

*A Finding Aid to the **William Ladd Chaffin Papers***

*Date Range: 1868-1922*

*Compiled by Arielle Nathanson,*

*December 2021*

**Summary**

**Creator:** Reverend William L. Chaffin

**Title:** William Ladd Chaffin Papers

**Dates:** 1868-1922

**Extent:** 1.7 linear feet, including: 2 three ring binders

**Abstract:** Reverend William L. Chaffin's papers date from 1868 to 1922 and contain genealogical listings and his most popular sermons.

**Language:** English

**Administrative Information**

**Acquisition Information:** This collection was given to the Ames Free Library in Easton by an unknown donor sometime after Reverend William L. Chaffin's death. The materials were then given to the Easton Historical Society and Museum in 1948 when it was first established.

**Accruals:** No further accruals are expected, but the collection may be updated as additional relevant materials are located and processed.

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection may only be accessed with the permission of the Easton Historical Society and Museum. Digitized versions of select materials are available through this finding aid and the Easton Historical Society and Museum's website at: [eastonmahistoricalociety.org](http://eastonmahistoricalociety.org)

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**Preferred Citation:** William Ladd Chaffin Papers, 1868-1922, Easton Historical Society and Museum, [item].

**Processing Note:** This collection was fully processed and a finding aid created by Arielle Nathanson. Select materials from this collection were digitized in 2021 and are accessible online. To request virtual access to non digitized materials, please contact the Easton Historical Society and Museum.

**Biographical Note**

Reverend William Ladd Chaffin (1837-1923) was born in Oxford, Maine to William Farwell and Louisa Shattuck Chaffin. His father died when he was eight months old and his Mother was physically and financially unable to care for him and his older sister Mary Louisa (1834). The children were sent to live in Concord, New Hampshire with their Aunt Nancy Fessenden. She raised them as her own right alongside her son John Henry.

After graduating from high school, William L. Chaffin worked at his adoptive father's trunk and harness shop for a few years. He then became the Clerk and Assistant Paymaster at the Northern N.H. Railroad Office. In 1857 William L. Chaffin enrolled in the Meadville Theological School to begin his religious studies. He received financial aid from seven generous members of his local Unitarian Society. After graduating in 1861, he preached briefly in Manchester, New Hampshire. A year later he was ordained by the Second Unitarian Church in Philadelphia, and served this church until 1865. From July to September in 1863, he served in the 58th Pennsylvania Infantry. In 1866, he was called to the Unitarian Church in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, but illness forced him to resign. In 1868, he moved to North Easton and became the minister of Unity Church, where he served until his death in 1923.

William L. Chaffin was a religious leader in his communities for 44 years in total, while pursuing his hobbies of local history and genealogy. He was the author of *History of the Town of Easton* (1886), *A Biographical History of Robert Randall and His Descendants* (1909), and *the History of Robert Chaffin and His Descendants and of the Other Chaffins in America* (1913). His final authorship project, *The Genealogical History of Easton* was never published, but Subgroup 1 of this collection is the direct result of the research for that publication. William L. Chaffin remained a trustee of Meadville Theological School from 1881-1906 and was the first secretary treasurer of its alumni association during the years 1892-98. He received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Meadville in 1915.

In 1862 William L. Chaffin married Rebecca Huidekoper Bagley (1840-1922), daughter of Michael Hodge and Margaret Lydia Hazelett Bagley. They had no children.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Reverend William L. Chaffin's papers date from 1868 to 1922 and contain genealogical materials and his most popular sermons. Found within them are various letters, listings and historical narratives, all originating from the genealogical materials William L. Chaffin collected for his unwritten book. There are three archival boxes worth of sermons written by him on topics ranging from: suicide and sin to socialism and women's suffrage.

This collection is arranged into two subgroups, each consisting of a different document genre. There are no series or subseries within each, and the materials are ordered alphabetically or chronologically, as will be specified below.

**Subgroup 1:** Genealogical Materials. The materials in this series are mostly undated, but are estimated to be from the 1880s to the early 1900s. All materials are ordered alphabetically by family name, with significant differences in the amount of items in each family's folder. Some folders contain one item and others around fifty. Notable materials include: letters and listings written by William L. Chaffin, historical narratives relating to the church history, unmarked graves and local gossip, and two three ring binders containing detailed biographical information about William L. Chaffin.

**Subgroup 2:** William L. Chaffin's Sermons. The materials in this series are dated from 1868 to 1922. All materials are ordered chronologically by the year of creation and alphabetically by sermon title within each year. Notable sermons include: Moral Courage (1873), Only A Cup of Cold Water (1887), Socialism (1901) and Addresses From the Women's Alliance (1909, 1916).

### **Arrangement**

The William L. Chaffin Papers are arranged into two subgroups with no series or subseries. Each subgroup is arranged by document genre and ordered chronologically or alphabetically, as detailed above. The family names and sermon titles included in this collection will be detailed below in the container list.

### **Related Materials**

Notable materials from subgroup 1 that contain previously unknown historical narratives have been digitized. The Religious History of Easton, Massachusetts (1905) by Reverend Chaffin has been digitized and is available on the Society's website. Other items from subgroup 2 may be digitized upon request. Select digital materials are available at the Easton Historical Society and Museum's webpage:

<https://www.eastonmahistoricalsociety.org/#/>.

Other collections featuring Easton families that Chaffin researched include: The Randall Genealogical Papers, The Hayward Family Collection, The George Warren Andrews Collection and The Morse Family Collection. The finding aids for these collections can be found on the Easton Historical Society and Museum website.

### **Container List**

#### **Subgroup 1: Genealogical Materials, 1880s-Early 1900s**

Box	Folder	Family Surname
1	1	Aldrich
1	2	Alger
1	3	Allen
1	4	Andrews
1	5	Augustus
1	6	Austin
1	7	Babbitt
1	8	Bailey
1	9	Barrows
1	10	Bartlett
1	11	Bean
1	12	Belcher
1	13	Bird
1	14	Bisbee
1	15	Bolles
1	16	Bolton
1	17	Bosworth

1	18	Brett
1	19	Briggs
1	20	Britton
1	21	Bruce
1	22	Buck
1	23	Bundy
1	24	Campbell
1	25	Carr
1	26	Churchill
1	27	Clark
1	28	Conant
1	29	Cooke
1	30	Cooper
1	31	Copeland
1	32	Craft
1	33	Craig
1	34	Crossman
1	35	Curtis
1	36	Dailey
1	37	Dana
1	38	Day
1	39	Dean
1	40	Delano
1	41	Dickerman
1	42	Dollard

1	43	Doty
1	44	Drake
1	45	Dunbar
2	46	Ellis
2	47	Fales
2	48	Ferguson
2	49	Fobes
2	50	Foster
2	51	Franklin
2	52	French
2	53	Fuller
2	54	Gibbs
2	55	Gilbert
2	56	Gilmore
2	57	Godfrey
2	58	Gooch
2	59	Goodwin
2	60	Goward
2	61	Grossman
2	62	Guild
2	63	Gurney
2	64	Hack
2	65	Hall
2	66	Hanks
2	67	Harlow

2	68	Hartwell
2	69	Harvey
2	70	Hayden
2	71	Hewett
2	72	Holbrook
2	73	Hollis
2	74	Hodges
2	75	Hunt
2	76	Johnson
2	77	Keene
2	78	Keith
2	79	Kelley
2	80	Keyser
2	81	Keyzar
2	82	Kimball
2	83	King
2	84	Kinsley
2	85	Knapp
2	86	Ladd
2	87	Lake
2	88	Lawton
2	89	Leach
2	90	Lillie
2	91	Lincoln
2	92	Macomber

2	93	Manley
2	94	Mason
2	95	Marshall
2	96	Messinger
2	97	Miller
2	98	Mitchell
2	99	Monk
2	100	Morse
3	101	Newcomb
3	102	Niles
3	103	Owen
3	104	Packard
3	105	Perry
3	106	Pettingill
3	107	Phillips
3	108	Phinney
3	109	Pierce
3	110	Pool
3	111	Poole
3	112	Pope
3	113	Porter
3	114	Pratt
3	115	Prentice
3	116	Quinlan
3	117	Reed



3	118	Selee
3	119	Shaw
3	120	Sheldon
3	121	Shepard
3	122	Shields
3	123	Simmons
3	124	Simpson
3	125	Smith
3	126	Spaulding
3	127	Staples
3	128	Stearns
3	129	Stokes
3	130	Stone
3	131	Strout
3	132	Summer
3	133	Swan
3	134	Sylvester
3	135	Thayer
3	136	Thayes
3	137	Thompson
3	138	Tilden
3	139	Tinkham
3	140	Tisdale
3	141	Torrey
3	142	Towne

3	143	Tupper
3	144	Turner
3	145	Wade
3	146	Ward
3	147	Watkins
3	148	Waite
3	149	Washbourne
3	150	Waters
3	151	Webster
3	152	Whiting
3	153	Wheelock
3	154	White
3	155	Whitman
3	156	Wilbur
3	157	Williams
3	158	Wild
3	159	Wilson
3	160	Witherell
3	161	Willis
3	162	Withington
3	163	Woodbury
3	164	Woodward
3	165	Vose
3	166	Unknown Families

### Subgroup 2: William L. Chaffin's Sermons, 1868 to 1922

Box	Folder	Sermon Title, Date
4	167	Moral Courage, 1873
4	168	Jonathan Edwards, 1875
4	169	Channing Ellery, 1876
4	170	Father Taylor, 1876
4	171	Lyman Beecher, 1876
4	172	Theodore Parker, 1876
4	173	Socrates, 1878
4	174	Tampering with Temptation, 1878
4	175	Evening Talks with the Young On the Consideration for Others, 1880
4	176	Gobelin Tapestry, 1883
4	177	Gratitude, 1883
4	178	Pontius Pilate, 1883
4	179	Patience, 1885
4	180	Comrades of the G.A.R., 1886
4	181	The Position of Women as Affected by Christainity, 1886
4	182	Envy, 1887
4	183	Lead Us Not into Temptation, 1887
4	184	On Reading, 1887
4	185	Only A Cup of Cold Water, 1887
4	186	God In Our Experience, 1888
4	187	Easter Sermon, 1889

4	188	Prodigal Son, 1890
4	189	Christmas Sermon: Jesus an Example of Courage, 1891
4	190	Keeping the Faith, 1891
4	191	Trust in the Lord and Do Good, 1891
4	192	The Books Were Opened, 1892
4	193	The Tongue, 1892
4	194	Zaccheus, 1892
4	195	Fatherhood of God, 1894
4	196	How to Change Water into Wine, 1894
4	197	Religion and Young People, 1894
5	198	Jesus, A Happy Man, 1895
5	198B	Memorial Day Sermon, 1895
5	199	Sins of the Tongue, 1895
5	200	Suicide, 1897
5	201	Unwritten History, 1897
5	202	Abraham Lincoln, 1898
5	203	The Commodious Haven, 1898
5	204	If I Were to Live My Life Over Again, 1899
5	205	How to Look Upon Death, 1900
5	206	Bridling Your Tongue, 1901
5	207	Habit, 1901
5	208	Reasons for Attending Church, 1901
5	209	Right Here, Right Everywhere, 1901
5	210	Socialism, 1901
5	211	Enoch Walked with God, 1902

5	212	Lessons of the Sky, 1902
5	213	The Lord's Prayer, 1902
5	214	Open the Window Eastward, 1902
5	215	Personal Leadership of Jesus, 1902
5	216	Why Was Man Ever Created?, 1902
5	217	Lessons of Sickness, 1903
6	218	The Better Self in Us and How to Evoke It, 1904
6	219	The Bible, 1904
6	220	The Bible (Second Sermon), 1904
6	221	Easter Sermon, 1904
6	222	Christmas Sermon, 1904
6	223	How God Helps Us in Trouble, 1904
6	224	Poetry of the Bible, 1904
6	225	Simplicity of Religion, 1904
6	226	Unpardonable Sin, 1904
6	227	Such As I Have Given Thee, 1904
6	228	Christmas Sermon: Why I Love and Honor Jesus, 1905
6	229	The Silence of God, 1907
6	230	The Personal Influence of Jesus, 1908
6	231	Address at the Women's Alliance, 1909
6	232	Pain and Sorrow and the Goodness of God, 1909
6	233	The Old Testament Apocrypha, 1909
6	234	Lord I Believe; Help Thou Mine Unbelief, 1910
6	235	Old Age, 1910
6	236	Address at the Women's Alliance, 1916

6	237	50th Anniversary Sermon, 1917
6	238	Personal Relationship Between Us and Jesus, 1922
6	239	Scripture Readings for Installations and Ordinations, Undated
6	240	Socrates and Christ, Undated