

# South Church Papers

## Finding Aid

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### Collection Summary

**Title:** South Church Paper Papers

**Accession Number:** 2006.26

**Dates:** 1711 to 1955

**Bulk Dates:** 1839 to 1928

**Location:** Vault

**Physical Description:** Two Boxes of Papers, Twenty-three volumes.

**Abstract:** The South Church Papers include the accounts, reports, correspondence and minutes collected by the church from its beginning in 1711 until 1955. Also included here are the accounts of the Congregational Society from 1839 to 1851, minutes and correspondence of the Ladies' Association from 1843 to 1914, minutes of the Woman's Missionary Society from 1871-1920, the yearly minutes of the Vestry from 1900 to 1928, as well as the accounts of the church from 1934 to 1955.

### Search Terms

Peabody (Mass.) – History

South Danvers (Mass.) – History

South Danvers (Mass.) – History – Civil War, 1861-1865

Danvers (Mass.) - History

South Church (Peabody, Mass.) – History

South Church (Danvers, Mass.) – History

Middle Parish (Salem, Mass.) – History

Fales, Almira, d.1868

Cook, Eunice Winchester, 1795-1872

Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915

United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 - Correspondence

## **Provenance**

While it is unknown exactly when the papers were deposited in the Sutton Room for safe keeping, it seems likely that they were donated after 1961 when the South Church was taken down. The Record Book from 1711-1739 appears to be donated in 1988 by the South Congregational Church.

## **Processing**

The papers were reviewed, sorted and processing was begun in 2006. It was completed in early 2007.

## **Conservation Work**

All staples were removed. Papers were filed in acid-free folders and organized in document boxes. Fragile volumes had boxes created for them and any pages or documents viewed as particularly acidic had acid-free tissue placed between them. Some surface cleaning was done.

## **Restrictions**

The papers are the property of the Peabody Institute Library and all copyrights belong to the library. Access is only in the Sutton Room and all research is supervised.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The South Congregational Church was incorporated in 1711. Located at the junction of what is present day Lowell, Foster and Central Streets, the original church was 51 feet long and 38 feet wide. It was built with the help of subscribers who donated the funds for its construction.

Once the building was completed on November 16, 1711, Samuel Gardner, Samuel Stone, Samuel Marble, James Holten and David Forster were chosen to search for a minister. On February 15, 1712, Benjamin Prescott was chosen and in 1713, assessments were assigned to parishioners to contribute to Prescott's salary and for the erection of a home for the minister and his family.

Prescott served as minister until 1756. Subsequent ministers were: Nathan Holt, 1756-1792, Samuel Mead, 1794-1803, Samuel Walker, 1805-1826, George Cowles, 1827-1836, Harrison G. Park, 1837-1838, Thomas P. Field, 1840-1850, James D. Butler, 1851-1852, James O. Murray, 1854-1861, William M. Barbour, 1861-1868, George D. Anthony, 1869-1876, Willard G. Sperry, 1878-1885, George A. Hall, 1886-1905, William Arthur Dietrick, 1906-1911 and Newell D. Maynard, 1911-1913.

In 1835, the congregation voted to take down the original church and build a new one in its place. This building was dedicated in 1837. On January 30, 1843, another vote was taken and it was decided to sell this building to the Methodist Society. The church was taken down and moved to Washington Street where it still stands today.

On September 22, 1843, a fire broke out in South Danvers, destroying the partially finished church. With help from donations and the work of the Ladies' Association, the church was completed in 1844. It remained at its site until 1961 when it was sold and taken down. The congregation moved to its present location on Prospect Street in Peabody.

The Records of the South Church, 1711-1739, record the early years of the church. Members, locations and owners of the pews, lists of the various committees, votes taken and a record of the budget were transcribed into this first volume. Parishioners were assessed a portion of the minister's salary. Any person unable to meet these assessments were subject to being arrested and jailed. Abatements were often given to the poorer members of the church and these lists are also included in the records.

Minutes of the South Church recorded between 1840 and 1871 describe a church in transition. Included here are the names of parishioners, as well as those applying for admittance to the church. Deaths of members were not recorded until 1858. Any person wishing to join the church had to be interviewed before being accepted. While the church was forward in its vote to work against the evils of slavery in American society, they also were adamant that members adhere to established guidelines of behavior. These included bans against dancing and drinking. If parishioners were believed to be violating the church rules, they would be visited by a committee established for this purpose and warned. If they did not prove their repentance, they were excommunicated. These excommunications were fairly frequent during the 1840's and 1850's.

In 1850, Rev. Thomas Field announced his resignation. According to church records, his reasons for resigning—exhaustion—were not viewed as just cause for leaving. But faced with his refusal to stay, they had no choice but to accept to his decision.

In March 1851, James D. Butler was accepted as the new minister. It wasn't long into his work when Butler realized there were many within the congregation who were not pleased with his style. On July 23, 1852, Butler asked for a meeting to discuss relations between him and church. A council was convened on August 5, 1852. It was comprised of ministers from neighboring towns and two delegates from South Church. Results of council are included in the minutes. They state that James Butler's installation at South Church was met by a disgruntled minority who worked to force him out. Despite the council's findings that Butler was not at fault for the rift, they recommended that he leave, believing he'd never be accepted by some members of the church. His farewell discourse, given on July 18, 1852 alludes to many other reasons for his departure.

Because of this, it took nearly another two years for the South Church to find a minister willing to become their pastor. Rev. James Murray was named the new minister on

October 1854. In his sermons, he spoke for the abolition of slavery. Included with these papers is one of his Thanksgiving addresses against slavery, given in 1856. Soon after, the church voted to open a chapel in the Rockville section of South Danvers. One of the first ministers sent to preach there was Stephen Hooper. In November of 1858, he was reported to have made derogatory remarks regarding the character of some of the members of the church. He also denounced the recent excommunications. Because he refused to retract his statements, Hooper himself was excommunicated. Sermons given at the South Church by Andrew Nichols and Articles of Faith for the Church in 1845 and 1885 are also filed here. Programs and anniversary celebrations are here as well.

One of the most influential organizations within in the South Church was the *Ladies Association*. It was formed in 1843, with the intention to furnish and purchase an organ for the new church. The first president of the Association was Mrs. Henry (Eunice) Cook. She was born in Danvers as Eunice Winchester (1795-1872). In 1816, she married Henry Cook (1793-1875). Though he had once been involved in the export of soap, by the time of his death, his occupation was listed as that of a gentleman. Once the new church was dedicated in 1844, the Ladies Association shifted their focus to raising funds for any number of charitable needs.

One of their first missions was to help fund colporteurs, missionaries and others who brought Bibles to distribute to settlers living in the Midwest. In their early years, they devoted much time to quilting and later to shoe making as a way to raise money for their projects.

The minutes of the Ladies Association list the membership, work accomplished, the rise and fall of the membership and the struggle in the early years to decide where to focus their energy. Though the minutes mention few town and national events, they do record the laying of the cornerstone of the Peabody Institute in 1853, as well as General Lee's surrender and Lincoln's assassination.

After supporting American colporteurs for a few years, they turned to the American Missionary Society, which sent them the names of struggling ministers stationed in Midwestern states. Between fundraisers and their own work, they provided clothing, bedding, household items and money for ministers and their families who worked for the American Missionary Society. The minutes record the items sent and their monetary value. These were then packed into barrels for shipment to the families. The first barrel of clothing was sent to a family in Wisconsin on Sept. 7, 1853. The Association continued with this work until the early 1900's.

Recorded into the minutes were copies the letters sent to the Association by those who received their gifts. These letters provide a view of life in the American Midwest from the 1850's to the 1890's. Many letters came from Anna Wade Richardson. Born into slavery, she went onto form the Lamson School in 1886. This school for African-American children was located in Marshallville, Georgia. The Ladies' Association supported the school with supplies and donations.

Also included with these records are several of the original letters sent to the Association. These include one from Booker T. Washington, President of Tuskegee College asking for clothing for the students. Others came from Ward Knowles, a minister from Iowa; A. C. Hirst, E.E. Frisbie and J. N. Beard from Napa College, California; H. J. McCoy, S. M. Sayford, C. K. Ober of the Young Men's Christian Association; Mary L. Marden who worked at an unnamed school for black children; and K. Otaki of Japan. There is also a pamphlet published in 1893 to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association.

During the Civil War, the Ladies Association furthered their work by establishing the Ladies Soldiers' Aid Association. This society devoted itself to providing money, clothing, bandages and other necessities to those working with the wounded soldiers in Washington, D.C.

A great number of the letters sent to the Association were addressed to Mrs. Henry (Eunice) Cook. The letters she received describe the casualties who poured into Washington D.C. and the efforts of those working with the wounded. Many of the letters came from Almira L. Fales (d.1868) and her husband, Joseph. Almira Fales was one of the first women to actively provide aid to the wounded in Washington, D.C. The Fales's letters present a vivid account of the conditions they encountered among the wounded. In her Feb. 7, 1863 letter to Eunice Cook, Almira Fales promised to reserve some butter for Fitch Poole's son, Horace. The July 22, 1863 letter to Eunice Cook expresses the Fales's gratitude for the sympathy extended upon the death of their son at the Battle of Chancellorsville. In response to Eunice Cook's request, Almira Fales included her photograph in the letter. It has been removed for storage in Photograph Box 2.

Other letters came from the Executive Committee of the United States Sanitary Commission. One, dated July 9, 1864, from Gideon Bantz described the Battle of Monocacy which took place outside of Frederick City, Maryland.

Also included with the Ladies Soldiers Aid papers are bulletins from The National Sailors' Fair and reports from the New England Women's Auxiliary Association which were printed by Abby May of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

After the Civil War, the Ladies Association returned their attention to helping ministers and missionaries in Midwestern states.

An offshoot of the Ladies Association was the Woman's Missionary Society. It was begun on March 7, 1871 by Mrs. Anthony, wife of George D. Anthony, minister of the church from 1869-1876. As part of their work, they supported two girls' boarding schools started by a Mr. and Mrs. Knapp and Mary E. and Charlotte E. Ely located in Constantinople and Bitlis, Turkey. Letters from the Elys recorded into the minutes describe their work at these schools and the conditions they encountered. In 1878, they describe the shifting political tide and a massacre of Kurds. The papers of Mary E. and Charlotte E. Ely can be found at Mt. Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA

In 1878, the Social Circle was formed with the intention to foster friendships, hold fairs and raise money for church. And in 1890, the Woman's Missionary Society changed its name to Auxiliary to the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions.

In 1906, the Woman's Association was formed in the attempt to gather together the various women's groups—Social Circle, Home Missionary Group, Foreign Missionary Group and Ladies' Association. They voted to change name of the Ladies Association to the Home Missionary Department of the Woman's Association and the Social Circle to the Local Church Department of the Woman's Association. The Woman's Association Executive Board held meetings once a year with the intent of overseeing the various associations. In 1917, they voted to combine home and foreign missionary meetings.

Though their work still included preparing donations for home missionaries, more and more the Woman's Association turned to learning about the work of foreign missionaries and the problems of race relations within the U.S.

Filed with these papers are a small journal kept by Mrs. Sperry, wife of Willard G. Sperry who was minister at the church from 1878-1885, and the Sunday School Records for 1908.

The South Church Papers from 1900 to 1955 include minutes of Vestry meetings, calendar of services, yearly reports from the minister, handwritten reports from the Woman's Association, accounts of finances and information regarding membership.

### **Organization and Container List**

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
South Church Shelf	South Church Records, 1711-1739
South Church Shelf	South Society of the Congregational Church, Accounts, 1839-1852
South Church Shelf	South Church Records, 1840-1871
Box 1, Folder 1	South Church, Articles of Faith, Sermons, 1819, 1845, 1852, 1856, 1885.
Box 1, Folder 2	Ladies' Association, Receipts, 1853-1856, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 3	Ladies' Association Letters, 1860-1926
Box 1, Folder 4	Letters to Mrs. Henry Cook, 1861-1865
Box 1, Folder 5	Ladies' Aid Association Papers, 1864, n.d.

Box 1, Folder 6	National Sailors' Fair Flyers, 1864, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 6	New England Women's Auxiliary Association, Reports, 1864
Box 1, Folder 8	Ladies' Aid Association, Newsclippings, 1864
Box 1, Folder 9	Soldiers Aid Society Receipts, 1863-1865
Box 1, Folder 10	Mrs. Sperry's Journal, 1884
Box 1, Folder 11	South Church Programs and Celebrations, 1886-1923, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 12	Woman's Missionary Society Papers, 1895-1914, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 13	Woman's Association Papers, 1906-1951
Box 1, Folder 14	South Church Papers, 1900-1906
Box 1, Folder 15	South Church Papers, 1907-1908
Box 1, Folder 16	South Church Papers, 1909-1910
Box 1, Folder 17	South Church Papers, 1911
Box 2, Folder 1	South Church Papers, 1912-1913
Box 2, Folder 2	South Church Papers, 1914
Box 2, Folder 3	South Church Papers, 1915
Box 2, Folder 4	South Church Papers, 1916-1917
Box 2, Folder 5	South Church Papers, 1918-1919
Box 2, Folder 6	South Church Papers, 1920-1928
Box 2, Folder 7	Banquet and Supper Records, 1921-1931.
Box 2, Folder 8	South Church Papers, n.d.
South Church Shelf	Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip, Records, 1894-1900.

South Church Shelf	Sunday School Record Book, 1908.
South Church Shelf	Minutes, 1911.
South Church Shelf	Records of the Ladies' Association, 1843-1863
South Church Shelf	Records of the Ladies' Association, 1863-1877
South Church Shelf	Records of the Ladies' Association, 1878-1896
South Church Shelf	Records of the Ladies' Association, 1896-1914
South Church Shelf	Woman's Missionary Society Records, 1871-1877
South Church Shelf	Woman's Missionary Society Records, 1878-1882
South Church Shelf	Woman's Missionary Society Records, 1884-1891
South Church Shelf	Woman's Missionary Society Records, 1891-1895
South Church Shelf	Woman's Missionary Society Records, 1895-1902
South Church Shelf	Woman's Missionary Society Records, 1902-1909
South Church Shelf	Social Circle Records, 1878-1888
South Church Shelf	Social Circle Records, 1889-1906
South Church Shelf	Woman's Association Records, 1906-1910
South Church Shelf	Woman's Association Records, 1910-1917
South Church Shelf	Woman's Association Records, 1917-1920
South Church Shelf	Woman's Association Records, 1924-1928
South Church Shelf	Woman's Association Records, 1929-1935
South Church Shelf	Woman's Association Records, 1935-1950
South Church Shelf	Executive Board Meetings of the Woman's Association, 1906-1927
South Church Shelf	Woman's Association, Accounts, 1934-1955

