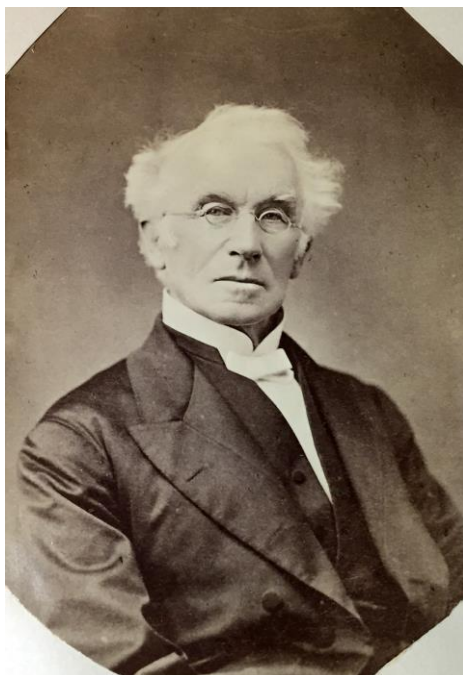


**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,  
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

**Union Theological Seminary Archives 1**

**Finding Aid for**

**William Adams Papers, 1824 – 1909**



Credit to: UTS1: William Adams Brown Papers, series 1, box 1,  
The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Brigette C. Kamsler, June 2015  
With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

**Summary Information**

Creator: William Adams, 1807-1880  
Title: William Adams Papers  
Inclusive dates: 1824-1909  
Bulk dates: 1830-1880  
Abstract: Presbyterian minister, pastoral theologian, UTS professor and president, maternal grandfather of William Adams Brown. Collection contains sermons and memorial books.  
Size: 29 boxes, 14.25 linear feet  
Storage: Onsite storage  
Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Email: [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance: Exact provenance unknown. The bound materials in Series 1 are stamped that materials were presented by the family of Dr. William Adams Brown to the UTS library in January 1950.
- Access: Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto: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, UTS1: William Adams Papers, series #, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### Biography

William Adams was born in Colchester, Connecticut on January 25, 1807 to Elizabeth Ripley and John Adams (1772-1863). His father John was an eminent teacher and philanthropist, who graduated from Yale in 1795. William Adams attended Phillips Academy (where his father was the principal), followed by Yale College (1823-1827); Andover Theological Seminary (1827-1830), and resident licentiate at Andover Theological Seminary (1830-1831). He was ordained by the Congregational Council on February 2, 1831.

William Adams was appointed pastor soon after in Brighton, Massachusetts, followed by an appointment at the Broome Street Central Presbyterian in New York City from 1834-1853. After that he became pastor at Madison Square Presbyterian Church in New York City from 1853-1873, where he enlisted support of some of the members and friends of the church for Union Theological Seminary. During this period of time, Adams earned a Doctor of Divinity from the University of the City of New York in 1842, and Doctor of Laws from the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) in 1869.

William Adams was married to Miss Susan P. Magoun of Medford, Massachusetts soon after entering the ministry. Susan lived a short time after that for two to three years; after her death, William Adams married Susan's sister Martha, with whom he had four children: Mary Elizabeth Adams, William Adams Jr., Thatcher M. Adams, and a fourth daughter who was the wife of Eugene Delano of Philadelphia.

William Adams' daughter, Mary Elizabeth Adams, married John Crosby Brown in the early 1860's. They would have six children, one of whom was William Adams Brown (born 1865).



William Adams with his grandson, William Adams Brown, in 1870. Credit to: UTS1: William Adams Brown Papers, series 1, box 1, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

William Adams was a founder, director, and occasional part-time teacher at Union, well-known preacher and author, and key figure in Presbyterian reunion. William Adams was professor extraordinary in Sacred Rhetoric at Union Theological Seminary from 1838-1840 and an instructor of Church Polity from 1871-1872. He was a director at UTS from 1836-1880; and was appointed the third president of the Seminary, also serving as Brown Professor of Sacred Rhetoric from 1873-1880.

Adams was very effective at raising funds for the Seminary during his presidency, procuring hundreds of thousands of dollars for the organization to renovate the seminary's buildings and build a new fireproof library. Adams was active and respected in the field, welcoming participants from the Sixth General Conference of the World Evangelical Alliance in New York in October 1873, raising Union's status in church life.

Adams was also known and appreciated for his work with the students and faculty:

“He touched the lives of students most directly in their senior year, when he met the class daily for work in homiletics. His successor in the presidency was to say of his seven years at Union, ‘The whole institution was toned up. Professors and Students, equally and all, felt the magnetism of his courtly and stimulating presence. On all public occasions, he was our ornament and pride.’”

William Adams died in Orange Mountain, New Jersey, on August 31, 1880 after an extended illness.

#### Sources:

Handy, Robert T. History of Union Theological Seminary in New York. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Union Theological Seminary (New York, N.Y.) The Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York New York: Alumni Office, 1970. Electronic reproduction. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Libraries, 2007

#### **Collection Scope and Content Note**

The collection is organized in two series:

- **Series 1: Memorial Books, 1830-1909 (5 boxes, 2.25 lin. ft.)**

This series contains bound “In Memoriam” books. There is a four volume set, followed by three other books for a total of seven books. The four volume set includes the quote, “The memory of the just is blessed.”

Volume one contains family notices, sermons and addresses, tributes to Dr. Adams, resignation from the pastorate, last illness, death of Dr. Adams, and obituary notices. The topics are covered by newspaper clippings, typescript, published pamphlets, and date to 1850-1906.

Volume two contains correspondence to members of Adams’ family and other individuals, congratulatory letters on the Bishop Potter controversy, pastoral letters and letters to the senior class of UTS in 1880, and an account of a visit to the Czar and the Evangelical Alliance abroad. The letters are typed copies into the book, which also contain pasted newspaper clippings, dating to 1858-1880.

Volume three contains sermons, addresses, correspondence, minutes and further obituary and death information for William Adams from 1830-1908. The materials are typed copies into the book, and also contain pasted newspaper clippings. The rear of the book contains original material including a diploma from Andover Seminary dated 1830.

Volume four contains typed copies of letters to his first wife, Susan, from 1830, and to his second wife, Martha, 1834-1835. The final letter is one from Martha to her husband dated 1880.

A two volume set of books was created to memorialize Dr. Adams after his death; however the publication of the books never came to fruition. His daughter Mary E. Brown made two typed copies of these books. One of which pertained to William Adams' time as President of Union from 1873-1880. It contains a series of letters and testimonials bearing upon Dr. Adams work at the seminary, with reminiscences of the faculty as well as the students after Adams' death. Thomas Hastings, Charles Cuthbert Hall, Charles Briggs, Francis Brown and Charles Gillett are just a few of the people who reminisced about Adams in the book dated 1893-1909. There are two copies of this volume.

Book seven contains newspaper clippings and whole newspapers, sermons, pamphlets, typescripts, and obituaries for William Adams, covering the years 1858-1880. These materials are pasted onto colored paper.

- **Series 2: Sermons, 1834-1873 (24 boxes, 12.00 lin. ft.)**

Within this series are sermons written by Adams over four decades.

### **Processing**

Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. The materials were reprocessed and organized as part of the Henry Luce Foundation Grant in 2015. The box numbers were changed at this time; a chart showing the differences between the old and new numbers is on the next page.

A number of materials have been noted missing since 2004, including sermons #1-61 (original box 1), correspondence between William Adams and his parents and other family members and a journal of engagements. These materials are still missing as of 2015.

### **Further Sources**

The Burke Library also has the William Adams Brown Papers as well as the John Crosby Brown Papers. For more information, please see the [Burke Library Archives website](#).

Charles R. Gillette produced textual and topic indices of Adams' sermons which are available at the Burke Library. For more information, please contact Burke Library Archive Staff.

## Old and New Box Numberings

Box 2	Series 1, Box 5
Box 3, Files 16-28	Series 2, Box 1
Box 4, Files 29-40	Series 2, Box 2
Box 5, Files 41-54	Series 2, Box 3
Box 6, Files 55-63	Series 2, Box 4
Box 7, Files 64-76	Series 2, Box 5
Box 8, Files 77-89	Series 2, Box 6
Box 9, Files 90-106	Series 2, Box 7
Box 10, Files 107-120	Series 2, Box 8
Box 11, Files 121-134	Series 2, Box 9
Box 12, Files 135-152	Series 2, Box 10
Box 13, Files 153-168	Series 2, Box 11
Box 14, Files 169-183	Series 2, Box 12
Box 15, Files 184-203	Series 2, Box 13
Box 16, Files 204-217	Series 2, Box 14
Box 17, Files 218-230	Series 2, Box 15
Box 18, Files 231-244	Series 2, Box 16
Box 19, Files 245-258	Series 2, Box 17
Box 20, Files 259-271	Series 2, Box 18
Box 21, Files 272-281	Series 2, Box 19
Box 22, Files 282-296	Series 2, Box 20
Box 23, Files 297-314	Series 2, Box 21
Box 24, Files 315-342	Series 2, Box 22
Box 25, Files 343-360	Series 2, Box 23
Box 26, Files 361-376	Series 2, Box 24

## Contents list

### **Series 1: Memorial Books, 1830-1909**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1	1		Volume 1, 1850-1906 Volume 2, 1858-1880
1	2		Volume 3, 1830-1908 Volume 4, 1830-1835
1	3-4		1893-1909
1	5		1858-1880

### **Series 2: Sermons, 1834-1873**

2	1	1-6	Numbers 62-115, 1834-1835
2	2	1-6	Numbers 116-171, 1836-1837
2	3	1-6	Numbers 172-234, 1837-1838
2	4	1-5	Numbers 235-279, 1838-1839
2	5	1-7	Numbers 280-344, 1840-1841
2	6	1-6	Numbers 345-408, 1841-1843
2	7	1-8	Numbers 409-468, 1844-1846
2	8	1-7	Numbers 469-529, 1847-1848
2	9	1-6	Numbers 530-584, 1849-1850
2	10	1-8	Numbers 585-641, 1851-1853
2	11	1-8	Numbers 642-691, 1853-1854
2	12	1-8	Numbers 692-739, 1855-1856
2	13	1-10	Numbers 740-801, 1857-1858
2	14	1-7	Numbers 802-841, 1859-1860
2	15	1-7	Numbers 842-874, 1860-1861

**Series 2: Sermons (Cont'd)**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
2	16	1-7	Numbers 875-914, 1861-1862
2	17	1-7	Numbers 915-956, 1862-1863
2	18	1-7	Numbers 957-994, 1863-1865
2	19	1-6	Numbers 995-1024, 1865
2	20	1-8	Numbers 1025-1068, 1866-1867
2	21	1-9	Numbers 1069-1118, 1867-1868
2	22	1-9	Numbers 1119-1174, 1869-1870
2	23	1-8	Numbers 1175-1217, 1871-1872
2	24	1-8	Numbers 1218-1265, 1872-1873