

Collection Title: William E. Sweeney Papers, 1885-1963, bulk 1908-1942, undated

Repository:

The Holloway Archives at Milligan University
P. H. Welshimer Memorial Library
200 Blowers Blvd.
Milligan, TN 37682
Email: archives@milligan.edu
<http://library.milligan.edu/archives/>

Creator:

William Elza Sweeney, J.D. Murch, Tom Libscomb, Don Jeanes

Title:

William E. Sweeney Papers, 1885-1963, bulk 1908-1942, undated

Collection No.

C0029

Extent:

14.5 cubic feet, (14 boxes)

Language:

English

Abstract:

This collection contains the papers and artifacts of William E. Sweeney, well-known minister in the Stone-Campbell Movement and member of the Milligan College (now Milligan University) Board of Trustees, 1921-1928. The bulk of the collection is Sweeney's sermons, although the collection also contains subject files and artifacts.

Biographical Note:

William Elza Sweeney was born December 4, 1877 in Paris, Kentucky to John Steele and Alice Monin Sweeney. He had three brothers and one sister. Sweeney's father, grandfather, greatgrandfather, and four uncles were all preachers in the Restoration Movement, some of them quite well-known and influential within the movement in its early years.

Sweeney began to study at Kentucky University (now Transylvania University) at the age of fifteen. Finishing in 1896, Sweeney then entered the University of Louisville law school. His time at the university was interrupted by the Spanish-American War, during which Sweeney was enlisted in the Second Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Company I. Honorably discharged at the end of the war, Sweeney returned to the University of Louisville in order to complete his studies. He graduated and was admitted to the bar in 1899. Sweeney practiced law in Kentucky for a short time, but much of his effort was focused on campaigning for his father, who sought and won election as State Auditor. Following this, Sweeney spent a few months in Chicago with his brother before going to Buffalo, Wyoming, in 1900. While in Buffalo, Sweeney occupied himself first as a rancher, and then returned to practicing law. He also served terms as deputy sheriff, clerk of the District Court, and prosecuting attorney for the State of Wyoming.

In 1908 Sweeney chose to leave Wyoming and the law profession in order to become a preacher. His first ministry took him to Evansville, Indiana. In 1911 he left this congregation for a ministry at Harlem Avenue Church in Baltimore, Maryland, only to return to Evansville eighteen months later. On one of his vacations during those years at Evansville, Sweeney met Mary Gooch Anderson. Born March 17, 1886 in Louisa Court House, Virginia, Mary was the daughter of Judge George K. Anderson. Sweeney and Anderson married in 1916. They had four children – Mary, born January 31, 1917; Susan, December 23, 1918; Margaret, May 5, 1921, and William, Jr., March 17, 1924.

In 1917, Sweeney went to Danville Christian Church in Danville, Indiana, and then to First Christian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee in 1920. While in Johnson City, Sweeney became involved with campus life at Milligan College (now Milligan University). He served on the Board of Trustees from 1921-1928 and was well-known on campus for his lectures and sermons to the student body. His work at First Christian church more than doubled the size of that congregation as well as created the local Christian Church congregations of West Walnut Street, Grandview, and East Unaka Avenue. Sweeney left First Christian in 1928, spent two years in Columbus, IN, then moved to Broadway Christian Church in Lexington, KY, in 1930. In 1942 he retired from full-time ministry, but continued to travel around the country as a guest preacher and lecturer at churches, Christian colleges, and conventions. Sweeney was also an active member of the North American Christian Convention's leadership and Continuation Committee, was involved with the Commission on Re-Study (or Restructure), and acted as president of the Convention in 1946.

William Sweeney passed away on May 23, 1963. His funeral service was held at Broadway Christian Church. He is buried in his family's cemetery lot in Paris, Kentucky.

Other works covering the life and ministry of William Sweeney exist in the Holloway Archives. See "The Files of W.E. Sweeney Relating to His Work on the Continuation Committee of the North American Christian Convention, 1941-1948" by Mike Beverly and "William E. Sweeney: A Light to the Restoration Movement" by Clinton Holloway, both written in 1995, in the bound Reformation Movement Term Papers collection. Both authors make brief reference to the Sweeney Collection. See also Donald Jeanes' *The Influence of William E. Sweeney on the Twentieth Century Restoration Movement* in the Thesis and Dissertations Collection.

Arrangement:

Ginger Dillon, Eric Nauman, Brynn Mann, and Emily Krug finished processing the collection August of 2007. This involved re-folding of all materials, interleaving archival paper between materials showing significant acidification, unfolding, removal of most metal fasteners, and re-boxing all materials. Both Clinton Holloway and Mike Beverly suggest in their 1995 Restoration Movement Term Papers that they did some "arrangement" of the Sweeney Collection, but neither author details what was done. Most likely, one or both of them were responsible for an earlier re-folding of subject files, though what extent these files were sorted through or rearranged is unknown. The order and titles of the files as found in 2005 was kept with minor re-alphabetization and addition of five folders as explained in the Series Descriptions section below.

The collection contains three series: I. Series: Sermons and Related Materials, 1916-1961; II. Series: Subject Files, 1885-1961; and III. Series: Artifacts, undated.

Scope and Content Note:

The papers of William Sweeney are arranged into three series: Sermons and Related Materials, Subject Files, and Artifacts.

The William E. Sweeney Collection includes various materials dating between 1908 and 1962. The bulk of the material is from Sweeney's preaching years – 1908 through 1942. Primary in the collection are more than 1,200 of Sweeney's sermon outlines, including notes and sermon illustration materials. In addition, the collection contains personal and professional correspondence, subject files, notebooks recording travel, expenses, sermons and weddings; and artifacts from Sweeney's office and from the North American Christian Convention. Previous archivists have removed the tracts and pamphlets, photographs, and more than 1,000 books from the original materials. The tracts and pamphlets were integrated into the Tracts and Pamphlets collection, the photographs were integrated into the Photo Archives, and the books were integrated into the Restoration History and main circulation collections of both Milligan College and Emmanuel School of Religion. A list of the books donated in 1972 was added by a previous archivist to a file titled "Book Indexes of Sweeney Family Libraries." The list has been kept in that folder and can be found in Series II, Box 12. The remaining materials of the Sweeney Collection have been arranged in three series: Series One containing sermons and related materials, Series Two containing subject files and personal correspondence, Series Three containing artifacts.

The Sermons and Related Materials series spans 1916 to 1961. It contains sermon outlines, notes and clippings collected by Sweeney for illustrative purposes. Sweeney organized his sermons by giving each one a number and a title. One thousand two hundred and four numbered sermons and their accompanying materials are in this series. Sermon outlines usually contain such information as the name of the sermon, name of the congregations to which it was delivered, and the date it was preached. The sermons are arranged in numerical order as assigned by Sweeney. Five folders of unnumbered sermons and five folders of untitled material were found in the filing cabinet with the numbered sermons. These folders can be found at the end of Series I (in Box 12).

The Subject Files series spans 1885 to 1961. It contains subject files. Included in these files are personal papers, correspondence, papers regarding the North American Christian Convention, radio addresses, and book lists. A previous archives student worker has re-folded and gone through some of these files, and it is unclear to what extent the original subject headings were maintained. Correspondence includes materials from the North American Christian Convention and the Commission on Restructure. Several letters from former Milligan College presidents Frederick Doyle Kershner and Dean E. Walker, mostly pertaining to the business of the NACC and Restructure, and a few from former Milligan president Virgil Elliot can be found within the correspondence as well. The Subject Files are arranged alphabetically by topic or by organization name. Some minor re-alphabetizing was done. It also contains five files which contain material added to the collection after the death of William E. Sweeney. One folder of these materials was donated to the P.H. Welshimer Memorial Library by J.D. Murch, apparently with the intention of adding them to Sweeney's papers. The materials were given to Murch by Tom Libscomb, a relative of Sweeney's, in 1977. The other four folders were sent to the archives by Milligan College president Don Jeanes in March of 2006. Jeanes had received these materials from Sweeney's family following his death. Materials added to the collection at a later date have their addition information noted on the folders.

The Artifacts series is undated and contains a note holder and stamp sponge from William E. Sweeney's desk, as well as notepads, notebooks, and a pocket-sized New Testament. The eight notebooks contain travel and expenses information, sermon outlines, personal journals, and information on weddings performed and sermons preached. They and the New Testament have been placed into individual book storage boxes and labeled. This series also contains a gavel mounted on plaque and a certificate of appreciation, both given to Sweeney in thanks for his presidency of the North American Christian Convention in 1946. William E. Sweeney's office desk, chair, and filing cabinet were also donated with his papers. The chair and file cabinet were deaccessioned in June of 2008. The desk can be found in the Holloway Archives work area.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Note: There was no clear accession number given for this collection. The collection was built over a number of years, including 1972, 1977, 1981, and 2006. Processing was completed in 2007.

Access Restrictions:

Collection is open for research.

The archivist reserves the right to determine on a case-by-case basis if certain folders within the collection that have been requested for viewing cannot be made available due to various restriction compliance, including but not limited to student information, private personal information, and organizational information of a restricted nature.

Preferred Citation

[Item], William E. Sweeney Papers, Collection C0029, The Holloway Archives at Milligan University, Milligan, TN.

Processing Information

Processed by: Ginger Dillon, Eric Nauman, Brynn Mann, and Emily Krug
Completed in 2007.

This involved re-foldering of all materials, interleaving archival paper between materials showing significant acidification, unfolding, removal of most metal fasteners, and re-boxing all materials. For more detailed information on arrangement and processing for each series, refer to the previous version of the finding aid in the collection file.

Folder List

Box 1	I. Series: Sermons and Related Materials, 1916-1961 Copy for "Fully Surrendered Life" Sermons numbered 1 through 127
Box 2	Sermons numbered 128 through 204
Box 3	Sermons numbered 205 through 268
Box 4	Sermons numbered 269 through 347
Box 5	Sermons numbered 348 through 427
Box 6	Sermons numbered 428 through 519
Box 7	Sermons numbered 520 through 620
Box 8	Sermons numbered 621 through 757
Box 9	Sermons numbered 758 through 885
Box 10	Sermons numbered 886 through 1019
Box 11	Sermons numbered 1020 through 1196

Box 12 Sermons numbered 1199 through 1204
Unnumbered sermons and untitled material

II. Series: Subject Files, 1885-1961

Apostolic Teaching
Articles by Lappin, S.S.
Articles by Sweeney, Edwin
Articles about Sweeney, W.E.
Articles by Sweeney, W.E.
Articles by Sweeney, Z.T.
Book Indexes of Sweeney Family Libraries (and others)
Booklets and pamphlets
Buffalo, Wyoming Murder Case and Misc.
Cane Ridge
Cartoons and Illustrations
Clifty Seminar – 1963
Clippings – Misc.
Clippings – Politician
Clippings – Theological
Commission on Restudy Correspondence (1)

Box 13 Commission on Restudy Correspondence (2)
Correspondence – Misc.
Correspondence, periodical clippings, NACC sermons
Correspondence to and from Soldiers and Sailors, WWII, from Broadway
Christian Church
Evangelism
Index of Volumes of Sermon Notes by Z.T. Sweeney
Informal Club 4-9-1957, “Our American Way of Life”
Informal Club – Bricker Amendment, May 11, 1954
Informal Club 10-9-1962, “Force and Ideas”
Informal Club – Domestic Legislation by National Treaty, December 11, 1956
Informal Club – Oregon Trail, December 10, 1940
Informal Club – Our Changing Government, October 8, 1946
Informal Club Papers
Informal Club – Russia and World Peace, December 14, 1948
Informal Club – Squatter’s Sovereignty – paper delivered January 11, 1938
Manuscripts by Sweeney, W.E.
Miscellaneous
Modernism
Newspaper articles
North American Christian Convention, Commission on Restudy, sermons and
publications, church bulletins
North American Christian Convention, articles about Continuation Committee
[copies]
North American Christian Convention [sermons]
North American Christian Convention Continuation Committee 1941
North American Christian Convention Continuation Committee 1942
North American Christian Convention, convention date poll 1944
North American Christian Convention Continuation Committee 1945

North American Christian Convention Continuation Committee 1946 [1]
North American Christian Convention Continuation Committee 1946 [2]
North American Christian Convention Continuation Committee 1948
North American Christian Convention, copies of Continuation Committee documents
Open Membership
Poetry and sermon illustrations [1]
Poetry and sermon illustrations [2]
Preaching
Radio Addresses
Recollections of Paris, KY, personalities – delivered at Rotary, Paris, KY, Oct. 5, 1932, 12 noon and other Paris, KY, info
Re-registering rent on 506 Magnolia
Restructure
Russia and World Peace
Summers, Hatton, Rep. – Speeches, etc.
Sweeney family
Sweeney manuscripts
United Christian Missionary Society
Unity
Unlabeled [writings, articles, papers, reports by or about W.E. Sweeney]

Box 14

III. Series: Artifacts, undated

American Standard Version pocket New Testament, 1929
Diary-notebook, 1962
Diary-notebook 1963
Notebook: “Weddings June 17, 1922 to August 30, 1930”
Notebook: “Sermon Book #1”
Notebook: “Sermon Book #2”
Notebook, 1963
Notepad, pocket-sized
Notepad, 1944 – 1945
Notepad, 1949 - 1954
Certificate of Appreciation, North American Christian Convention, 1946
Plaque with mounted wooden gavel, North American Christian Convention, 1946
Note holder
Stamp sponge