Guide to the Benajah Williams diaries ARC Mss 85.

Finding aid prepared by Wyatt Young and Zachary Liebhaber, 2017.

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2017 May 8
Title: Benajah Williams diaries
Identifier/Call Number: ARC Mss 85
Contributing Institution: UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Special Research Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 2.34 linear feet (2 flat boxes)
Creator: Williams, Benajah, 1789-1864
Date (inclusive): circa 1818-1862
Abstract: Five handwritten diaries by Methodist preacher Benajah Williams (1789-1864) documenting his activities during the years 1818-1862.
Physical Location: Special Research Collections, UC Santa Barbara Library
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Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], Benajah Williams diaries, ARC Mss 85. Department of Special Collections, UC Santa Barbara Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.
Acquisition Information
Biographical Note
The Rev. Benajah Williams was born in Pownal, Vermont in 1789, and soon after moved to Cazenovia, New York with his family. He married his wife Jerusha Williams in 1808, and by 1816 he was first licensed to preach in the Methodist faith. Williams was quickly assigned as a traveling preacher to many circuits (which were assigned routes provided by the church in order to ensure access to religious services for residents of rural areas) inside of New York including Old Bloomfield, Caladonia, Sweeden, Batavia, Danaville, Plattsburg, Naples, Scottsville, Elba, Richmond, and East Liberty, with Honeyoe Falls serving as his central station before 1840. Williams life was very difficult for him and his family, and often most of his annual salary was paid in produce by members of his congregation. Perhaps because of this, he briefly left New York and relocated to Chagrin Falls, Ohio where he owned and operated an iron foundry beginning in June of 1840. He would return to his preaching, however, in 1848, and this time he was assigned to the Coudersport, Pennsylvania circuit. Williams was known to be a strict man, shunning and condemning extravagance or display in dressing such as jewelry and adornments. This garnered him the reputation of an extremist, though most accounts note that he was well regarded and kind in many other areas. Williams was also a known Abolitionist, and he was known to distribute anti-slavery materials along with his religious teachings. Williams was known to be suspicious of Catholicism, and saw the Pope as a threat to Republicanism and the Protestant Church.
Scope and Content
This collection is comprised of five volumes, each of which is composed of 25 individual pocket-sized diaries that have been bound together. The total number of pages for these volumes totals at nearly 4,700. All of these have diaries seem to have been hand written by the Rev. Benajah Williams, a Methodist preacher and “circuit rider” active during the years of these journals from 1818-1862 (with some gaps). Williams composed these manuscripts during these years while traveling the Northeast Circuits. The parties responsible for the binding these journals are unknown at this time.
Arrangement
These diaries have been arranged in chronological order.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Methodist Church -- Clergy -- Biography
Methodist Church -- New York (State) -- History
New York (State) -- Church history
Diaries
Williams, Benajah, 1789-1864 -- Diaries
Diaries

Flat-box 1
- Volume 1 1818-1824
- Volume 2 1825-1846
- Volume 3 1848-1851
- Volume 4 1852-1853
- Volume 5 1853-1862

Loose pages

Flat-box 2
- Correspondence undated
- Letter and envelope from the Library of the Rochester Theological Seminar 1910 December 2
- Table of contents, two pages, handwritten, author unknown undated