



Jennie Thayer Collection, 1875-1916 (Manuscript Collection 7)

Rebok Memorial Library Special Collections
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20901
Finding aid created March 2022 by Ashlee Chism; updated October 2022.

Scope and Content

This collection contains a photo album, testimonials book, autograph album, and eighteen diaries spanning 1875-1916.

Arrangement and Quantity

This collection is 2 linear feet. The diaries are arranged chronologically.

Custodial History and Immediate Source of Acquisition

This material was donated by Miriam Tymeson, a daughter of Frederick C. Gilbert and great-great-grandniece of Jennie Thayer, in several accretions in 1974-1980. Relevant materials from the Gilbert Collection were transferred to this collection in 2015 and 2022. Previously, this collection was called the Tymeson Personal Collection, but was re-named in 2022 to better reflect the collection. An additional diary was transferred from the Center for Adventist Research to the Rebok Memorial Library in October 2022.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

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Preferred Citation

For the collection:

Rebok Memorial Library, Silver Spring, Maryland. Jennie Thayer Collection. MS 7.

For a specific box in the collection:

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland. Jennie Thayer Collection. MS 7. [BOX NUMBER].

Biographical Information

Sarah Jane Thayer, better known as Jennie, was born 20 September 1853 in Buckland, Massachusetts, USA, to Abijah Pratt Thayer and Rhoda Ballard (Williams) Thayer. She was their thirteenth child. Abijah (1809-1891) and Rhoda (1815-1890) had both been Millerites and early adherents of the seventh-day Sabbath. Jennie's eldest sister, Mary Ann Thayer (1834-1908), married William Henry Graham (1831-1925); Mary and William's daughter, Ella May (1865-1944) married renown Adventist evangelist, Frederick Carnes (Cohen) Gilbert (1867-1946) in 1896. Another sister, Eliza (Thayer) Palmer (1845-1921), was deeply involved in tract and city work along with her husband, Charles Edward Palmer (1839-1920).

Jennie Thayer held offices in the International Tract and Missionary Society, traveled to England on behalf of the denomination, and was the first editor of the *Atlantic Union Gleaner*. She attended Battle Creek College from 1877-1879 and worked as the Michigan Conference's Tract Society and Health and Temperance Association from 1880-1882. During this time, she was appointed as the first-ever assistant secretary of the General Tract and Missionary Society, and worked with the society's secretary-treasurer, Maria L. Huntley (1848-1890).

On 14 January 1882, Thayer sailed, along with John N. Loughborough (1832-1924), George R. Drew (1835-1905), William (-1897) and Jane (-1921) Ings, and Adelbert A. (1856-1921) and Ella (-) John, for England, where she worked in her capacity as assistant secretary, writing, editing, and setting type in the Adventist mission house in Ravenswood, Southampton. She worked with Loughborough to establish a British supplement to the *Signs of the Times* and then with Milton C. Wilcox to create *The Present Truth*. As the mission grew, so did her responsibilities. She had charge of the mission's Book Depository, read proof, sewed pages, and wrote articles for the *Present Truth*. Thayer also briefly worked as the editor of the paper when it was between official editors. She returned to the United States in mid-1888.

In 1890, after Maria L. Huntley's tragic death, Thayer reconnected with the International Tract and Missionary Society, as one of its appointed corresponding secretaries given charge of its Chicago, Illinois, office. In addition, she was chosen to edit the Home Missions section of *The Home Missionary*. By 1894, she had moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, and was coordinating tract work from that location, as well as engaging in local work of her own.

By 1900, she had returned to Massachusetts, first living with her younger sister, Rosa (1855-1923), and Rosa's husband, Fayette Forbes, in Brookline, and then in her own place in South Lancaster. She began editing the *Atlantic Union Gleaner* in 1901 in preparation of its first issue in 1902 and edited the periodical until 1910. In later years she would briefly take up editing responsibilities as she was needed.

In addition to editing the *Gleaner*, Thayer also served as secretary and treasurer of the Atlantic Union Conference from 1905 to 1908. For a short while she was also the Atlantic Union Conference auditor and, for eight years, treasurer of the South Lancaster church, where she had her membership. Jennie Thayer retired from public work in 1923 to care for the family of a deceased

sister, probably Rosa. Even after her retirement, Thayer still held a missionary license and then an honorary missionary license from the Atlantic Union Conference, and she occasionally submitted prose and poetry to Adventist periodicals.

After suffering what was described as “a slight shock” in 1936, she moved in with the Gilbert family in Takoma Park, Maryland, where she was confined to bed. In early 1939, she moved into the New England Sanitarium (in Melrose, Massachusetts), where she was a patient until her death on 12 September 1940. Her funeral was held in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and she was laid to rest in Buckland, Massachusetts.

Description Control Element

Description based on DACS and was created in Spring 2022 by Ashlee Chism.

The source for the biographical information is Thayer’s obituary in the September 25, 1940 *Atlantic Union Gleaner* and her obituary in the October 31, 1940 *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. For an in-depth article on Thayer’s life, please consult the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*: <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=2A9W>.

Related Archival Materials

RG 21, Incoming Secretariat Correspondence (Boxes 3219 and 3221)

RG 033, Sustentation File – Jennie Thayer (Box 9797)

Manuscript Collection 8 - Frederick C. Gilbert Collection

Container Listing

Box Number	Date	Folder Title
D 13 36		Photo album
D 13 36		Testimonials book
D 13 36	1877-1887	Autographs book, 1877-1887
D 13 37	1875	Diary, 1875
D 13 37	1877	Diary, 1877
D 13 37	1883	Diary, 1883
D 13 37	1885	Diary, 1885
D 13 37	1886	Diary, 1886
D 13 37	1887	Diary, 1887
D 13 37	1888	Diary, 1888
D 13 37	1889	Diary, 1889
D 13 37	1890	Diary, 1890
D 13 37	1896	Diary, 1896
D 13 37	1898	Diary, 1898
D 13 37	1899	Diary, 1899
D 13 37	1901	Diary, 1901
D 13 37	1902	Diary, 1902
D 13 37	1903	Diary, 1903
D 13 37	1906	Diary, 1906
D 13 37	1907	Diary, 1907
D 13 37	1908	Diary, 1908
D 13 37	1916	Diary, 1916