

MSA 101

Joseph Hamilton (1839-1933) Papers, 1865-1932

Scope and Content

Born in Quebec, in 1839, Joseph Hamilton lived his adult life in Vermont, where he served as a Methodist minister from 1865 to 1930 (?) in a succession of churches. The papers consist of his autobiography, several diaries, his "Book of baptisms, marriages and funeral sermons administered, solemnized, and preached" (1865-1929), and an unfinished manuscript, "Methodism in Woodstock," as well as a list of Woodstock Methodist ministers from 1887-1930.

In 1869, Hamilton married Charlotte Packer (1847-1933) of Marshfield, Vermont, with whom he had a family of six children. His fifth child, a son, Ralph Q. (1881-1947), married Ada Black in 1910 and it is their daughter, Josephine Hamilton Van Meter, who gave the papers to the Vermont Historical Society. Folder 1 contains genealogy for both the Hamilton and Packer families. The papers occupy .5 linear feet of shelf space (Ms. Acc. No. 93.14).

The Rev. Hamilton depicts his life as a Methodist minister as well as the politics of the Vermont Conference (Methodist) in his autobiography. In his brief diary entries he adds notes about people and events to the names and dates in his baptism, marriage, and funeral register. Of interest, during his first tenure in Woodstock, Frederick Billings was instrumental in refurbishing the Methodist church building (p. 89ff of his *Autobiography*, Folder 3). The Rev. Hamilton served as chaplain for the Vermont Senate from 1919-1922 and was the last elected clergyman to hold this post according to his autobiography.

The Rev. Hamilton was frequently reassigned to churches throughout central and northern Vermont; he usually stayed at a church for just three years. In chronological order, beginning with his first assignment in 1865, the towns Hamilton mentions in his autobiography where he served are: Kirby; Marshfield (twice); Northfield Falls and West Berlin; Waitsfield; Plainfield; Groton (supply minister for East Topsham); Rochester and West Rochester; Wilmington (and supply minister for Jacksonville); West Fairlee and Ely; Woodstock (twice) and supply minister for Taftsville, South Woodstock and Pomfret; White River Junction, Quechee, and Wilder; Northfield; St. Johnsbury as Presiding Elder for the St. Johnsbury District; Newport; Danville and West Danville; and Randolph.

The Rev. Hamilton describes his fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration on April 27, 1919 (p. 150 of his *Autobiography*, Folder 4); a photograph of his extended family on that occasion is in the Vermont Historical Society photograph collection (F-PO Hamilton family). Additional photographs in the photograph collection include the Rev. Hamilton, his wife, and six children (ca. 1885), and Hamilton and his four adult sons (ca. 1905).

Organization of the Collection

The collection is organized in five series:

- I. Genealogy of the Hamilton and Packer families
- II. Autobiography
- III. Diaries

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- IV. Record Book
- V. Manuscripts

Inventory

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I. Genealogy

- Folder 1 Genealogy of the Packer and Hamilton families, 1820 to date

II. Autobiography

- 2 Autobiography (1924?), photocopy, p. 1-50
- 3 _____, _____, p. 51-100
- 4 _____, _____, p. 101-161
- 5 _____, original typescript
- 6 _____ (no date), manuscripts notes

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III. Diaries

- 7 Diaries, 1869, 1875 and 1881
- 8 _____, 1882, 1902, 1919 and 1932

IV. Record Book

- 9 “Book of baptisms, marriages, and funeral sermons, administered, solemnized and preached by Joseph Hamilton,” 1865-1929

V. Manuscripts

- 10 “Methodism in Woodstock, Vermont” (undated, unfinished manuscript) and “Methodist ministers, Woodstock, 1887-1930” (typed list).

Priscilla Page
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