

Collection #
SC 3316

**REVEREND JEAN SHEPARD MILNER
ADDITION, CA. 1870S–1955**

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Contents](#)

Processed by

Alysha Zemanek
August 2017

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript folder, 1 black-and-white photo folder

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1870s–1955

PROVENANCE: Mary Jean Alig, Indianapolis, IN; May 2000

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

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

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Reverend Jean Shepard Milner Papers M 0752

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2000.0716

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jean Shepard Milner: Milner was born on 18 November 1893 in Atlanta, Georgia. As a child his family moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where he spent the remainder of his childhood.

Milner's father was an engineer, and as a beginning college student Jean Milner enrolled for engineering classes at Georgia Tech and Purdue University. Influenced by the religious views of botanist Stanley Coulter, then Dean of Science at Purdue, Milner decided instead on a career in religion. He left Purdue and earned a bachelor's degree in science from the University of Louisville and then a theology degree from Kentucky Theological Seminary in Louisville. After graduating from the seminary, Milner served in the Red Cross during World War I.

After two early positions in Edinburg, Indiana, and Ashland, Kentucky, Milner was appointed as minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis in 1921. He was chosen to lead a spiritual revival in the church. He arrived at a time when churches were divided on the Darwinian theory of evolution and the place of science in modern society in general. With a background in both science and theology, Milner was a liberal, or modernist, not a fundamentalist. According to a biographical sketch in the collection (Box 10, folder 14) written by his daughter, Mrs. Susannah Day, Milner "preached and lectured extensively on science and religion, showing they were not opposed to each other He defended man's intellectual freedom to pursue scientific knowledge." Influenced by the Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick of the First Presbyterian Church in New York, Milner gave a series of lectures on "Christianity and Evolution" in the mid-1920s, firmly established himself as an opponent of fundamentalism. His book, *The Sky is Red* (1935), argued the modernist position as well.

Milner's sermons, transcriptions of many of which can be found in this collection, were a high point of his ministry, especially in their delivery. He retained something of a Southern accent, and his speaking style was vivid. To quote again from the biographical sketch written by his daughter, Milner's "preaching style was polished and dramatic, and he was skillful in relating universal problems to his listeners' personal needs." A selection of his sermons on the topics of faith, spiritual life, and hope can be found in *Selected Writings and Favorite Quotations of Jean Shepard Milner, D.D.* (1967), a photocopy of which is in Box 10, folder 11 of this collection. Selected audio recordings of his sermons form Series 3 of the collection.

When Milner became minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in 1921, it was located at Vermont and Pennsylvania streets. He faced a land disagreement among his own church, a nearby Baptist church, and the Indiana War Memorial Commission, whose property was located between the two churches. All three were hoping to expand their facilities, but there was not enough room for everyone's expansion plans. This conflict turned into one of Milner's greatest successes during his tenure as pastor. After years of debating a solution to the problem, the state finally agreed to buy the land belonging to both churches

in 1956, forcing Milner's congregation to relocate. The original church was demolished in 1960.

Milner and the congregation had already started working on plans for a church at a new site before the state agreed to buy the property. Now with \$600,000 from the sale of the old property, they began to raise the rest of the money to build their new, much larger church. One step in the process was made easier when Charles J. Lynn, former vice-president of Eli Lilly and Company, deeded the site for construction to the congregation. The congregation's new home would be located at 77th and Meridian streets. The congregation was successful in raising the rest of the \$2.1 million needed for construction and moved into the new facility debt-free on 4 October 1960.

Soon after Milner had his congregation settled in the new church building, he decided to retire, after 39 years of service (the longest tenure of any pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church) in 1960. His successor was William H. Hudnut III, a future mayor of Indianapolis.

Milner was also active in other aspects of the community. He was a member of the Board of Trustees for Hanover College, Madison, Indiana, as well as for Methodist Hospital. Milner was also associated with the Rotary Club, the Indianapolis Literary Club, and the Contemporary Club of Indianapolis.

Milner was awarded honorary degrees from both Purdue and Butler universities. He received an honorary Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) degree from Butler, and, according to his daughter, preferred to be called "Doctor" rather than "Reverend."

Jean Shepard Milner died on 25 June 1964, after a brief illness, in Methodist Hospital, Indianapolis, at the age of 70.

Will Jackson: Jackson was born 6 June 1809 in Cecil County, Maryland. He came to Indiana in 1834 and spent much of his life working in railroad management. Jackson joined the Second Presbyterian Church in 1842. He died 9 December 1900.

Sources:

George W. Geib, *Lives Touched by Faith: Second Presbyterian Church, 150 Years* (Indianapolis: Second Presbyterian Church, 1988)

William Isley, Jr., "Second Presbyterian Church," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 1246-1247

Materials in the collection.

Telephone conversation with Mrs. Susannah Day (25 October 2001).

Indiana, Death Certificates, 1899-2011, via Ancestry.com

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection addition contains materials given to Reverend Jean Shepard Milner by Nancy Walcott Watson, including an autobiographical sketch and two black-and-white photographs of Will Jackson. Also in the collection is Watson's letter to Reverend Milner on 18 August 1955.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Autobiographical sketch and letter, ca. 1870s–1955

Will Jackson photos, n.d.

CONTAINER

Folder 1

Visual Collections:
Photographs,
Folder 1