Descriptive Summary

Languages: English

Contributing Institution: Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla 92093-0175

Title: Ethan Ray Clarke Correspondence and Ephemera

Identifier/Call Number: MSS 0685

Physical Description: 0.2 Linear feet (1 archives box)

Date (inclusive): 1822-1930

Abstract: Correspondence and ephemera collected by Ethan Ray Clarke, a Rhode Island Civil War regimental chaplain and small-town minister in New York and Michigan, with the bulk of material representative of the period from 1860 to 1880.

OFF-SITE STORAGE

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. ALLOW ONE WEEK FOR RETRIEVAL OF MATERIALS.

Acquisition Information

Acquired 2007.

Preferred Citation

Ethan Ray Clarke Correspondence and Ephemera, MSS 685. Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego.

Biography

Ethan Ray Clarke born on January 10, 1818, at Potowomut, Rhode Island, to an original Rhode Island settler's family. Clarke was the second surviving son of the ten children of Ray Clarke (1782 - 1847) and Celia Greene (1776 - 1829 - a descendent of the Revolutionary war hero, Nathaniel Greene.) Clarke was educated at Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, and inherited property from his grandfather, including a farm in Oxford, New York. He married Mary Elizabeth Millard, of Rhode Island, on October 29, 1840, and they moved to Oxford. He entered into the ministry in 1851 and became the first pastor of the newly erected Oxford Free Will Baptist church. His children included Susan Celia (Mrs. William E. Marwin), Anna Augusta (Mrs. James P. Boyd), Isabella Emily (Mrs. Arthur M. Mayhew), Mary Elizabeth (Mrs. William J. Rose), George Brayton Clarke (married Florence J. Holley), and Ward Greene Clark (physician and professor of dental surgery at Rush University, Chicago). Two children, Jessie (aged 15) and Ray (aged 10), died in 1864 and 1865 respectively.

During the United States Civil War, the forty-five year old Clarke served as one of only 930 regimental chaplains. He was commissioned (1863 - 1865) with the 1st Regiment of the Rhode Island Cavalry and later served with the 25th New York Cavalry. He witnessed many famous battles including Chancellorsville and Rapidau Station (1863); the White House on the York River, Shenandoah Valley; and Charleston battles (1864). After the war, he returned to Oxford and continued his work as a pastor.

In 1870, Clarke accepted an offer to become a pastor in Michigan and spent most of his remaining years in village churches (New Haven, Mt. Clemens, Tekonsha) in south-eastern and south-central Michigan. The 1880 census reported him as a sixty-two year old Baptist preacher living in Burr Oak along with his wife, his son, Ward, his daughter, Isabella (then a widow) and an eleven year-old grandson, George C. Rose (born 1869). The date of his death and burial are uncertain.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Ethan Ray Clarke Correspondence and Ephemera collection provides a small glimpse into the life of a Civil War chaplain and small-town minister and is a mix of correspondence to Clarke as well as miscellaneous writings, certificates, flyers, train tickets, and other items that Clarke collected during his lifetime. The collection is arranged in two series: 1) CORRESPONDENCE, and 2) EPHEMERA.

SERIES 1: CORRESPONDENCE

The CORRESPONDENCE files contain letters to and from Clarke during his Civil War service including a letter to his wife, Elizabeth, written on the back of another letter that requested Clarke to perform burial services for two recently killed soldiers; the letter of a family that thanked Clarke for recovering and burying the body of their son; correspondence from fellow ministers and former employers including many letters of introduction and references as to his competency; requests for Clarke to speak at other churches; a postcard that appointed him chaplain for a Temperance Society Fourth of July celebration; a parishioner's letter that thanked him for his “faithful ministry”; and a letter of reference for Clarke's father, Ray Clarke, dated 1822, written in Frankfort, Kentucky.

SERIES 2: EPHEMERA
The EPHEMERA series contains writings by Clarke, including handwritten lists of the battles his Civil War regiments were involved in, and a composition entitled, "Evening Hymn"; an engraved certificate of the Washington National Monument Society documenting Clarke's contribution of $1.00; member certificates from the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (1865, 1874) and the Masonic Order (1866, 1879); a flyer and "Honorable Testimony" certificates associated with a Sabbath School convention where Clarke gave a speech entitled, "The best means of awakening interest in the Sunday School work among the members of the Church"; an autographed (by Clarke) printed illustration of the Industrial Exhibition building in Hyde Park, London, built for the Great Exhibition of 1851 (and later dubbed the Crystal Palace.)

Additional materials include: Clarke's professional card when he was pastor at the Tekonsha Baptist Church (1879); a clergyman's Erie Railway certificate (1868) that entitled him to reduced fares; an Old Colony & Newport Railway "check" (ticket) showing the distances from Boston on the verso side; a newspaper clipping that mentioned Clarke's position as Past Grand Chaplain of the Vernon Masonic lodge; and a black and white photograph of the eastern view of the United States Capitol building, ca. 1920-30s.

Personal items included are Mrs. Clarke's collection (eleven folded-paper packets) of her relatives' hair (most braided into small concentric circles with a small ribbon or cut-out paper flower bouquet attached), including her husband and mother, and a small hand-drawn and painted picture of a country house annotated that it was given to Clarke by his sister, C.G. Clarke.

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Subjects and Indexing Terms
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources

CORRESPONDENCE

Box 1, Folder 1
Champion, John R. - Handwritten letter on attorney's stationery inquiring if Clarke could make speeches in Coldwater, Michigan 1878

Box 1, Folder 2
Chase, N. G. - Retired pastor and friend from Smyrna, Michigan 1880

Box 1, Folder 3
Chedel, John A. - Handwritten letter thanking Clarke for the burial of their son, Second Lieutenant J.A. Chedel, Jr., killed in a Civil War battle 1863

Box 1, Folder 4
Clarke, Mary Elizabeth (nee Millard) (wife) 1873

Box 1, Folder 5
Creuse, Jonathan - Handwritten letter of recommendation for Clarke as a "superintendent" (person who ran the sunday school) 1837

Box 1, Folder 6
Dexter, R. H. - Handwritten letter of recommendation of Clarke from the pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Pavilion, Genesee County, New York 1861

Box 1, Folder 7
Holman, Charles - Handwritten offer to Clarke to be the chaplain at a July 4th Temperance celebration in Coruna, Michigan ca. 1870s

Box 1, Folder 8
Maller, William [?] - Handwritten letter of recommendation for Clarke's father, Ray Clarke, to a Mr. Somerville of Crashville 1822

Box 1, Folder 9
New Haven church - Handwritten letter from church clerk regarding an employment offer in New Haven, Michigan 1869

Box 1, Folder 10
Northway, Delos R. - Correspondence asking Clarke to officiate at the burial of two soldiers killed on September 1, 1863

Box 1, Folder 11
Younghusband, Lancelot - Letter from an infamous early homeopathic healer and reverand from Michigan 1871

Box 1, Folder 12
Unidentified - Letter from a parishioner thanking Clarke for his ministry undated

EPHEMERA

Box 1, Folder 13
Battle lists - Two handwritten lists of the 1863-1864 Civil War battles Clarke and his regiments participated in undated

Box 1, Folder 14
Certificates
Includes printed certificates evidencing membership in the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (1865, 1874), and the Masonic Order (1866, 1879)

Box 1, Folder 15
Washington National Monument Society ca. 1849

Box 1, Folder 16
"Evening Hymn" - Handwritten composition annotated, "Ethan Clarke's Hymn," autographed by Clarke 1868
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 17</th>
<th>Hair collection - Mrs. Clarke 1838 - 1863</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 18</td>
<td>Miscellaneous materials - Includes Clarke's professional calling card, an Erie Railway &quot;clergyman's certificate,&quot; an Old Colony and Newport Railway check (ticket), a printed illustration of the Industrial Exhibition building in Hyde Park, and a photograph of the U.S. Capitol building ca. 1870s - 1930s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 19</td>
<td>Painting - Hand-drawn and painted picture of a country house and road, annotated, &quot;presented to Ethan Ray Clarke by his sister, C.G. Clarke undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 20</td>
<td>Sabbath School convention - Includes a flyer announcing Clarke's speech and two motivational &quot;Honorable Testimony&quot; certificates 1873</td>
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