

GATES, GEORGE AUGUSTUS
Papers, 1909-12

GATES, GEORGE AUGUSTUS

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

- 1851 Born at Topham, Vermont to Hubbard and Rosetta Gates.
- 1865 Enrolled at Johnsburg Academy, Vermont.
- 1869 Enrolled at Dartmouth College
- 1873 Graduated from Dartmouth College with a B.A. Degree.
- 1875-1877 Served as tutor in well-to-do Boston family. Traveled and studied in several German Universities.
- 1880 Completed study for B.D. degree at Andover Theological Seminary. Accepted pastorate of Congregational Church at Littleton, New Hampshire. Appointed pastor of church in upper Montclair, New Jersey, after ordination.
- 1882 Married Isabel Augustus Smith of Syracuse, New York.
- 1887-1900 Served as President of Iowa College, Grinnell, Iowa.
- 1892 Awarded LLD degree by Nebraska University.
- 1893 Awarded D.D. by Dartmouth College
- 1901 Accepted pastorate of First Congregational Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming.
- 1902 Assumed presidency of Pomona College, California after rejecting offer of presidency of Fisk University and Talledega College in the same year.
- 1909 Resigned presidency of Pomona College. Accepted Fisk University presidency with the understanding that financial problems would be concern of the Trustees.
- 1912 Resigned position at Fisk University as President following serious accident incurred in railway accident. Died in Florida where he went with the intention of recuperating.

Sources:

Gates, Isabel Smith. The Life of George Augustus Gates.
Boston, The Pilgrim Press, 1915.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of President George Augustus Gates, though small in number, suggest that in Dr. Gates, Fisk University had a leader who believed 1. that Negroes were equally as capable as any other racial or ethnic group and deserved the opportunity from college training; 2. that college training for Negroes was equally as essential as industrial training; 3. that Fisk ought to expand its curriculum and improve its academic standards and thereby improve the quality of its products - the graduates; 4. that Fisk University ought to seek to establish a solid financial foundation in order to establish and maintain a first-rate college and; 5. that Fisk University ought to make friends among Northerners and Southerners, especially among the latter because most graduates of Fisk were from the South and would remain in the South to live and work.

Although, the widow and biographer of President Gates - Mrs. Isabel Smith Gates - asserts that her husband accepted the presidency of Fisk with the understanding that he would not be expected to assume the burden of raising money for the school, he was enough of a pragmatist to realize he could not remain aloof from the problem. Hence he was hardly in office before letter writing requesting donations or thanking donors became one of his heavier tasks.

The Board of Trustees of Fisk University, during President Gates' administration, proved to be highly cooperative in shaping policy or helping develop programs which might move Fisk toward goals set by the President. The papers indicate that providing larger financial support was a major concern of the Board.

President Gates very early realized that the Board of Trustees might be useful in his plan to win friends for Fisk and Fiskites among Southern whites. Prior to his arrival, it appears, there was no Southern white member on the Board. Gates presented the matter to the Board, while almost simultaneously he approached several whites of the Nashville area about accepting membership. The documents in the Gates Papers indicate that the president was successful in this endeavor.

A few of the documents in the Gates Papers are in the form of communications with officials of other colleges; fewer are personal letters and several with members of the Fisk faculty. Most of the materials in the folders labeled "collection" are records of the transaction of the Board of Trustees.

REGISTER

GATES, GEORGE A., 1851-1912
PAPERS, 1909-1912

Processed by:
Dr. Raleigh Wilson
University Archivist
Spring, 1974

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REGISTER

Box 1

- f. 1--Biographical data
Correspondence--Administration
2--Ainsworth, H. A. - Burlew, Myrta--1910-1912
Correspondence--Board of Trustees
3--Boynton, N. - Gross, R. J.--1908-1912
4--Hull, Charles--1909-1912
5--Merrill, J. G.--1909-1912
6--Ryder, C. J. - Wright, H. H.--1910-1912
7--Lists, Membership Roster--Board of Trustees
8--Proceedings--Board of Trustees
9--Reports of the President--Board of Trustees
10--Report re Graduation--Board of Trustees
Correspondence--Faculty/Staff
11--Metcalf, W. V. - Spence, Mary--1911-1912
Correspondence--Personal
12--Baldwin, Ruth - Myers, J. A.--1909-1912
Correspondence--Musical Organizations
13--Beard, William S. - Work, John W.--1909-1912
Correspondence--Schools/Colleges
14--Atlanta University - Meharry Medical College
15--Miscellaneous material
16--Printed material re Gates Memorial