

**Guide to the
The Notarangelo Collection
of the
Louis A. Parsons Papers**



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections & College Archives**

**Elizabeth Johns
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MS – 115: The Notarangelo Collection of the Louis A. Parsons Papers: (1895-1926)

(1 box, 27 cubic feet))

Inclusive Dates: 1895-1906, 1924-1926

*Processed by: Elizabeth M. Johns
April 2010*

Provenance

Musselman Library received the papers of Louis A. Parsons in two installments in 2008 as a partial purchase and a partial donation from Thomas Notarangelo. (Accession 2008-0686)

Biography

Louis A. Parsons (1872 – 1957) was a professor of Physics at Gettysburg College from 1907 to 1925.

Parsons was born on April 9, 1872 in Burlington Iowa, to Albion and Mary Hilleary Parsons (1843-1919). He entered Iowa State University in 1891, earning a B.A. in 1895 and an M.A. in 1899. Parsons taught physics in various positions, and his first teaching job was at Burlington High School, Burlington, Iowa. While serving as a Fellow in Physics at Johns Hopkins University, he earned his Ph.D. in 1902. He continued as an Assistant in Physics at Johns Hopkins for the next year, before teaching at the University of Utah for one year. From 1904-1907 Parsons served as an Instructor in Physics at the University of California at Berkeley.

Parsons came to Gettysburg in 1907 and created and chaired the Department of Physics. Parsons never intended to serve at Gettysburg College for an extended period of time, but remained after failing to secure a position elsewhere. On August 21, 1920, he married Eva Pauline (Polly) Derr (class of 1910). Their first child, Mary Elisabeth, was born on July 1, 1923, and their second, Albion, was born in 1928.

Until he left the College in 1925, Parsons improved and expanded the Physics Department. He was an active member of both the American Physical Society and the American Electro-chemical Society. In 1923, he became a member of the Association of University Professors (AAUP), and became part of the local chapter at Gettysburg College when it gained enough members in 1924. The organization was formed nationally in 1915 as a body to enunciate and defend principles and practices of academic freedom and tenure.

After leaving Gettysburg in 1925, Parsons took a temporary one-year position at Swarthmore College, and by 1926 he had secured a position as the head of the department of physics at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. Later he taught at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and at the University of Maryland at College Park. After teaching, Parsons took a job as a Physicist at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington D.C.

In September 1945 Parsons retired due to health issues. He moved with his wife to her family's farmstead in Hampstead, MD, where he resided until his death on February 10, 1957.

Scope and Content Notes

The collection was created from two different sets of letters and papers related to Louis A. Parsons, obtained from Thomas Notarangelo in 2008. Notarangelo purchased the papers at auction. Both sets consisted of correspondence of both professional and personal nature; one set consisting of correspondence from Parsons' life before he became a professor at Gettysburg, and the other focusing mainly around the issue of his dismissal from Gettysburg College in 1925. The entire collection consists primarily of the correspondence written and received by Parsons.

Although Parsons was a physics professor, there are few items regarding physics or the Department of Physics, except for a few articles written by Parsons included in Series II. It is important to note that this collection is biased on the issue of his dismissal from the College, as all the papers are what Parsons himself chose to retain. For further information on this issue, see below.

This collection would be most useful to a researcher interested in the early days of the Hanson administration, operations of the Board of Trustees, and administrative procedure at the College during the 1920s. Locations of more papers regarding these concepts can be found in the resources identified below.

Series Description

This collection is divided into four series. Series I: Correspondence, Subseries A: Gettysburg College Related Correspondence, 1924 - 1926 and Subseries B: Correspondence before serving at Gettysburg College, 1895 - 1906; Series II: Articles and Writings; Series III: Newspapers; Series IV: Miscellaneous. All items are arranged chronologically within their subseries.

Series I, Subseries A focuses on Parsons' dismissal from the College, and includes correspondence with Henry W.A. Hanson, President of Gettysburg College (1923-1952), members of the Board of Trustees, and executive committee members of the AAUP. These letters center on Parsons' sentiments of being treated unfairly by President Hanson and the Board. His letters mainly read as attempts to rectify his perceived unfair treatment and gain support among his colleagues. His correspondence initially addresses the dismissal of three other professors early in 1924, and then shifts to addressing his own

dismissal in December of 1924. Also included are a few personal letters written during this time that do not mention the dismissal. (1924 - 1926)

Series I, Subseries B consists of correspondence to and from Parsons, colleagues, family and friends (1895 – 1906). At this time in his life, Parsons had recently completed his Masters degree and was searching for teaching positions. Many of the letters were in regards to potential positions in various institutions. One folder contains correspondence between Parsons and Charles J. Reed, Engineer and Secretary of the American Electrochemical Society. There are also letters from Carl A. Stutsman concerning family and business matters, and Joseph F. Merrill, a colleague from the University of Utah.

Series II includes writings by Parsons of both an academic and recreational nature.

Series III consists of newspaper articles and clippings collected by Parsons.

Series IV consists of miscellaneous items included with the papers, such as a registry of names, an Election Ballot for the Officers and Committees of the First Baptist Church Berkeley, and teaching contracts.

Box 1

1-1 Finding Aid and Biographical Information

Series I – Correspondence

Subseries A – Gettysburg College Related Correspondence (1924-1926)

- 1.2 Correspondence between Parsons and President Henry W.A. Hanson (1924-1925)
- 1.3 Correspondence between Parsons and the Board of Trustees (1924-1925)
- 1.4 Correspondence and Papers of Parsons and the AAUP (1924-1925)
- 1.5 Correspondence of Parsons (1924-1926)

Subseries B – Correspondence of Parsons before his position at Gettysburg College (1895 – 1899)

- 1.6 Correspondence (1895-1899)
- 1.7 Letters from Stutsman (1899-1904)
- 1.8 Correspondence (1900-1902)
- 1.9 Correspondence with Reed (1902-1904)
- 1.10 Notices from Teachers' Agencies (1900-1905)
- 1.11 Correspondence with Merrill (1903-1904)
- 1.12 Correspondence (1903-1906)

Series II – Articles and Writings

- 1.13 Writings by Parsons of both an academic and recreational nature

Series III – Newspapers

- 1.14 Newspaper articles and clippings collected by Parsons.

Series IV - Miscellaneous

- 1.15 Miscellaneous items included with the papers, such as a registry of names, Election Ballot for the Officers and Committees of the First Baptist Church Berkeley, and job contracts.

For more information about Louis A. Parsons:

Glatfelter, Charles H. *A Salutary Influence*. Gettysburg, PA: Gettysburg College, 1987.

RG-2.0.6: The Papers of the Office of the President of Gettysburg College: William Anthony Granville (1910-1923).

RG-2.0.7: The Papers of the President of Gettysburg College: Henry W.A. Hanson: (1923-1952).

Also 3 separate collections of unprocessed Louis Parsons papers (scheduled for future processing), from David Martin, Sue Boardman and Mark Schonbeck. The Martin Collection of the Louis Parsons Papers (Accession 2004-0213, Box 2) contains correspondence from Parsons' early years as a faculty member at Gettysburg College. The Boardman Collection of the Louis A. Parsons Papers (Accession 2004-0208) contains glass plate negative photographs of Gettysburg College taken during Parsons' tenure. The Schonbeck Collection of Louis A. Parsons papers (Accession 2005-0171) contains further information on Louis A. Parsons and his family, including photographs, correspondence, family histories, and various other documents.