

Archives and Special Collections

Dickinson College

Carlisle, PA

**COLLECTION REGISTER**

Name: **Durbin, John Price (1800-1876)** **MC 2016.05**

Material: Papers

Volume: 0.25 linear feet (1 Document Boxes)

Donation: Gift of Peter R. and Frances Rossmassler, 2014

Usage: These materials have been donated without restrictions on usage.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

John Price Durbin (1800-1876) served as the first President of Dickinson College after it came under the management of the Baltimore and Philadelphia Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church; he served in this role from 1834 to 1845. Durbin began preaching at age 19 and was largely self-taught. He received his master's degree from Cincinnati College in 1825. Durbin then served as a professor of languages at Augusta College in Kentucky and as the Chaplain of the United States Senate before assuming the presidency of Dickinson College. From 1842 to 1843, Durbin made an extensive tour of Europe and the Middle East. Durbin's two books, *Observations in Europe, Principally in France and Great Britain* and *Observations in the East, Chiefly in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor*, were both based on these travels. After resigning from the presidency of Dickinson in 1845, Durbin began preaching in Philadelphia and served as the secretary of the Missionary Society from 1850 to 1872. Durbin died in New York on October 18, 1876 and is buried in Philadelphia.

**COLLECTION DESCRIPTION**

The John Price Durbin Papers are housed in one document box and arranged into three categories: Scrapbook, Loose Materials, and Inscribed Book. These papers were donated by Peter R. Rossmassler, a descendant of John P. Durbin, and his wife Frances. The content of this collection reflects Durbin's thoughts on his own life as well as evidence of his travels in Europe and the Middle East.

The Scrapbook begins with 74 pages of an autobiographical memoir written by Durbin. Pages 75-80 of the scrapbook are missing. Newspaper clippings about sermons delivered by Durbin can be found on pages 62 and 101. The remainder of the scrapbook includes pages of

plant clippings affixed to the paper and other miscellany from his travels, most of which have handwritten descriptions.

The Loose Materials section begins with a partial copy of the autobiographical memoir from the scrapbook, written on 5x8 inch notecards. Another copy of the autobiographical memoir, complete, is found in the same folder. Also included among the loose materials is a newspaper clipping found between pages 62 and 63 of the scrapbook, as well as other miscellaneous papers found inside the back cover. A printed sheet featuring a poem by Bishop Fowler about Durbin includes an early 20<sup>th</sup> century photograph of an engraving affixed to it. This page was originally framed as a gift to Eleanor Radford Rossmassler, Durbin's great great granddaughter; the backing from the original framing is preserved in the same folder. Finally, there is another engraving of Durbin which had been removed from an oval frame.

The copy of the book, *The Life of John Price Durbin...with an Analysis of his Homiletic Skill and Sacred Oratory* by John Alexander Roche, is inscribed by the author to Durbin's son, Alexander. This book has been separated out from the other papers and is shelved with other books by Durbin in Dickinson's collection; the call number for the book is listed in brackets.

## COLLECTION INVENTORY

### BOX 1 - MC 2016.5

#### SCRAPBOOK

Folder 1) Autobiographical memoir on pages 1-74, newspaper clipping on page 101, affixed flora and other miscellany in the later pages of the scrapbook

#### LOOSE MATERIALS

Folder 2) Transcription of autobiographical portion of scrapbook  
Folder 3) Contents between pages 62-63  
Folder 4) Contents between end paper and back board  
Folder 5) Printed poem with affixed photograph of engraving, back paper for frame  
Folder 6) Engraving

#### INSCRIBED BOOK

*The Life of John Price Durbin...with an Analysis of his Homiletic Skill and Sacred Oratory* by John Alexander Roche (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1889). [SC-DC P D953R]

This collection register was prepared by Frank Vitale IV, September 2016.