

WILLIAM WOOD PARSONS PAPERS, 1886-1896

Collection #
M 504

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Processed by
Charles Latham
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USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box

COLLECTION DATES: 1886-1896

PROVENANCE: Gift of Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, ca. 1968

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 00.0165

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Wood Parsons (1850-1925) was born in Terre Haute and received his education there and in Tuscola, Illinois.

When Indiana State Normal School was opened in 1870, he enrolled, and was a member of the school's first graduating class in 1872. After four years of teaching, in Tuscola and Gosport, Illinois, and in Indianapolis, Parsons became an instructor in English at the Normal School in 1876. In 1882 he was made vice president of the school, and in 1885 became its third president. He held the latter position until 1921.

Under Parsons' long administration the Normal School flourished. In 1929, after his death, it was renamed Indiana State Teachers College, and later on Indiana State University. Parsons had a considerable influence outside the school through his contacts with the Department of Public Instruction and through his work as an instructor of teachers in county institutes.

During Parsons' early years at the Normal School, two incidents threatened the success of the institution. In April 1888 the main school building was destroyed by fire, just at a time when the trustees, in a dispute with the city of Terre Haute, had let insurance on the building lapse. Parsons took prompt and effective steps to keep classes going and to prevent students from drifting away to other schools. In 1893 Prof. Arnold Tompkins was dismissed by the trustees for criticizing the management of the school. This dismissal resulted in a student revolt, and the trustees subsequently refused to hold commencement or to grant diplomas to dissident students. Parsons by a policy of wise moderation prevented this affair from causing permanent dissension and damage.

Sources: *Indiana Biographical Series*, vol. II page 11

Encyclopedia of Biography of Indiana, 1895, Vol. I pp 299-301

William O. Lynch, *A History of Indiana State Teachers College, Terre Haute, 1945*

Indiana and Indianans, vol. I pp 907-909

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

This collection, filling one manuscript box, consists of photocopies of letters received by Parsons. It is arranged by correspondent, and chronologically within correspondent.

The collection is limited to the years 1886-1896, the first decade of Parsons' presidency of the Normal School, and principally includes correspondents whose last names begin with "R". Partial though it is, it gives a good idea of the kind of business that Parsons transacted.

Some of the correspondents are worthy of special mention. Arthur Cunningham was librarian of the Normal School, and his correspondence includes two annual reports from the library. L.T. Rettger was chairman of the Biology department, and his letters concern a summer session held in the summer of 1894, and the purchase and disposal of laboratory supplies. The latter subject is also covered in letters from Richards and Co. H.D. Vories was Superintendent of Public Instruction, and his letters deal with board meetings, with the setting of questions for teacher examinations, and with counteracting attacks made on Parsons by Prof. Tompkins and by Mr. Humke of the state teachers association. Some of the letters are personal: J.F. Ramsey was an artist who moved from Terre Haute to Kansas City in 1886 and left his Terre Haute affairs in Parsons' hands; H.K. Rust was a teacher who repeatedly wrote Parsons asking him to help renew a note on which Rust was able to make no payments even though he usually wrote from the Columbia Club. The rest of the correspondence deals largely with students' records and with helping former students find jobs.

FOLDER INVENTORY

- Folder 1. General correspondence 1889-1896 (chronological)
2. Arthur Cunningham, Librarian 1893-1894
3. J.F. Ramsey May-October 1886

4. L.T. Rettger, Department of Biology 1894
 5. Alexander T. Reid 1890-1896
 6. G.I. Reid 1893-1895
 7. J.M. Rice 1893-1894
 8. Richards and Co. (laboratory equipment) 1891-1895
 9. P.P. Rodenberger 1891-1893
 10. R.B. Routh (re: Maude Minor) 1893-1894
 11. H.K. Rust 1894-1896
 12. Students (alphabetically listed) 1893-1895
 13. H.D. Vories, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1891-1895
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CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Parsons, William Wood, 1850-1925

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Cunningham, Arthur

Rettger, L. T.

Vories, Hervey D. (Hervey Daniel)

Indiana State Normal School

Indiana State University

Indiana State Teachers College

Teachers colleges--Indiana--Terre Haute

College students--Indiana--Terre Haute

Universities and colleges--Indiana--Terre Haute

Teachers--Indiana--Terre Haute

Terre Haute (Ind.)

END