

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** Originally part of the independent Missionary Research Library, these records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library archives with the closure of the MRL.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to burkearchives@library.columbia.edu, or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access Restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, MRL 10: John Dunbar Papers, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

John Dunbar was born on March 7, 1804 in Palmer, Massachusetts. He graduated from Williams College in 1832 and from Auburn Theological Seminary in 1834. On May 5, 1834, four days after his ordination as a Presbyterian minister, Dunbar joined Rev. Samuel Parker and Mr. Samuel Allis on a journey to locate a site for a mission on behalf of First Presbyterian Church in Ithaca, NY and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). They had been instructed to cross the Rocky Mountains to the Nez Perce, but by the time they reached St. Louis the traders that they were to travel with had already left.

Dunbar and Allis headed instead to Bellevue, Sarpy County, Nebraska, guided by Indian Agent John Dougherty, to work as missionaries among the Pawnee Indians. Dunbar often accompanied the biannual buffalo hunts. The ABCFM became concerned about the amount of time he was spending on hunts rather than establishing a permanent mission station, but Dunbar assured them of the importance of learning the Pawnee language and customs.

In 1836 he traveled to Hadley, Massachusetts to oversee the printing of a seventy-four page elementary school book in the Pawnee language, of which 500 copies were printed. On January 12, 1837 he married Esther Smith and together they returned to Bellevue for work as housekeepers in an old trading house until 1841, when they moved into the Pawnee villages along with several other missionaries. The Pawnee's resistance to Christianity and the increasing hostility by the Lakota led to the abandonment of the mission on April 17, 1846. Dunbar and his wife moved to Missouri and then to Kansas. They had seven children. John Dunbar died in Kansas on November 1, 1857.

Sources:

Adams, Zu. "Centennial Celebration at Pike's Pawnee Station: Biography of John Brown Dunbar." *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society*, pp. 99-106. Accessed 17 January 2013 at <http://books.google.com/books?id=x907AAAAIAAJ>.

Connelley, William E. "Biography: Rev. John Dunbar." *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans*. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918. Transcribed Oct 1997 by Tom & Carolyn Ward. Accessed 17 January 2013 at <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/1918ks/biod/dunbarj.html>.

Nebraska State Historical Society. "John Dunbar 1804-1857." *Official Nebraska Government Website*. 2010. Accessed 17 January 2013 at <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/family/john-dunbar.htm>.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of an original manuscript handwritten by Reverend John Dunbar describing his missionary experiences in the first two years when he lived among the Pawnee Indians. It is believed that the manuscript was written in 1836.

Also in the collection are two letters from J. Frederick Fitseben, Jr., Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, NY in 1904, to Professor John Brown Dunbar, son of Reverend John Dunbar. In his first letter he requests information regarding his father's missionary work and photos to include in the church's Centennial book, and in his second letter he thanks Professor Dunbar for the contributions he made.

Processing

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Any items in an advanced state of deterioration were placed in Mylar envelopes.

Further Sources

The Nebraska State Historical Society has a John Dunbar collection. The finding aid can be found at: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/family/john-dunbar.htm>

The main records of the ABCFM are held by the Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts and the following link is to the Finding Aid of that collection: <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou01467>. Included in this collection are letters of Dunbar's journey, which have been published in the book [The Pawnee Mission Letters, 1834-1851](#), edited by Richard E. Jensen (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2010). Microfilms of various sections of the Houghton Library collection, most commonly of the earliest pre-1919 correspondence, can be found in many academic libraries.

The National Archives houses the large collection of the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which include records of the mission and to the Pawnees. An overview of the records, many of

which have been microfilmed, can be viewed online: <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/075.html>.

The Burke Library offers other material in the Missionary Research Library relating to missions in North America. Information on collections available can be found online at:

<http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/burke/archives/mrl.html>. The Burke also has a collection of ABCFM records which can be found at:

http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/libraries/burke/fa/mrl/ldpd_4492650.pdf.

The Burke houses the records of Auburn Theological Seminary. The collection can be researched online through the finding aid:

http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/libraries/burke/fa/auburn/ldpd_5637394.pdf.

Contents list

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	Original Manuscript of Reverend John Dunbar, [1836?]
1	2	Correspondence of Prof. John Dunbar with J. F. Fitseben, Jr., 1904