

Archives and Special Collections

Dickinson College

Carlisle, PA

ARCHIVAL COLLECTION REGISTER

Title: **Jesse Truesdell Peck (President, 1848-1852)** **RG 2/4**

Dates: 1848-1852

Material: Papers

Volume: 0.1 linear feet

Usage: There are no access restrictions on these records.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Upon the death of Robert Emory in May 1848, the Board of Trustees elected Jesse Truesdell Peck as the next president of Dickinson College. The youngest of ten children, Peck was prepared for the ministry at Cazenovia Seminary in New York, yet he had virtually no formal college experience. This lack of training early became evident when he continuously came in conflict with the students of the college over discipline. Peck's penchant for discipline and his physical appearance made him an easy target for the rebellious students, indignant at being called "boys" by their new president. One of the most famous incidents was contrived by Moncure Daniel Conway, Class of 1849, who arranged to have Peck detained at an insane asylum in Staunton, Virginia, while the president was attending a conference. Even the president's wife and dog were not safe from the students' displeasure; an incident in which the latter was shot resulted in an embargo upon firearms and weapons (including dogs) on campus. In 1851, the entire sophomore and junior classes rebelled and threatened to leave after several students were punished for attending the funeral of a Carlisle merchant, permission having been refused by the faculty. Disaster was averted by the mediation of James Buchanan, Class of 1809, who intervened on behalf of the students. But for Peck, this was the final blow, and soon after he announced to the Board of Trustees that he would resign at the end of the following academic year.

Peck's troubles with the student body were not limited to disciplinary problems; during his presidency, student enrollment in both the college and the grammar school dropped considerably from what it had been under Emory. Peck also had very little luck (as had many of his predecessors) in raising funds for the college. This failure led to the institution of the ill-advised scholarship sale program, a plan of Herman Merrills Johnson devised to raise the college's endowment. The plan failed miserably, but Peck did little more than approve it and left his successor, Charles Collins, to deal with the ramifications. Peck himself accumulated bills

that the Board refused to pay, some even coming after his resignation. The only highlight of Peck's presidency was his able faculty. Otis Henry Tiffany and James W. Marshall, both alumni, joined the college with Peck; Marshall later became a consul at Leeds and then Postmaster General from 1869 until 1874. Other additions included Erastus Wentworth, a missionary to China after leaving Dickinson, as well as Herman Merrills Johnson, who arrived in 1850 and would remain for the rest of his life, serving as president for the final eight years.

After leaving Dickinson in 1852, Peck became a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He also helped to found Syracuse University, serving on its Board of Trustees, including a three-year stint as the Board President, until his death in 1883.

SERIES ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

The records contained in the President Jesse Truesdell Peck record group pertain only to his time and affairs as president of Dickinson College. As such, no personal papers or papers pertaining to Peck's tenure as a faculty member are included in this record group. For records concerning Peck's interactions with students, please refer to RG 5/1. The Peck records are housed in one document box with RG 2/2 through RG 2/10 and are arranged into three series: General Business, Personnel, and External Affairs.

The General Business series is comprised of records concerning miscellaneous affairs of college business such as correspondence dealing with library and museum acquisitions and questions regarding curriculum. The records within this series are arranged chronologically, with undated material housed first. All records concerning college financial affairs and interactions with the church are housed within the Board of Trustees record group.

The Personnel series is divided into three sub-series: Faculty, Non-faculty and Applications. Only confirmed employees of the college are included within the Faculty and Non-faculty sub-series. The Applications sub-series contains the letters and recommendations of persons seeking employment with the College. In cases where it is unclear whether or not the request for a position was granted, the records remain in the Applications sub-series until their employment status can be confirmed. Records within their sub-series are arranged in alphabetical order by the individuals last name.

The External Affairs series contains records which concern any event happening outside of the college that had an impact on the institution. The series is further divided into two sub-series, Miscellaneous Affairs and Career Services. The Miscellaneous Affairs sub-series includes Peck's engagements as president of the college. The Career Services sub-series does not represent an actual college department. It merely refers to a practice of the college in filling positions when notified or requested by various schools/churches. Often, these institutions would request a graduating student to fill the available position. This sub-series contains only records in which no particular student is named, and where the result of the application is unknown. In cases in which a particular student has been requested, that record has been housed within the Student Affairs record group (RG 5/1) according to the individual's last name. These materials have been arranged chronologically within their sub-series.

RECORD GROUP INVENTORY

RG 2/4 - JESSE TRUESDELL PECK (PRESIDENT, 1848-1852)

Series 1 General Business

1.1 Miscellaneous Affairs

- 1.1.1 Undated – Letter of Harrison Hall, re: offer of *Port Folio* back issues
 - 6 Jan. 1849 – Letter of B. Jaeger, submitting proposition with testimonials
 - 26 June 1849 – Letter of A. L. Russell, re: request for governor's attendance at college function
 - 1 Dec. 1849 – Letter of Harrison Hall, re: offer of *Port Folio* back issues
 - c1850 – Catalogue of minerals presented to Peck
 - c1850 – Printed list of publications by John Ball, publisher
- 1.1.2 13 June 1850 – Letter of General T. Stockton, re: courses in military tactics and civil engineering
 - 3 Dec. 1850 – Letter of J. Lewis, re: request for NJ conference journal extracts
 - 18 Dec. 1850 – Letter of J. W. Hoover, re: Peck's preaching appointments, collections for the college
 - c1851 – List of Faculty with salaries
 - 24 Feb. 1851 – Letter of Andrew Kessler Hay, re: gift of *Congressional Globe*
 - 24 Mar. 1851 – Letter of Gutelius Snyder, re: gift of mineral curiosities
 - 1 July 1851 – Letter of James Sanks, re: faculty assistance at Mechanicsburg
 - 14 Aug. 1851 – Letter of W. Derrick, re: congressional records
 - 1 Jan. 1852 – Letter of Henry Smith, re: gift of books, including a Bible

Series 2 Personnel

2.1 Faculty

- 2.1.1 Allen, William Henry
 - Baird, Spencer Fullerton
 - Johnson, Herman Merrills
 - Sudler, Thomas
- 2.1.2 Tiffany, Otis Henry
 - Wentworth, Erastus
 - Wilson, John

2.2 Non-Faculty

- 2.2.1 Roberts, Andrew
 - Snow, Daniel

RG 2/4 - JESSE TRUESDELL PECK (PRESIDENT, 1848-1852)

Series 2 Personnel (cont.)

2.3 Applicants

- 2.3.1 Clark, Homer J.
Rowley, Erastus
Tomlinson, Joseph
White, [Mr.]

Series 3 External Affairs

3.1 Miscellaneous External Affairs

- 3.1.1 7 Feb. 1850 – Flier re: Day of Prayer for Colleges
17 June 1850 – Letter of Reuben Nelson , re: relations between Baltimore Conference and Wyoming Seminary
30 Jan. 1851 – Letter of Board of Managers of PA Bible Soc., re: society business
3 March 1851 – Letter of W. R. Sadler, re: memorial by Peck in PA Senate

3.2 Career Services

- 3.2.1 16 Nov. 1849 – Letter of John L. Scott, re: partner for seminary in Aberdeen, OH
12 June 1850 – Letter of L. H. Beatty, re: primary school teacher, Beaver Dams, Queen Anne's County, MD
28 Dec. 1850 – Letter of Robert Laurenson Dashiell, re: teacher for Fauquier County, VA families
3 Mar. 1851 – Letter of Joseph Bunn, re: teacher recommendation for Miss Stevens to Pennington Female Institute
21 Apr. 1851 – Letter of Matthias German, re: common school teacher, Lower Penn's Neck, NJ
6 June 1851 – Letter of Thomas B. Jacobs, re: teacher for Chester County, PA
7 June 1851 – Letter of T. J. McGill, re: teacher for primary school
8 July 1851 – Letter of committee from Mount Pleasant College, re: math teacher