

William H. Gray collection, 1836-1972

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Gray, W. H. (William Henry)
Title	William H. Gray collection
Dates	1836-1972 (inclusive) 1836 1972 1836-1888 (bulk) 1836 1888
Quantity	2.0 linear feet, (2 boxes)
Collection Number	WCMss.030
Summary	This collection consists of correspondence, writings, clippings, and books of William H. Gray, a Northwest pioneer, who served on the Oregon territorial legislature.
Repository	Whitman College and Northwest Archives Whitman College and Northwest Archives Penrose Library, Room 130 345 Boyer Avenue Walla Walla, WA 99362 Telephone: 509-527-5922 Fax: 509-526-4785 archives@whitman.edu
Access Restrictions	Collection is open for research.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for preparing this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Funding for encoding the finding aid was awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Gray was born in Fairfield, NY, on September 8, 1810. In 1926, his father died and Gray became apprentice to a cabinetmaker in Springfield, NY. He moved to Utica, NY at age 21. Though there are conflicting accounts as to Gray's educational status, most agree that he was informally trained in medicine and theology. During his medical training, he contracted an incurable disease that left him with a weakened lung. In 1831, Gray joined the Presbyterian Church, in which his brother was a minister. Later, Gray was appointed to the Oregon Mission of the American Board by his friend, Rev. Chauncey Eddy. In 1835, Gray was offered a position with the Whitman party and left his fiancée in Utica to join the Whitmans and Spaldings who had already traveled to Liberty, Missouri, where they gathered supplies. According to accounts from letters, Gray was the motivator in the party and woke everyone up in the early morning to keep the team moving.

Gray, the Spaldings, and the Whitmans arrived at Fort Walla Walla on Oct 2, 1836. It was assumed by Spaldings and the Whitmans that Gray would conduct most of the manual labor, while the more educated men would conduct mission work. Gray, however, did not stay long at the two mission sites

and returned east in the spring with a party of four Nez Perce. According to accounts, their party was captured by the Sioux; the guides were killed, and Gray was taken prisoner and removed to Canada. He was rescued by members of the Hudson Bay Company. Upon his return to New York, he married Mary Augusta Dix and they returned west, leading the Walker-Eels party in 1838.

Gray was involved both politically and financially in the establishment of Oregon. Gray remained at the Whitman's Waiilatpu Mission for a time and then moved to Salem, Oregon, where he secured manual employment by building Willamette University. Afterward, Gray moved to Klatsop Plains, just north of Astoria, and built the first Presbyterian Church west of the Rockies. Gray served as the secretary of the Champoeg meetings, the provisional government in pre-state of Oregon. After the establishment of an official government, he served as a member of the territorial legislature. Gray studied transportation engineering and was on the vanguard of river travel. In 1858, he pioneered the Fraiser River in British Columbia with model boats and sloops. From 1860-1861, Gray built a model boat, 91 feet long and 12 feet wide, and piloted it down the entire length of Okanogan River to the Columbia River, where his journey ended near Celilo Falls.

Gray and his family moved to the Dalles in 1864, where Gray build the steamer, Cesadilla. He spent his later life writing the "History of Oregon", and securing funds to erect a monument at Waiilatpu to honor Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. In addition, he was involved in the Pioneer and Historical Society of Oregon, where he served as secretary for a number of years.

His wife, Mary Augusta Dix Gray, died in 1881. Gray's death followed in 1889. William H. and Mary Augusta Dix Gray were buried at Klastop plains, and later their remains were moved to the memorial site of the Waillitpu mission.

Content Description

This collection contains correspondence, writings, and manuscripts concerning William H. Gray. Gray's writings reveal some of the political, religious, and social climates during the mid-1800s. Also included are clippings and writings on Gray which were written after his death. The writings and correspondence illuminate "pioneer life" and the resulting attitudes after settlement in the Washington and Oregon Territories.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Materials found in collection; provenance is unknown.

Detailed Description of the Collection

1: Correspondence, 1837-1888

This series contains William H. Gray's correspondence and one folder of correspondence belonging to his wife, Mary Augusta Dix Gray. The series is divided into outgoing and incoming mail, and arranged by author name. The original processing inventory, which details the writers and descriptions of each letter, can be found in the Miscellaneous series.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
1	1-14	Incoming Correspondence	circa 1868-1885
1	15	Envelopes with no letters	1880-1888
1	16-18	Outgoing, miscellaneous	1855-1888
1	19	Outgoing, early letters	1837-1847
1	20	Mary Augusta Dix Gray Correspondence	1839-1848

2: Monument, 1874-1886

This series contains information, plans, and correspondence concerning the creation of the Whitman Monument at Waiilatpu. Gray was active in persuing the construction of such a statue to honor the Whitmans. The plan was completed in 1887 and an agreement was signed between the Whitman Memorial Association and the Niles Vinson Marble Works of Walla Walla. It was completed in 1917.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
1	21	Correspondence from William H. Gray	1874-1886
1	22	Correspondence to William H. Gray	1876-1886
1	23	Donor Documentation	1880-1882; undated
1	24	Drawing and letter from I. H. Hopkins and Map of Monument	1880-1881
1	25	Fundraising documentation	undated
1	26	Miscellaneous Correspondence	1878-1883
1	27	Monument deed	1878
1	28	Monument Financing	1874-1886
1	29	Pamphlet on Whitman Monument	1880

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1 30	Pioneer Historical Society Monument Committee correspondence and records	circa 1874-1886

3: Pioneer and Historical Society, 1871-1880

The Oregon Pioneer and Historical Society was founded in circa 1872, in an effort to record and preserve Oregon history of the late 1800s. W.H. Gray served as secretary to the Pioneer and Historical Society during the 1870s. Included in this series are the Society's records, correspondence, minutes, annual reports, and addresses. Several financial records and library lists are also included.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box	Folder	
1 31	Annual Addresses	1872-1875; undated
1 32	Correspondence	1876-1880; undated
1 33	Financial Information	1872-1880
1 34	Library and book lists	1875-1877
1 35	Minutes	1872-1878; undated
1 36	Miscellaneous	1876-1877; undated
1 37	Printed materials	1872-1880
1 38	Reports	1871-1881; undated

4: Writings, 1843-1886

This series contains writings by W. H. Gray. Gray's manuscript of his published book, History of Oregon, is included; original order is maintained. Gray also wrote on a variety of other subjects including religious, political, and social commentaries. He was particularly concerned in differentiating between Catholic and Protestant religious activities and his writings reflect his adamant distrust of Catholic teachings. Gray wrote a number of well-organized reviews of books and speeches. Also included are Gray's speeches and lectures, and prolific letters to the editor which appeared in a number of local papers.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
1	39	"4th of July at Astoria Clatsop Co, Oregon"	undated
1	40	Biblical Notes	undated
1	41	"Brains"	undated
1	42	"A Brief Sketch of the Early History of Oregon and of California"	undated
1	43	Clatsop County	undated
1	44	"Courses of Indian Wars"	undated
1	45	"History of Oregon" Clippings	1870
1	46	"History of Oregon" Correspondence	1865-1886
2	26-34	"History of Oregon" Manuscript	undated
1	47	"History of Oregon" Miscellaneous	1867-1876
1	48	Lectures and Addresses	1847-1882
1	49-50	Letters to the Editor	1843-1886; undated
1	51-52	Miscellaneous	undated
1	53	"Natural and Artificial Religion"	undated
1	54	Poetry	undated
1	55	"Public Schools"	undated
2	1	"Recollections of My Trip Across the Plains in 1847"	undated
2	2	Reviews and Critiques	1880; undated
2	3	"Sketches of Oregon History" for the Astorian	undated

Container(s)		Description	Dates
2	4	"To the Citizens of a Vast, Rich Agricultural and Mineral Country"	undated
2	5	"A Visit to Sitka"	undated

5: Miscellaneous, 1836-1970, (bulk 1840-1889)

This series contains miscellaneous clippings, photographs, and artifacts associated with W.H. Gray and the Gray family. Especially salient are Gray's original church recommendation, photographs of the Grays, and information concerning the exhumation of the Gray's bodies to Wailitpu monument. Also included is biographical information written by Myron Eells and W.D. Lyman.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
2	6	Book of clippings and writings collected by Gray	undated
2	7	Book of Mormon documentation (see note)	1917
2	8	Capt. Hawthorne Gray's (grandson to W.H. Gray) balloon fragment	1927
2	9	Church Recommendation	1836
2	10-12	Clippings	1837-1885; 1950-1970
2	13	Financial information	1881-1883
2	14	Gray Family Genealogy	1972; undated
2	15	Handmade copy of "History of Oregon" pasted into "Statistics of the Foreign and Domestic Commerce of the United States"	1876
2	16	Miscellaneous	undated
2	17	Obituaries of W.H. and Mary Augusta Dix Gray and collected and authored by Myron Eells	1881-1889; undated
2	18	Photographs	1870; undated

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2 19	"The Place of William H. Gray in our History" W.D. Lyman	1916
2 20	Political involvement, Astoria Library	1843-1877; undated
2 21	Post-mortem exhumation, correspondence from Jacob Kamm	1913-1917
2 22	Records and Funerals	1848-1897
2 23	"W.H. Gray Journal" in Whitman College Quarterly	1913
2 24	Young River Grange, 172	1875
2 25	Original Processing Inventory	undated

Names and Subjects

Family Names :

Gray family

Erin Hall and Colleen McFarland
2006



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