

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

I N V E N T O R Y

The Odiorne Family Papers

Part 1

Derostus F. & Catherine Ladley

MS-117

Diana L. Good
June 5, 1984

PROVENANCE

Corinne Odiorne Pelzl donated the Odiorne Family Papers to the Wright State University Archives on March 16, 1980.

The literary rights have been donated to the public.

BIOGRAPHY

Derostus F. Ladley was born on April 10, 1806. Little is known of his early life except that 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 and he acquired an education superior to his contemporaries through intense study of the Bible. Prior to his entry into the ministry he "kept school" for a living. His religious outlook was influenced by the Holy Ghost preachers of the Christian Church, a diverse and individualistic religious sect which was enormously popular among the pioneers in the West and more remote sections of the United States. The Christian church preached the doctrine of perfection on earth as a result of devotion to the word of God. Each Christian church was autonomous; not answerable to any national authority, thus the ministers of the Christian denomination had an enormous amount of power and influence within individual churches. Derostus Ladley joined this church at an early age and, in 1838, became an Elder and minister of the Christian denomination. In this capacity he traveled extensively throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New York on the Church circuit.

The Christian church was united nationally in the Christian Connection, an advisory, although not authoritative body. The 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 became a respected Elder within the Christian denomination and 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 of articles of a religious nature to church magazines, including The Gospel Herald and The Christian Palladium.

Throughout the period 1838 through 1852 Derostus Ladley and his family moved throughout Ohio as he preached, held Temperance meetings and founded new churches. They lived in Hebron, Cincinnati, Enon, Springfield, Sidney, Piqua, Rocky Springs, Ripley and Yellow Springs.

Ladley's first wife died shortly after their marriage, and in 1834 he married Catherine Griffith. 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. Derostus and Catherine had five children: Oscar, referred to in Derostus' letters as "Auscar", was born in 1838, 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.

At this time in American history all colleges were sectarian

in nature. By 1850 the Christian Connection considered establishing their own denominational college, and met in conference in Marion, New York to formulate plans. Derostus Ladley was a delegate to this convention, and was a member of both the committees to select a site and obtain funding for the new college. The Marion Convention decided on three principles: there would be a college created if enough money could be raised, the college would be called Antioch, and the school would be coeducational. No mention was made of sectarianism.

Ladley went back to Ohio and solicited funds for the new school. He was instrumental in obtaining a promise of \$30,000 and 20 acres of land from Judge William Mills of Yellow Springs, which guaranteed the school would be built in the West, at Yellow Springs, and would have a fairly large original endowment.

Eli Fay, one of the more independent and progressive members of the Christian Connection, was in charge of obtaining a president for the new college. He set his sites on, and through substantial misrepresentation of the Christian Connection's intentions, obtained the services of Horace Mann, the world's foremost educator. Mann demanded, and was granted by Elder Fay, substantial control of Antioch. He was especially interested in having the new college be completely non-sectarian, totally independent from any church control. Elder Fay promised Mann a non-sectarian college, but this promise was made without the knowledge or approval of the other Elders in the Christian Connection, whose churches had donated the bulk of the money needed to build the school. Disputes over sectarian control and financial problems plagued Antioch from the beginning.

In 1852 Derostus Ladley moved his family to Yellow Springs and founded the First Christian Church of Yellow Springs. Construction of the college was completed, scholarships sold, and Antioch opened in 1853, already in debt. Almost from the beginning Elder Ladley and the citizens of Yellow Springs, most of whom were members of the Christian Church, found fault with the college and Horace Mann. They disliked his educational techniques, his lack of devotion to strict religious dogma, the frequent parties at his house and, perhaps most of all, his sophisticated and extremely persuasive manner.

Derostus Ladley and Horace Mann criticized each other with increasing hostility; Ladley from the pulpit and Mann in the lecture hall. As the controversy escalated both began writing articles in the various magazines published by sects of the Christian Connection, attacking each other and the institutions they represented. At the Miami Christian Convention in September of 1857 Horace Mann asked for the floor to present a response to an article attributed to Ladley in The Gospel Herald criticizing his management of Antioch College. Mann was denied an official hearing but was allowed to speak at an unofficial meeting when the convention was adjourned for the day, which he did. At that point Mann claimed he was under the impression that the article and charges would not be mentioned again, in official or unof-

ficial sessions, so he returned to Yellow Springs. The following day the convention met in official session and heard speeches from Elder Ladley and others, denouncing Mann, and reasserting his original claims.

Ladley had been in poor health for many years, and in 1854 was forced to resign as pastor of the First Christian Church because he was unable to preach regularly. The Church employed a succession of ministers, all on a temporary basis until 1856 when Horace Mann, who was a member of the Church, tried to get Austin Craig, a friend and sympathizer, elected permanent pastor. Had he succeeded, Mann would have ensured continued financial support of Antioch by the Church, and would have quieted some of the local opposition. Elder Ladley rallied to save his church. He, along with Ira Allen (a member of the original faculty who was fired by Mann), led the opposition to Craig's election. There was much public controversy, two entire books written on the subject and law suits filed. The entire town of Yellow Springs and the Antioch College population were at odds throughout 1856-1858. Eventually Mann succeeded in getting another friend, Eli Fay elected permanent pastor, much to the displeasure of Elder Ladley and his friends.

In the end Ladley and his supporters were able to raise enough money to purchase the defaulted mortgage on the church building. At that point Ladley supporters within the First Christian Church voted the church to be dissolved, since they no longer owned a building to meet in. Elder Ladley then founded the Second Christian Church of Yellow Springs, excluding Horace Mann and all of his sympathizers from membership. In doing so Ladley denied Antioch College, under the rule of Horace Mann, further revenue from the local Christian Church and, Ladley believed, from the entire Christian half of the Christian Connection.

All of this occurred during the first couple months of 1858 and left Ladley, suffering from consumption, gravely ill. He died October 6, 1858, believing he had defeated Mann and doomed Antioch College to extinction. Mann followed Ladley in death less than a year later.

The local church did forsake the school for a time, but the nationwide Christian Church was unwilling to abandon all the money and effort invested in the Antioch effort, and they kept sending money, although never as much as the college needed. Years later the Christians even had an opportunity to govern Antioch College.

Catherine Ladley lived the remainder of her life quietly, and evidently made her peace with Antioch College. Her children all attended Antioch's preparatory school.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Derostus and Catherine Ladley portion of the Odiorne Family papers consist of 2 hollinger boxes, 23 file folders. They document the years 1821 through 1867. The first 2 series contain personal letters between Derostus and Catherine and their correspondence with their families. These letters are fairly unremarkable in the information they supply, but are the only letters which give much information concerning Catherine Ladley at all. Catherine must have been a very hard working, supportive wife who was content to stay in the background as her husband became involved in church affairs and the Antioch controversy. Derostus appears to have been a very strict, dogmatic man who had little patience with those who were not as serious in their pursuit of his definition of perfection.

These papers show signs of having been carefully edited, at least 2 times. Almost all letters have the name of the writer and date written or received written on the back in Ladley's handwriting as it looked in his later life, and with the same pen and ink. There is also ample evidence that Bessie Totten, Ladley's granddaughter, sorted these papers, marking in pencil on the back the relationship of the writer and sometimes the content of the letter. Some letters bear the notation "save" in her handwriting, which certainly indicates that others were not saved. It could be that either Ladley himself, or Ms. Totten, or perhaps both, have selected for retention only the material which show Derostus Ladley in the best light. Ms. Totten was in charge of the Antiochiana Collection at Antioch College for many years and certainly was familiar with Antioch's early history.

Nevertheless, the story of Antioch College's stormy beginning has always been told from the perspective of Horace Mann, an enlightened educator who was beset with financial woes at his college and caught in the middle of an interdenominational church struggle between the progressive and sophisticated Unitarians and the uneducated, selfserving Christians who lived in Yellow Springs and did not comprehend Mann's genius. These letters indicate that Ladley and his followers saw this as something of a holy war, with themselves the Christian soldiers and Horace Mann as the devil incarnate. It does appear that Horace Mann was a bit severe in his administration of the College and that he did a fair amount of meddling in the affairs of Ladley's church.

The Ladley letters tell an interesting story and invite further study.

Diana L. Good
June, 1985

SERIES VIII	DIARIES
	1 folder, 3 diaries
	1842-1852
SERIES IX	MISCELLANEOUS
	1 folder

SERIES DESCRIPTION

SERIES I: PERSONAL LETTERS BETWEEN DEROSTUS & CATHERINE LADLEY,
1836-1856

When Derostus traveled on church business he and Catherine corresponded regularly with each other and some of these letters were saved and are in this file. 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. Notable in their absence are letters from Derostus to Catherine from the period 1850-1853 when he attended many conferences concerning the establishment of Antioch College.

Generally the letters between Derostus and Catherine are quite formal, though they seem to have had a good amount of respect and affection for each other. Conversation was mainly concerned with church affairs, both at home reported by Catherine and on the road as reported by Derostus. In his later years Derostus seems to have become quite dependent upon Catherine and his family.

SERIES II: LETTERS TO DEROSTUS & CATHERINE FROM FAMILY,
1828-1867

-6 folders, chronological order

The first entry in this folder is a family tree prepared by Bessie Totten, the Ladley's granddaughter. Ms. Totten also has annotated most of these family letters in pencil, describing the relationship of the correspondent to her grandparents and, sometimes, the content of the letter.

Correspondents and references include:

(SEE FOLLOWING PAGE)

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 (her mother's sister)
Derostus Ladley's family
Thomas Ladley

- Derostus' parents

Elizabeth Ladley

George W. Ladley - Derostus' brother

Hannah Ladley - Derostus' sister-in-law (George W.'s wife)

George Ladley - Derostus' nephew

Ann Ladley Rodman - Derostus' sister

William Rodman - Derostus' brother-in-law (Ann's husband)

Mary Rodman Holmes - Derostus' niece (Ann & William's daughter)

Rachel Ladley Martin - Derostus' sister

Joe Martin - Derostus' brother-in-law (Rachel'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

The Griffith and Ladley family letters are very unremarkable and contain little information of a unique nature. 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, which were abundant, the weather, and church meetings. The relatives of the Ladley's never wrote of current political matters or economic issues, other than the price of corn and wheat. Derostus and Catherine appear to have been the most literate correspondents in their respective families.

Derostus died in 1858. After that date either Catherine did not save much incoming correspondence or Bessie Totten discarded it, as there are only a few letters to Catherine between 1859 and 1867. One letter of interest from this period is to Catherine from her son Oscar while he served in the Army during the Civil War.

SERIES III: DEROSTUS LADLEY'S PROFESSIONAL LICENSES &
COMMENDATIONS

1 folder, chronological order
1828-1857

This series contains certificates and notices documenting Ladley's career as a clergyman. Included is his ordination letter (dated May 1, 1836) which proclaimed him to be an Elder and minister in the Christian Church, licenses granted to Ladley by various institutions authorizing him to perform marriages, and letters of commendation from parishes at which Ladley had served, praising his work and recommending him to other parishes.

SERIES IV: SERMONS AND SERMON NOTES
1 folder, chronological order
1821-1855, much undated material

This series begins with a Hymn for the Fourth of July, written, according to Bessie Totten's annotation in 1821 when Derostus was 15 years old, which indicates that he had developed a devout religious outlook, as well as good writing skills, at an early age.

Some of his earlier sermons are completely written in finished form, but the bulk of this material is in note form, from small books and on scraps of paper and is undated. These sermons were no doubt delivered frequently in Ladley's travels on the church circuit.

Most of this material is undated until the Antioch era, at which time he dated several sermons (post 1852). These later sermons can easily be interpreted as containing admonishment to those who had fallen from the faith at Antioch College.

SERIES V: FINANCIAL RECORDS
3 folders, chronological order, 1835-1859

These records are difficult to separate in that a circuit minister made his living from the fees he charged at various churches on his circuit, collections he made at revivals and temperance meetings, and subscriptions he sold to religious publications. These records have been arbitrarily divided into three groups: personal financial accounts, church collections, and church payments & receipts.

Folder 1: Personal financial records. This includes a receipt for a burial plot, a deed to 3 lots in Hebron, receipt for sale of one house, proposal for the building of another house (22 ft. x 33 ft., undated), 2 insurance policies, Ladley's scholarship purchased from Antioch College, and receipts for Derostus Ladley's coffin and funeral expenses.

Folder 2: Church collections. This contains papers and ledgers documenting income from Donation Visits. This income included hats, mits, muslin, shoes, dresses, shirts and food, as well as cash. Also included are collection records for subscriptions to the Palladium, a religious magazine Ladley sold. There are records of accounts kept for room and board collected from Antioch students staying at the Ladley residence.

Folder 3: Church payments and receipts. Most of these are receipts 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
1 folder, chronological order
1840-1856

It was common for people who were moving from an area to obtain a letter of introduction from the church they were leaving which was to be presented to the church they wanted to join wherever they settled. These letters vouched for the person's devoutness to the faith, geniality and willingness to support the church.

Most of these letters of introduction are for people who moved to Yellow Springs and joined the First Christian of Yellow Springs, of which Ladley was pastor until 1854, and after that date clerk.

Many of these names later appear in the controversy between the First Christian Church and Antioch College, including D.C. Orr, Snow Richardson, E.C. Burghdurf and David Jewell, all of whom supported Ladley during the controversy. Notable 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
8 folders, chronological order
1835-1860

Correspondents of note include:

Ira Allen, M.D. Baker, E.W. Devore, W.H. Doherty, James Elliott, Eli Fay, J.R. Freese, Elder James Hays, John Kershner, Isaac Kershner, Horace Mann, A.L. McKinney, Judge William Mills, Elder John Rap, Elder Isaac A. Walter, W.B. Wellans and John Wharton.

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, (i.e., Low Unitarianism, Vital Piety and Strict vs. Moderate Temperance). There are descriptions of revivals and Temperance meetings including Elder Isaac Walters ill-fated Temperance Crusade in New Orleans. (Walter's letters are easily the best written, most informative and most entertaining in this entire collection.) The pastors and parishioners of various churches kept Ladley informed of the power struggles within their churches and the comings and goings of members.

The Christian Churches usually were small (10-30 members). Ladley received many job offers from churches seeking to obtain his services as their pastor. The local Christian Churches appeared to have been fairly independent of the nationwide Christian Church structure.

Notable in absence is reference to the Abolition movement. The Unitarians were staunch abolitionists and the Christians usually agreed with the Unitarians in basic beliefs. Surprisingly there are only two references to abolition, both ambiguous, in this entire set of papers.

Folders 4-5, (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. The Marion Convention was held in October of 1850, but there are few references to actual events at that and subsequent meetings.

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. There was tremendous competition between the Christians and Unitarians for jobs at the college, and several letters document this.

Ladley and most other Christians were proud of their obtainment of Horace Mann to head their new college, and Ladley published articles in The Palladium and Gospel Herald indicating his satisfaction with Antioch's progress and optimism for the future, therefore it is odd there is no reference to Ladley's, or any-one else's, opinion of this selection in these letters.

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 ("...an egotistical squirt..." according to J.R. Freese) and Eli Fay as they commend Ladley for his courage and urge him to continue the struggle.

Folder 8 (1856-1860) relates to Antioch matters exclusively 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. Specific entries of note are letters from 9 men testifying they personally heard Elder Lynn invite Mann to the second day of the Miami Convention, as well as a letter from Horace Mann to Ladley reproving him for his "...highly injurious..." article in the Gospel Herald and also maintaining he was not invited to attend the meetings of the second day.

This folder contains copies of several letters Ladley wrote to others concerning the Antioch controversy. Also of note are documents supporting the purchase of the church building and the dissolution of the First and creation of the Second Christian Churches, including a summons naming D.F. Ladley and J.G. Reeder in a law suit brought about by Frances A. Palmer, Assignee of Antioch College.

SERIES VII DIARIES

1 folder, 3 diaries
1842-1852

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 Describes trip to the Miami Conference in September
of 1852. The las 2 pages of this diary have been cut
from the book.

SERIES IX MISCELLANEOUS

1 folder, mostly undated

This file contains copies of verses and articles written by
Ladley and published in religious publications, an obituary for
Derostus Jr., Elder 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.

GUIDE TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Allen, Ira W., History of the Rise, Difficulties and Suspension of Antioch College: A Record of Facts. Columbus: John Geary & Sons, 1858.

Broadstone, Michael A., History of Greene County, Ohio. Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Co., 1918.

Fay, Eli, Rejoinder to I.W. Allen's Pseudo "History" of Antioch College, Yellow Springs: Longley Bros., 1859.

Messerli, Jonathan, Horace Mann - A Biography. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.

Straker, Robert L., Horace Mann and Others. Yellow Springs: The Antioch Press, 1963.

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