus' sister
 - Joe Martin, Derostus' brother-in-law (Rachel Ladley Martin's husband)
 - Joel Martin, Derostus' nephew (son of Rachel & Joe Martin)
 - Mary Martin Hall, Derostus' niece (daughter of Rachel & Joe Martin)
 - Phebe Ladley, Derostus' cousin

Both the Griffith and Ladley families were mainly engaged in farming as an occupation, and the letters are interesting as a chronicle of the affairs of working people during this period. They wrote mostly of health problems, the weather, and church meetings.

There are only a few letters to Catherine after Derostus' death in 1858. Of note, is a letter to Catherine from her son Oscar, while he served in the Union Army during the Civil War.

Series III, Derostus Ladley Professional Licenses and Commendations, 1828-1857, contains certificates and notices documenting Ladley's career as a clergyman. Included is his ordination letter (dated May 1, 1836), licenses granted to Ladley by various institutions authorizing him to perform marriages, and letters of commendation from churches Ladley had served.

Series IV, Sermons and Sermon Notes, 1821-1855, begins with a Hymn for the Fourth of July, written, according to Bessie Totten's annotation in 1821, when Derostus was 15 years old. Some of his earlier sermons are completely written in finished form, but the bulk of this material is in note form and is undated. Many sermons, post 1852 are dated and contain admonishment of Antioch College.

Series V, Financial Records, 1834-1859, is divided into three files. Personal financial records includes a receipt for a burial plot, a deed to three lots in Hebron, receipt for sale of one house, proposal for the building of another house, two insurance policies, Ladley's scholarship from Antioch College, and receipts for Derostus Ladley's coffin and funeral expenses. Church collections, contains papers and ledgers documenting income from donation visits. Also included are collection records for subscriptions to *The Palladium* sold by Ladley. There are also records of accounts kept for room and board collected from Antioch students staying at the Ladley residence. Church payments and receipts are mostly written to Derostus Ladley documenting his payments to the Ohio Book Association (OBA) for the "Book Concern", the binding of hymn books, and donations made to various causes, including Antioch College.

Series VI, Letters of Introduction, 1840-1856, primarily contain letters of introduction for people who moved to Yellow Springs and joined the First Christian of Yellow Springs. Many of these names later appear in the controversy between the First Christian Church and Antioch College. Notably in absence are letters of introduction for parishioners who joined the church and later sided with Antioch, including Horace Mann.

Series VII, Letters to Derostus Ladley Concerning Church Affairs, 1835-1860. Folders 1 through 3 (1835-1847) contain descriptions of the affairs of various Christian and Unitarian churches throughout the country. These letters contain references to theological disputes. There are descriptions of revivals including Elder Isaac Walters ill-fated Temperance Crusade in New Orleans. The pastors and parishioners of various churches kept Ladley informed of the power struggles within their churches and the comings and goings of members.

Folders 4 and 5 (1848-1850), contain the first references to the proposed Antioch College. Judge Mills, J.R. Freese of the Christian Book Concern, and Elder Badger all were interested in having a large printing press built at Antioch College, and they wrote to Ladley soliciting his help in having Yellow Springs chosen as the site of the new school and printing press.

Folder 6 (1851-1852) contains many letters of inquiry about the job prospects in Yellow Springs and the cost and availability of land. There are also several letters of introduction given to Ladley by the children of his friends and acquaintances as they arrived in Yellow Springs to attend college. Several letters document competition for jobs at the college.

Folder 7 (1853-1855) documents the continuing struggle for control of Antioch and the increasing financial problems of the school. Correspondents voice specific complaints against Horace Mann, Amos Dean, and Eli Fay as they commend Ladley.

Folder 8 (1856-1860) relates mainly to Antioch matters and describe Ladley's attempt to disassociate the Christian church from Antioch College and the struggle for the control of the First Christian Church in Yellow Springs. This folder contains copies of several letters Ladley wrote to others concerning the Antioch controversy. Also included are documents supporting the purchase of the church building and the dissolution of the First Christian Church and creation of the Second Christian Church.

Series VIII, Diaries, 1842-1852, contains three diaries. Diary 1, 1842-1844, describes travels on circuit. Diary 2, 1852, includes a lengthy and emotional description of the illness and death of son, Derostus Jr. at age 9. Diary 3, 1852, describes the trip to the Miami Conference in September of 1852. The last 2 pages of this diary appear to have been cut from the book.

Series IX, Miscellaneous, contains copies of verses and articles written by Ladley and published in religious publications, an obituary for Derostus Jr., Ladley's calling cards, a short article from *The Palladium* describing Ladley as being near death (1855), and various paper scraps containing names, addresses and assorted notations.

Subject Terms:

Persons/Families

Ladley, Derostus F., 1806-1858 -- Manuscripts
Ladley, Catherine Griffith, 1812-1871
Ladley, Oscar Derostus, 1837-1880
Mann, Horace, 1796-1859

Organizations

Christian Connection – Church history – 19th century
Antioch College – History – 19th century

Places

Yellow Springs (Ohio) – History – 19th century
Ohio – Church history – 19th century

Material Types

Letters (correspondence)
Diaries
Sermons

Collection Inventory

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
Series I			
		Personal Letters between Derostus and Catherine Ladley	1836-1856
1	1	Letters	1836-1856
		Series II	Letters to Derostus and Catherine Ladley from Family
			1828-1867
1	2	Letters	1828-1840
1	3	Letters	1841-1845
1	4	Letters	1846-1847
1	5	Letters	1848-1850
1	6	Letters	1851-1855
1	7	Letters	1856-1867
		Series III	Derostus Ladley Professional Licenses and Commendations
			1828-1857
1	8	License and Commendations	1828-1857
		Series IV	Sermons and Sermon Notes
			1821-1855
1	9	Sermons and Notes	1821-1855
		Series V	Financial Records
			1834-1859
1	10	Personal Financial Records	1835-1859
1	11	Church Collections	1834-1854
1	12	Church Payments and Receipts	1844-1854
		Series VI	Letters of Introduction
			1840-1856
1	13	Letters	1840-1856
		Series VII	Letters to Derostus Ladley Concerning Church Affairs
			1835-1860
2	1	Letters	1835-1840
2	2	Letters	1841-1845
2	3	Letters	1846-1847
2	4	Letters, Antioch College	1848-1849
2	5	Letters, Antioch College	1850
2	6	Letters, Antioch College	1851-1852
2	7	Letters, Antioch College	1853-1855
2	8	Letters, Antioch College	1855-1860
		Series VIII	Diaries
			1842-1852
2	9	Diaries	1842-1852
		Series IX	Miscellaneous
			Undated
2	10	Miscellaneous files	Undated