

Francis B. Gallagher collection of Fenian Brotherhood records

MC 14

Finding aid prepared by Faith Charlton and Bill Rueter.

Last updated on February 24, 2016.

Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center

; February 2012

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Summary Information

Repository	Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center
Creator	Gallagher, Francis B.
Title	Francis B. Gallagher collection of Fenian Brotherhood records
Call number	MC 14
Date [bulk]	1866-1870
Date [inclusive]	1862-1870
Extent	0.4 linear feet (; 1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Fenian Brotherhood, the American branch of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, was established in 1858 with the goal of establishing an independent Ireland. As well as raising money and gathering arms to send back to Ireland, the Fenians also engaged in military activity against the British, leading two failed invasions of Canada. Factionalism within the organization led to the Brotherhood's decline by the 1880s. This collection primarily contains the correspondence of Francis B. Gallagher, a Fenian Senator and district treasurer from Buffalo, NY with other senior Fenian officials. Also included are some administrative records, including circular letters, finance reports, and meeting minutes. The papers document the Brotherhood's activities, including its failed invasion of Canada, as well as the internal divisions that led to the organization's demise.</p>

Cite as:

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here]. Francis B. Gallagher collection of Fenian Brotherhood records (MC 14), Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center.

Biography/History

With the support of Irish Americans, James Stephens, leader of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (I.R.B.), established the Brotherhood's American division, the Fenian Brotherhood, in the fall of 1858. With local branches active in cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and New York, the organization grew to over 50,000 members and hundreds of thousands of sympathizers by the end of the Civil War.

Although Stephens had intended that the Fenians would primarily focus on fundraising and supplying arms to help the I.R.B. attain its goal of an independent Ireland, the organization became much more active and aggressive. Functioning as a secret society for the first several years, the Fenians decided to make their cause public, using publications and advertisements to garner support. Also, a strong contingent of its members wanted the Brotherhood to engage in military activities. Rather than merely sending supplies and soldiers to Ireland, they supported the idea of attacking the British by invading Canada. The Fenians made several failed attempts in 1866 and 1870.

British resistance, internal factionalism, and the organization's failed military efforts led to the Fenian Brotherhood's collapse in 1886. By this time, a significant portion of the organization had already been absorbed by the Irish nationalist organization Clan-na-Gael.

Scope and Contents

During the 3rd Fenian Convention in Philadelphia in October 1865, members established a fifteen-member senate, which assumed most of the authority previously held by the Brotherhood's President. The papers in this collection, mostly correspondence, relate to Senator Francis B. Gallagher from Buffalo, New York. Gallagher also served as Treasurer for the Brotherhood's Buffalo district for a time.

A majority of the letters in the collection is between Gallagher and other senators and senior Fenian members, including Fenian President John O'Neill, President William Randall Roberts, Michael C.

Murphy, and Dennis O’Sullivan to name a few. James Gibbons, a printer from Philadelphia and one of the original organizers of the Fenian Brotherhood, is another notable correspondent represented in the collection.

Among other things, the correspondence in this collection reveals the internal divisions and bitter politics that undermined the Fenians’ efforts and ultimately their existence. For example, there are letters between Gallagher and President John O’Neill that reveal a souring relationship between the two as Gallagher aligned himself with a growing faction of members who questioned O’Neill’s leadership. They opposed O’Neill’s aggressive military strategy and use of the organization’s treasury.

The bulk of papers in the collection date between 1866 and 1870, the years when the Fenian Brotherhood was at its height. They document the organization’s activities, including its efforts to raise money and acquire arms as well as its failed attempts to invade Canada. Many of the letters and financial papers relate to the Fenians’ first attempted invasion of Canada which was carried out from Buffalo, New York.

The collection has been organized into two series, Francis B. Gallagher papers and Fenian Brotherhood records. The first series includes letters and financial papers, including invoices and receipts for arms, uniforms, and other supplies, related to Gallagher. The second series includes records of the Brotherhood that do not necessarily relate to the Buffalo Senator. These records include correspondence and financial papers as well as administrative records, such as circular letters, financial reports, departmental reports, and meeting minutes.

Overview of Arrangement

Series I Francis B. Gallagher papers, 1862-1870

Series II Fenian Brotherhood records, 1862-1870

Administrative Information

Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center

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Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Accession number 1990.014

Processing Information note

The collection title was changed from Fenian Brotherhood papers to the Francis B. Gallagher collection of Fenian Brotherhood records to more accurately reflect the collection's content. Some materials were rearranged in order to help researchers find items of interest more readily. Folders were also relabeled.

Existence and Location of Copies note

This collection is also available on microfilm for use in the repository only.

Digital reproductions of the Francis B. Gallgher collection of Fenian Brotherhood records are available at <http://digital.library.villanova.edu/Item/vudl:247376>

Related Materials

At other institutions:

The Fenian Brotherhood Records and O'Donovan Rossa Personal Papers, The Catholic University of America, The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, Washington, D.C.

Fenian Brotherhood Papers, 1869-1922, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis, MO

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Fenian Brotherhood.
- Fenians.

Form/Genre(s)

- Circular letters
- Correspondence
- Financial records
- Minute books
- Telegrams

Geographic Name(s)

- Buffalo (N.Y.)
- Canada
- Philadelphia (Pa.)

Personal Name(s)

- Burns, Mr.
- Callinan, Michael J.
- Clingen, William
- Dart, William A.
- Dougherty, W. E. (William Edgeworth)
- Gibbons, James
- Keenan, Patrick
- Lavan, Thomas
- Longuemare, Charles, Jr.
- McCleod, Alex
- McCloud, Richard
- Munger, George G. (George Goudry), 1828-1895
- Murphy, Michael C.
- O'Brien, John C.
- O'Day, Patrick
- O'Neill, John, Gen., 1834-1878
- O'Sullivan, Dennis
- Renihan, F.
- Roberts, William R. (Randal)
- Scroggs, Gustavus Adolphus
- Spear, S. P. , General
- Timon, John, Bishop, 1797-1867
- Walsh, P. F.
- Wilkeson, John

Subject(s)

- Canada--History--Fenian Invasions, 1866-1870.
 - Irish Americans--Societies, etc.
 - Irish question
 - Ridgeway, Battle of, Ridgeway, Ont., 1866
-

Other Finding Aids note

Information about James Gibbons and a calendar description of his correspondence with Francis B. Gallagher can be found in Clark, Dennis. "Letters from the Underground: the Fenian correspondence of James Gibbons." *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 81 (June, 1970) no. 2.

An earlier finding aid with folder level descriptions as well as a card catalog with item level descriptions are available in hard copy at PAHRC.

Publications note

Materials from this collection, particularly Francis B. Gallagher's correspondence with James Gibbons, was used for the article: Clark, Dennis. "Militants of the 1860's: the Philadelphia Fenians." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 95 (January 1971) no.1

Francis B. Gallagher's letters, specifically his correspondence with John O'Neill, were analyzed and used for the virtual exhibit, Torn Between Brothers: A look at the internal divisions that weakened the Fenian Brotherhood. <http://exhibits.library.villanova.edu/torn-between-brothers-a-look-at-the-internal-division-that-weake/invasion-of-1870/> (Accessed February 2012).

Bibliography

Walker, Mabel Gregory. *The Fenian Movement*. Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles Publisher, Inc., 1969.

Clark, Dennis. "Militants of the 1860's: the Philadelphia Fenians." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 95 (January 1971) no.1

Torn Between Brothers: A look at the internal divisions that weakened the Fenian Brotherhood. <http://exhibits.library.villanova.edu/torn-between-brothers-a-look-at-the-internal-division-that-weake/invasion-of-1870/> (Accessed February 2012).

Clark, Dennis. "Letters from the Underground: the Fenian correspondence of James Gibbons." *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 81 (June, 1970) no. 2.

D'Arcy, William. *The Fenian Movement in the United States: 1858-1886*. Dissertation. Ph.D. diss, Catholic University of America, 1947.

Series I. Francis B. Gallagher papers

Collection Inventory

Series I. Francis B. Gallagher papers, 1862-1870.	Box	Folder
Scope and Contents note	1	1-16
<p>Most of the miscellaneous correspondence is incoming letters to Gallagher; one, regarding the failed Canadian invasion of 1866, is to his wife. A couple letters are from members of Gallagher's immediate family. Most of the financial papers are invoices and receipts.</p>		
	Box	Folder
John O'Neill to Francis B. Gallagher, 1866-1870.	1	1
James Gibbons to Francis B. Gallagher, 1866-1870.	1	2
W. E. Dougherty to Francis B. Gallagher, 1868-1870.	1	3
Thomas Lavan to Francis B. Gallagher, 1867-1868.	1	4
John C. O'Brien to Francis B. Gallagher, 1862-1870.	1	5
Dennis O'Sullivan to Francis B. Gallagher, 1866-1869.	1	6
Mr. Burns (alias James Osborne) to Frank B. Gallagher (alias Charlton), 1867-1870.	1	7
William R. Roberts to Francis B. Gallagher, 1866-1870.	1	8
Patrick O'Day to Francis B. Gallagher, 1867-1870.	1	9
F. Renihan to Francis B. Gallagher, 1868-1869.	1	10
Richard McCloud to Francis B. Gallagher, 1870.	1	11

Series II. Fenian Brotherhood records

John Wilkeson to Francis B. Gallagher, 1868-1869.	1	12
William Clingen to Francis B. Gallagher, 1869-1870.	1	13
Treasury Department (Patrick Keenan and Michael J. Callinan) to Francis B. Gallagher, 1867-1868.	1	14
Francis B. Gallagher- miscellaneous correspondence , personal and financial papers, 1862-1870.	1	15
Francis B. Gallagher- miscellaneous correspondence, personal and financial papers, 1868-1870.	1	16

Series II. Fenian Brotherhood records, 1862-1870.

	Box	Folder
	1	17-20; 1 bound volume
	Box	Folder
Circular letters, reports, addresses, and member lists, 1865-1870.	1	17
Financial reports, 1866-1870.	1	18
Miscellaneous correspondence and drafts, 1866-1868, undated.	1	19
Invoices, receipts, and other financial papers, 1866-1867, undated.	1	20
Meeting minutes, Buffalo, NY (bound volume), February to July 1869.	1	