

William E. Sweeney Collection

1885-1963

Milligan College Archives and
Special Collections
P.H. Welshimer Memorial Library
Milligan College, TN 37682

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INTRODUCTION

Title: William E. Sweeney Collection, 1885-1963

Collection Number: 29

Physical Description: 14 boxes (approx. 14.5 linear ft.)

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

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Provenance: The papers of William E. Sweeney were donated to the P.H. Welshimer Memorial Library after the death of his wife, Mary, in 1971. Their daughter, Margaret Foley, bought these materials from the Sweeney estate and donated them to the Milligan College Library in 1972. The materials were transferred into the custody of the Milligan College Archives and Special Collections upon its establishment in 1981.

Access: The collection is open for research. However, due to the fragility of some of the paper it may not be possible to photocopy some of the material. Researchers are asked to handle fragile paper with utmost care.

Processing Information: 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.

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, great-grandfather, 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. 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.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

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.

Other works covering the life and ministry of William Sweeney exist in the Milligan College 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.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I, SERMONS AND RELATED MATERIALS, 1916 - 1961, Boxes 1 - 12.

Series I 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. In most cases, the sermons have had acid-free paper interleaved into the folders in order to buffer the effects of highly acidic paper and newsprint. It should be noted that in instances where folders contained large amounts of acid-damaged paper, interleaving was often done between every two or three pages in order to maximize the buffered paper's ability to slow further acidification of the materials. Interleaved pages were not meant to indicate the beginning or end of a document or set of notes. Materials that were fastened together were kept together; materials without fasteners were kept loose. Some newspaper clippings have been photocopied to acid-free paper and the originals discarded. Photocopying was abandoned for the sake of time and materials. All sermons have been re-folded. The new folders have been numbered and titled exactly as Sweeney had them. The original folder was kept within the new one in some situations where Sweeney's written notes on the folder could not be neatly or easily transferred to a new folder. 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).

Series II, SUBJECT FILES, 1885-1961, Boxes 12 – 13.

Series II 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.

Paper showing signs of high acidity or acid damage has been interleaved with acid-free paper and almost all metal fasteners were removed. It should be noted that in instances where folders contained large amounts of acid-damaged paper, interleaving was often done between every two or three pages in order to maximize the buffered paper's ability to slow further acidification of

the materials. Interleaved pages were not meant to indicate the beginning or end of a document or set of notes. Materials that were found fastened together were kept together; materials without fasteners were kept loose. The Subject Files are arranged alphabetically by topic or by organization name. Some minor re-alphabetizing was done. See the Box List for folder titles.

Series II 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.

Series III, ARTIFACTS, Boxes 14

Series III 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.

Series III 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 offices of the Milligan College Archives and Special Collections.

Box List

Box 1: 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 886 through 1019

Box 11: Sermons numbered 1020 through 1196

Box 12: Series I: Sermons numbered 1199 through 1204,
Unnumbered sermons and untitled material,

Series II: Subject files:

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: Series II: Subject files:

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: Series III: Artifacts

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