

JOHN CUNNINGHAM (1820-1908)
PAPERS, ca. 1845-1916
39 items
Restrictions: None
Accession number 1993-07
Gift of Owen Thomas, May 1993

Congregational Library
14 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
(617) 523-0470

Processed June 1993
by Barbara E. Austen

INTRODUCTION

This collection of memorabilia was handed down from the originator, John Cunningham, to his daughter Adeline Cunningham Arnold, to her daughter Frances Martha Arnold Thomas, then to her son Owen Thomas, the donor. The line of descent is outlined by the donor on a page in the accession file.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Cunningham, the son of Joseph and Jane (Scott) Cunningham, was born in Market Harborough, Leicestershire, England, January 12, 1820. He attended a private boys school in England, after which he moved to the United States and attended Oberlin College. He was ordained in New York City in 1848. His pastorates included Boonton and Paterson, New Jersey from 1848-1852; Winchester, Connecticut, 1853; Globe Village, Massachusetts, 1854; Penn Yan, New York, 1855-1856; Gainesville, New York, 1856-1866; Sweden Center, New York, 1866-1876; St. Joseph, Michigan, 1876-1877; and West Groton, New York, 1877-1900. During the Civil War he worked with the U.S. Christian Commission as a delegate to bring the word of God, encouragement, and supplies to soldiers in the field, the hospital, and on the battleground.

Cunningham married Adeline Laura Turner in 1847 in Poughkeepsie, New York. She died in 1854, and a year later Cunningham married Frances Murdock Kinne in Canterbury, Connecticut. He had three children. Cunningham died in Rochester, New York December 19, 1908.

Additional genealogical notes can be found in the accession file and on the end papers of the medical book with the collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of John Cunningham consist of both professional and personal materials, arranged by type. Church papers, 1853-1900, 1916, reflect his ministerial duties and are arranged chronologically. They include ecclesiastical council records for Winchester Center, Connecticut where there was some controversy over his call, and for Gainesville and Penn Yan, New York. Other Winchester materials include minutes of a meeting about the controversy in the church, and a statement made by his supporters. Also included is a published history of the Congregational Church in West Groton, New York.

Personal papers, 1853-1910, include a diary kept from May to June 1864 while Cunningham was a delegate for the U.S. Christian Commission. The delegates duties were to visit to the field, hospital, and battleground for "instruction, supply, encouragement, and relief of the men of our army." More specifically, delegates were expected to deliver stores, aid chaplains, encourage prayer meetings, write letters for those too ill to wield a pen, and bring the word of God to the men. Cunningham was located near Alexandria, Virginia, during the two months he documented. He noted his own activities, rumors floating through camp, anecdotes about soldiers, and individual deaths.

In addition to the diary, other personal papers include a certificate of citizenship, 1853; resolutions from the Grange; his son Joseph's will, 1870; two notes to his wife; and bills for his and his wife Frances' funerals, 1908, 1910, all arranged chronologically.

Family photographs include cased daguerreotypes of Cunningham, Frances Kinne Cunningham, John and his wife Adeline Turner Cunningham, and his parents Joseph and Jane Scott Cunningham. Portraits of John, and interior and exterior views of the West Groton, New York Congregational Church are mounted photographs filed separately.

Also included in the collection is a leather-covered writing/sewing kit used by Cunningham during the Civil War; a Bible used by him at West Groton, presented 17 June 1887, and with his pencilled notations; and a volume The History of Health, which belonged to Peter Cunningham in Leicestershire, England, 1791, with notations on family genealogy on the end pages.

DESCRIPTION

- | | | |
|--------|------|--|
| Folder | 1. | Church papers, 1853-1900, 1916 |
| " | 2-3. | Personal papers, 1853-1910 |
| " | 4. | Photographs of John Cunningham and West Groton Congregational Church, 1875, 1899 |
| " | 5. | Cased daguerreotypes of Frances Kinne Cunningham, ca. 1855, and John and Adeline Turner Cunningham, ca. 1847 |
| " | 6. | Cased daguerreotypes/tintypes of John Cunningham, ca. 1845, and Joseph and Jane Scott Cunningham, ca. 1850 |
| Item | 1. | Writing/sewing kit, ca. 1864 |
| Volume | 1. | Bible, presented to John Cunningham 17 June 1887 |
| " | 2. | <u>The History of Health</u> , 1791, with genealogical notations on end papers |