

Archives and Special Collections

Dickinson College

Carlisle, PA

ARCHIVAL COLLECTION REGISTER

Title: **Herman Merrills Johnson (President, 1860-1868)** **RG 2/6**

Dates: 1860-1868

Material: Papers

Volume: 0.1 linear feet

Usage: There are no access restrictions on these records.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Following Collins' resignation in 1860, Herman Merrills Johnson was elected as the twelfth president of Dickinson College. Johnson came to the college in 1850 as professor of English Literature. During his years as a professor at the college, Johnson worked with three students to organize the "Eclectic Society of Dickinson College." This society became active on May 12, 1852 as a chapter of Wesleyan University's Phi Nu Theta, a fraternity to which Johnson belonged during his college days. This group was the first fraternity at the College.

Much of Johnson's presidential term was occupied with the effects that the American Civil War had on the college. At the outbreak of war, students from both sides left. Johnson moved swiftly, with the aid of Governor Andrew Curtin, to persuade the younger enlistees to return. Classes continued for the most part, but with some difficulty. In 1863, Lee's invasion of the North brought the town of Carlisle and the College under confederate shellfire and brief occupation in the days immediately preceding the battle at Gettysburg. Following the battle, federal authorities commandeered most college buildings for use as hospitals for the wounded of both sides. No students were present at this time since graduation had been hastened to completion before the action took place.

Following the war, the student body had lost most of its usual influx from the southern states and was only three-fourths of the size it had been in 1860. Johnson continued to battle the deficits which had plagued his entire presidency. He sought money constantly from the Methodist Conferences, and tried to modernize the curriculum to make the College more attractive. With the help of the science faculty, including the young and influential Charles Francis Himes, areas of study such as chemistry, geology, and metallurgy were incorporated into the program. A business school, known as the Dickinson Commercial College, operated as part of the College for a short time before moving to Hagerstown, Maryland.

The centenary of the Methodist Church in 1866 finally relieved the college of its financial burdens through the significant endowment of new funds, although Johnson never saw their effects. Exhausted by his years of effort and virtual poverty, he contracted a cold and died two weeks later at his home in Carlisle on April 5, 1868.

SERIES ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

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

The General Business series is comprised of records concerning miscellaneous affairs of college business. 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 two sub-series: Faculty, and Applications. Only confirmed employees of the college are included within the 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.

RECORD GROUP INVENTORY

RG 2/6 - HERMAN MERRILLS JOHNSON (PRESIDENT, 1860-1868)

Series 1 General Business

1.1 Miscellaneous Affairs

- 1.1.1 undated – Address to the Belles Lettres and Union Philosophical Societies
- 1.1.2 undated – Draft of address, "The Effect of Learning & Art on the moral & religious condition of society"
- 1.1.3 undated – Drafts of *Christian Advocate* and *Journal* articles, "What constitutes a College?" and "The Library therefore is the essential foundation of the college."
- 1.1.4 undated – Draft of circular letter on temperance reformation
- 1.1.5 1858-1868 – Cash accounts notebook
- 1.1.6 1 Mar. 1860 – Letter of Alfred Cookman, re: arrangements for a public meeting
c1861 – Draft of letter to Abraham Lincoln, re: colonization
1861 – Petition to the faculty, re: observations of Feb. 22nd
24 Apr. 1861 – Circular letter to students and parents, re: return to college

RG 2/6 - HERMAN MERRILLS JOHNSON (PRESIDENT, 1860-1868)

Series 1 General Business (cont.)

1.1 Miscellaneous Affairs (cont.)

- 1.1.7 15 Sep. 1862 – Letter to A. G. Curtin, re: discharge of students in Union Army
5 May 1863 – Letter of Charles I. Thompson, re: record of buyers of scholarships
27 Aug. 1863 – Printed leaflet, "Collegiate Education"
- 1.1.8 20 Oct. 1863 – Circular letter and proof sheets for college's alumni catalogue
17 Nov. 1863 – Letter of Robert McClelland, re: alumni catalogue proof sheets
- 1.1.9 1 Oct. 1864 – Letter of Hugh A. Curran, re: plans for a business college
- 1.1.10 c1866 – Notes for a speech at the Philadelphia Annual Conference
- 1.1.11 22 Apr. 1867 – Letter from Institute of Reward for Orphans of Patriots, re:
scholarships
10 July 1867 – Letter of Benjamin F. Butler, re: meeting to discuss a project
- 1.1.12 23 Jan. 1868 – Invitation to attend a conference of educational institutions
27 Feb. 1868 – Invitation to attend services at the College Chapel

Series 2 Personnel

2.1 Faculty

- 2.1.1 Bowman, Shadrach L.
- 2.1.2 McCauley, James A.
- 2.1.3 Mullin, Alfred F.
- 2.1.4 Nadal, Bernard H.
- 2.1.5 Schem, Alexander J.

2.2 Applicants

- 2.2.1 Muller, F. Hubert
Robinson, Francis A.
Simpson