

Guide to the Harry Crosswell Papers

RG 258



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2015

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Divinity Library
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New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 432-5301
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<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

CALL NUMBER: RG 258

CREATOR: Croswell, Harry, 1778-1858

TITLE: Harry Croswell Papers

DATES: 1821-1858

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 6.5 linear feet (21 boxes)

LANGUAGE: In English.

SUMMARY: Diaries, family records and history of the Parish of Trinity Church, New Haven (1740-1820) by Harry Croswell, journalist and later minister of Trinity Church from 1815 until his death. The diaries in 14 volumes (1821-1858), offer a daily record of his life in New Haven as well as accounts of his participation in the work of the church in the surrounding region and in the affairs of Trinity College, Hartford. Croswell also records the formation of the black congregation, St. Luke's, in 1844. Occasional trips to upstate New York (1825, 1841), to Boston and Philadelphia (1821) offer descriptions of these places. In 1915 F. B. Dexter made a transcript of large portions of the diary and also compiled an index.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.258>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.258>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Edward C. Beecher in 1904 and 1905. Collection transferred to Divinity Library from Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library in 2013. Addendum received from Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut in 2014.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Preferred Citation

Harry Croswell Papers (RG 258). Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

Biographical / Historical

Harry Croswell: journalist; in 1802 founded a Federalist newspaper, *Wasp*, in Hudson, N. Y.; tried and found guilty of libel against the Republicans of the county; started another paper in Albany, N. Y., but it failed and he was jailed for debt; entered the ministry and was ordained in the Episcopal Church, 1814; became rector of Trinity Church in New Haven, Ct., 1815-1858.

Biographical / Historical

Harry Croswell, diarist, journalist and clergyman, was born in West Hartford, Connecticut, in 1778, the seventh child of Caleb and Hannah Croswell. He was privately educated, and included as part of his education one year at Noah Webster's house doing odd jobs in exchange for instruction. Having launched himself on a journalistic career in Catskill, New York, he married Susan Sherman of New Haven, Connecticut, in 1800 and moved to Hudson, New York. There his career took a political turn when, in 1802, he founded a Federalist newspaper, the *Wasp*, which was highly critical of the dominant Republican forces in the county. He was eventually brought to trial for libel by the Republicans and in the ensuing proceeding Alexander Hamilton came to testify on his behalf. Despite the illustrious intervention, Croswell was found guilty and was forced to suspend publication of the *Wasp*. Encouraged by Federalist support, he moved to Albany, New York, where he started another paper, but since the support was verbal rather than financial, the paper failed, and Croswell was jailed for debt.

Leaving politics and publishing, he joined the ministry and was ordained in the Episcopal Church in 1814. On January 1, 1815, he came to New Haven to be installed as rector of Trinity Church, and remained there to the end of his life. Of his seven children, four survived into adulthood. The death of his son, William, in 1851 at the age of 47, was a great grief to him, which he assuaged in the writing of a *Memoir of William's life*. It was published in 1853. His wife died in 1855 and he himself, although suffering from a painful bladder condition, lived till 1858, preaching and writing until the last week of his life.

A memoir based on Croswell's diaries was published by F. B. Dexter, assistant librarian of Yale University, in the *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* (vol. IX, 1918). For an account of the Croswell libel trial, see *Speeches at full length of Mr. Van Ness, Mr. Caines, Mr. Harrison and Gen. Hamilton in the great cause of the People against Harry Croswell* (1804).

Scope and Contents

Series I, Diaries or Journals, consists of fifteen bound volumes, of which fourteen are a diary faithfully kept from April 11, 1821, to March 6, 1858, a week before his death. In 1915 Franklin Bowditch Dexter (1824-1920), assistant librarian of Yale University and Learned Professor of American History, undertook an abridgement of the diary "containing the portions most adapted to printing." This manuscript itself runs to 975 pages with detailed biographical and other explanatory notes. Professor Dexter also made a partial index of 75 pages to the diaries which includes both names and subjects.

The diaries offer a daily record of Croswell's pastoral visits, comments on church politics, events at Yale College and civic affairs, providing an invaluable record of New Haven history over a period of more than 30 years. Although the entries tend to be brief and factual, Croswell's decisive opinions on such issues as church doctrine, politics, temperance and abolitionism emerge very clearly. He is equally vivid, and often

acid, in brief sketches of visitors as well as of some of the permanent residents of New Haven. He was regularly in touch with the blacks of New Haven who were members of his church and in the spring of 1844 records the formation of a separate black congregation, St. Luke's. (See entries for 1844 Mar 12 to Jun 7, passim.) His occasional travels to upstate New York to visit his son, Sherman, contain descriptions of the towns and countryside as he found it then with comparisons of the region as he knew it in the early years of the century. (See entries for 1825 Jul and 1841 Jul.) He also visited Philadelphia in 1821 and describes his impressions. His more frequent visits to his son, William, in Boston also include references to local scenes and institutions. A particularly interesting entry is his description of his first railroad trip (1835 Aug 18) and his physical sensation on being aboard a train.

Other entries mentioning figures of national prominence include, among others, a description of the funeral services for Noah Webster (1843 May 31), the death of President William H. Harrison and its observance in New Haven, and the election of Zachary Taylor as president. The celebration of the Fourth of July is described with care each year. Although he was regularly invited to the Yale College commencement, Croswell avoided going, preferring to sit at home quietly in his study.

The last volume in Series I documents Croswell's participation in the General Conventions of the Episcopal Church 1838-1858.

The Sermons of Series II were received from the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut in 2014. They include a numbered series, a dated series, a liturgical series related to different Sundays during the Church Year, and a series focused on special occasions.

Series III, Historical Records, includes two bound volumes, a genealogy and a church chronicle. The *Croswell Family Record*, begun in 1856, contains valuable if fragmentary information. Clearly intended to be more ambitious, it occupies only seventeen pages in a large folio volume. In the same year Croswell also began an *Annals of the Parish of Trinity Church*, in which he goes back to verbal traditions from 1740. The manuscript of 101 pages is in another large folio volume and reaches the year 1820. These volumes and fourteen volumes of diaries were given to the Yale Library in 1904 and 1905 by Edward C. Beecher.

Series IV and Series V include small amounts of unpublished writings by Croswell and correspondence respectively. Numerous published works by Croswell are in the Yale Library cataloged collection.

Arrangement

- I. Diaries or Journals
- II. Sermons
- III. Historical Records
- IV. Writings
- V. Correspondence

Collection Contents

Series I: Diaries or Journals, 1821–1858

b. 1, f. 1	1821 Apr 11 - 1824 Dec 31	1821 Apr 11 - 1824 Dec 31
b. 1, f. 2	1825 Jan 1 - 1828 Apr 30	1825 Jan 1 - 1828 Apr 30
b. 2, f. 3	1828 May 1 - 1832 Jan 7	1828 May 1 - 1832 Jan 7
b. 2, f. 4	1832 Feb 1 - 1834 Dec 31	1832 Feb 1 - 1834 Dec 31
b. 3, f. 5	1835 Jan 1 - 1838 Oct 31	1835 Jan 1 - 1838 Oct 31
b. 3, f. 6	1838 Nov 1 - 1841 Dec 31	1838 Nov 1 - 1841 Dec 31
b. 4, f. 7	1842 Jan 1 - 1844 Aug 18	1842 Jan 1 - 1844 Aug 18
b. 4, f. 8	1844 Aug 19 - 1847 Dec 31	1844 Aug 19 - 1847 Dec 31
b. 5, f. 9	1848 Jan 1 - 1850 Mar 30	1848 Jan 1 - 1850 Mar 30
b. 5, f. 10	1850 Mar 31 - 1851 Dec 31	1850 Mar 31 - 1851 Dec 31
b. 5, f. 11	1852 Jan 1 - 1854 Mar 31	1852 Jan 1 - 1854 Mar 31
b. 6, f. 12	1854 Apr 1 - 1855 Sep 24	1854 Apr 1 - 1855 Sep 24
b. 6, f. 13	1855 Sep 25 - 1857 Mar 31	1855 Sep 25 - 1857 Mar 31
b. 6, f. 14	1857 Apr 1 - 1858 Mar 6	1857 Apr 1 - 1858 Mar 6
b. 7, f. 1-14	Transcript of the diary, with notes on the text. Prepared by F. B. Dexter.	1821 Apr 21-1837 Jul 27
b. 8, f. 15-23	Transcripts of the diary, with notes on the text. Prepared by F. B. Dexter.	1837 Jul 27-1858 Mar 6
b. 8, f. 24	Partial index to the diaries of Harry Croswell. Prepared by F. B. Dexter. (75 pp.)	
b. 11, f. 8	Journal of General Conventions Bound volume contains notes regarding Croswell's activities at General Conventions in Philadelphia and New York.	1838-1858

Series II: Sermons, 1814-1857

Numbered sequence		
b. 12, f. 1	#1-4, 6-12	no date
b. 12, f. 2	#13-19, 21-24, 26, 28-35	no date
b. 12, f. 3	#36-40, 42-50, 52-54, 56-57, 60	no date
b. 12, f. 4	#61-62, 64-73, 75-78	no date
b. 12, f. 5	#79-98	no date
b. 13, f. 1	#100-116, 118-120	no date
b. 13, f. 2	#121, 123-131, 133-134, 137, 139-141	no date
b. 13, f. 3	#146-16-, 162, 164-165	no date
b. 13, f. 4	#167-169, 171-172, 174-176, 178-188	no date
b. 13, f. 5	#189-190, 192-195, 197-210	no date
b. 14, f. 1	#211-212, 215, 217-221, 223, 226-227, 229-231, 233, 235-238, 240-242	no date
b. 14, f. 2	#244-247, 249-254, 257-265	no date
b. 14, f. 3	#267-272, 274-277, 279-281, 283-288, 290	no date
b. 14, f. 4	#292, 296-297, 299-301, 303-315	no date
b. 14, f. 5	#317-318, 320-322, 324, 326, 328-333, 336, 338-342, 344-345, 347	no date
b. 15, f. 1	#350, 353-354, 356-361, 365-369, 372-375, 377-380	no date
b. 15, f. 2	#381-383, 385-386, 389-390, 405, 429, 441, 451, 464, 471-472, 509-513	no date
b. 15, f. 3	#514-517, 519-523, 525-532, 534, 536, 538	no date
b. 15, f. 4	#540, 542, 544-546, 548, 550, 552, 554-566	no date
b. 15, f. 5	#567-580, 582-586	no date
b. 16, f. 1	#587-596, 599-607	no date
b. 16, f. 2	#608-609, 611-622, 624-634	no date
b. 16, f. 3	#635-639, 641-661	no date
b. 16, f. 4	#662-666, 668-684, 688	no date
b. 16, f. 5	#689-691, 693, 696-707, 709-711	no date
Dated sequence		
b. 17, f. 1	Sermons filed by first delivery date	1814 May - October

Dated sequence (continued)

b. 17, f. 2	Sermons filed by first delivery date	1814 November - 1815 July
b. 17, f. 3	Sermons filed by first delivery date	1815 August - 1816 October
b. 17, f. 4	Sermons filed by first delivery date	1816 November - 1818 April
b. 17, f. 5	Sermons filed by first delivery date	1818 April - 1819 October
b. 18, f. 1	Sermons filed by first delivery date	1819 November - 1821 December
b. 18, f. 2	Sermons filed by first delivery date	1822 January - 1832 September

Liturgical sequence

b. 18, f. 3	First Sunday in Advent - Sunday after Christmas	1840s
b. 18, f. 4	Second Sunday in Advent - Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	1840s
b. 18, f. 5	Septuagesima Sunday - Second Sunday in Lent	1840-1855
b. 19, f. 1	Third Sunday in Lent - First Sunday after Easter	1840s
b. 19, f. 2	Second Sunday after Easter - Sunday after Ascension	1840s
b. 19, f. 3	Whit Sunday - Third Sunday after Trinity	1840s
b. 19, f. 4	Fourth Sunday after Trinity - Eighth Sunday after Trinity	1840s
b. 19, f. 5	Ninth Sunday after Trinity - Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity	1840s
b. 20, f. 1	Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity - Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity	1840s
b. 20, f. 2	Twentieth Sunday after Trinity - Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity	1840s

Special occasions

b. 20, f. 3	Sermons for Saints' days	1840-1857
b. 20, f. 4	Lectures on the Episcopal Articles of Religion	1843-1844
b. 20, f. 5	Miscellaneous lectures and letters	1830-1850
b. 20, f. 6	Lessons for the first Sunday after Easter and many Sundays after Trinity	1835-1840
b. 20, f. 7	Bible class lectures on the Acts of the Apostles	1833
b. 21, f. 1	Addresses for special occasions These occasions include the laying of cornerstones at various churches, funerals, and Sunday School anniversaries and Croswell's published sermon "National Sin Rebuked - A Discourse on the Death of the President of the United States" (1841)	1833-1854

Notes

Notes (continued)

b. 21, f. 2	Notes for sermons and parts of sermons on assorted Bible verses	no date
b. 21, f. 3	Miscellaneous notes	1824-1860
Sermon registers		
b. 21, f. 4	Bound volume listing sermons by number, with delivery dates - #1-200	1850s
b. 21, f. 5	Bound volume listing sermons by number, with delivery dates - #501-711	1850s
Obituary sermons for Croswell		
b. 21, f. 6	Bound pamphlet containing sermons by Rt. Rev. John Williams and Re. Samuel Benedict	1858 March

Series III: Historical Records, 1856

b. 9, f. 1	Bound volume: <i>Croswell family record</i> and additional biographical documentation Records of Harry Croswell's immediate family: parents, brothers and sisters, and his own wife and children, with an ALS from Ruth Croswell laid in. (only 17 pp. written)	1856
b. 10, f. 1	<i>Annals of the Parish of Trinity Church in New Haven. Beginning with the earliest traditions, from 1740 to 1820</i> (101 pp.)	1856

Series IV: Writings, no date

b. 11, f. 1	"The Young Churchman's Guide - Being a Course of Religious Instruction" by Dr. Croswell Handwritten ms. of Croswell's published work.	no date
b. 11, f. 2	"Legislature" - bound booklet of handwritten prayers	no date
b. 11, f. 3	Bound booklet of handwritten notes on "Cave's Dissertation"	no date

Series V: Correspondence, 1818-1853

b. 11, f. 4	To E. E. Beardsley	1841
b. 11, f. 5	To Samuel H. Huntington	1823, 1830, 1831, 1853
b. 11, f. 6	To Samuel F. Jarvis, Rev. D. Jarvis	1818, 1848
b. 11, f. 7	To John C. Rudd	1838

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African Americans -- Religion
Clergy
Popular culture
Preaching
Temperance
Theology

Geographic Names

Boston (Mass.) -- Description and travel
New Haven (Conn.) -- Religion
New Haven (Conn.) -- Social life and customs
New York (State) -- Description and travel
Philadelphia (Pa.) -- Description and travel
United States -- Description and travel
United States -- Politics and government

Genres / Formats

Diaries

Names

Croswell, Harry, 1778-1858

Corporate Bodies

Episcopal Church
Trinity Church on the Green (New Haven, Conn.)
Trinity College (Hartford, Conn.)
Yale University -- Religious life