



Guide to the Francis Cope Yarnall Papers, 1853-1861

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David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

askRL@duke.edu

URL: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

Table of Contents

Summary	3
Background	3
Administrative Information	5
Names and Subjects	6
Collection Inventory	6

Summary

Collection Title:

Francis Cope Yarnall papers, 1853-1861

Creator:

Yarnall, Francis

Abstract:

Yarnall's bound manuscript volume entitled "Letters on Slavery," dated 1885, discussing slavery in the American South.

Extent:

0.1 Linear Feet

Language:

English

Language:

Materials in English

Collection ID:

RL.11501

Permalink:

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/yarnallfrancis/>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], [Title of collection], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Background

Scope and Content

The collection consists of a bound manuscript volume entitled "Letters on Slavery, F.C.Y., 1853" (88 pages) and a small number of clippings, some loose and some mounted within the volume. The spine of the book, bookplate, and the copies of the letterse all bear Francis Yarnall's name or initials, so presumably

the handwriting is his. It is possible the volume is a contemporary copy because all clippings date to 1861 or earlier.

The volume has two parts: a wide-ranging discussion of slavery in the South (pages 1-25) and a series of letters (48 pages) dated 1853-1854 between Yarnall and Professor M. in New York, in which the discussion is continued. Yarnall toured the South and his initial article is dated March 1853 in Huntsville, Alabama. He wrote that he was opposed to slavery, but did not advocate sudden abolition. He was sensitive to the complexity of the subject, and presents a comprehensive assessment of many aspects of slavery: condition and treatment of slaves (both house and field hands); the character of black people; the character of overseers and masters; slave traders and drivers; agricultural practices in the South; treatment of runaway slaves, including the use of dogs and murder of fugitives; the impact of Northern anti-slavery movements; the reception of the Fugitive Slave Act; the prospects of colonization in Africa; and the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Yarnall appears to attempt a neutral view about these issues in his article, reiterating repeatedly that his comments are based on first-hand observations and inquiries.

He is more hostile to slavery in the subsequent letters between himself and Professor M. Professor M. defended slavery on practical, religious, and philosophical grounds. Yarnall attacked slavery in his return letters. It is unclear whether Professor M. is an actual person or a literary device. All of the volume's letters are in the same handwriting. Additional topics include: the condition of blacks in Africa; labor in the North; inequality as a condition of life; white men's potential to elevate other races; prejudice between North and South; Jamaica's emancipation; the deaths of leaders Clay, Calhoun, and Webster; the Nebraska Bill; and Southern slavery laws.

Biographical/Historical

Francis Cope Yarnall (1830-1890), businessman from a Philadelphia family, was a prominent railroad executive and coal operator. He was interested in developing slate quarries in the Bangor region, and served as vice president of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company; president of the Lehigh and Lackawanna Railroad; vice president of the Lehigh and Susquehanna Railroad; and a director of the Mortgage Trust Company of Pennsylvania.

Yarnall was born May 4, 1830, son of Edward Yarnall, a wholesale druggist and director of the North American Bank. The family was Francis Yarnall married Mary Coale of Baltimore.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Acquisition Information

The Francis Cope Yarnall Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a in [year].

Processing Information

Processed by [processor name], [month, year]

Accessions described in this collection guide: [list accession numbers]

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Names and Subjects

- Slavery -- History
- Antislavery movements -- United States -- History -- 19th century
- African Americans -- Colonization -- Liberia
- Slavery -- Economic aspects
- Slavery -- Religious aspects
- Plantations -- Southern States
- Fugitive slaves -- United States -- History -- 19th century
- Slavery -- United States -- Condition of slaves
- Calhoun, John C. (John Caldwell), 1782-1850
- Clay, Henry, 1777-1852

Collection Inventory

"Letters on Slavery," F.C.Y., 1853-1854	Box 1
Physical Description: 1 Volumes	
Clippings from the Whig Almanac, 1855	Box 1
Information folder about the Yarnall family	Box 1