2/5/21
President
Edmund J. James
Vergil V. Phelps Papers, 1882-1968

Box 1:

The Lord's Jewels sermon by Dr. S. W. Phelps, 1895-1900
Bibliography of the Sabbath according to the Talmud, 1905-07
"The Educational Situation in the Chicago Public Schools" by George H. Mead, May 8, 1907
1908 - Views of Pres. E. J. James on hazing, copy of plaque of Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, Massachusetts
1909 - Correspondence on church records and preaching in Washington, D. C.
1910 - "The Pastor and the Teacher in New England" Ph. D. dissertation outlines, notes and drafts, Yale
1911 - Harvard Theological Review July, 1911 article on "The Pastor and the Teacher" January-April Program of the First Baptist Church, Billings, Montana

Box 2:

1913 - Battle Creek Sanitarium menu and "health decalogue"
1913-17 - Photographs University of Illinois
1914 - January 3, appointment in the President's office, University of Illinois and June 23 letter of Pres. E. J. James on appointment
November 8 Daily Illini article on James' speech to students
1916 - University statistics for April issue of Alumni Quarterly; Jenkin Lloyd Jones; September 9 letter to Nation on "Religion and American Universities"; September 17 speech of Pres. James to Chicago Association of Commerce
1916 - Phelps' writings on religion and publication of University Directory; W. C. Bagley, Edward F. Dunne
November 28 kite contest rules
"The University of Illinois As a Factor in the Development of the State"
"If I Were Back in High School"
Chapter of book on vocational guidance
Nell Barnes, 1916-18 - correspondence with actress, novel material, epitaphs
First Christian Church, Urbana Sermon - "How the Pew Can Help the Pulpit"
1917 - Yale Club banquet program
Outline of vocational guidance book
Laura B. Evans, 1/25; Allan Nevins, 2/11 and Frank Lowden, 5/4
Civil service notice of standing, December 15
Urbana High School essays by seniors on the ideal boy, girl and life
1918 - January - June
Laura B. Evans (1/1)
Florence E. Watson (2/ )
E. J. James (2/9)
Resignation (1/28)
YMCA service at Camp Travis, San Antonio, Texas, including activity reports and letters home

The Russian Soviet Revolution flyer

July - December
Army service in Central Machine Gun Officers Training School at Camp Hancock, including letters home, forms examinations, notes, "machine Gun Drill Regulations"

David Kinley, 9/9 and 12/20; E. J. James, 11/21 and 12/23; Florence Watson, October and November; K. C. Babcock, 12/3; Allene and Louisa C. Gregory, 11/19; Laura B. Evans, 12/15

War poetry
Army vocational education publications
Federal Board of Vocational Education; vocational rehabilitation series, opportunity monographs, 1918-19

Box 3:

1919 - D. Kinley, 4/11
The Fort Sheridan Recall April 16 article in vocational training
Publications on vocational education, including United States Boys' Working Reserve Farm Craft Series Lessons 1-29

1920-21 - E. J. James, 10/14
V. V. Phelps autobiographical data
Materials on foreign service and education

1922 - Fanny C. Sates, 8/26

1924 - College of the City of Detroit
Oratorical contest programs, 1/31 and 6/12, and newspaper articles

1925 - "The Business Man and His Books" and "Now Speaking of the Memory" reprints by V. V. Phelps from Business
Brochure on the Michigan Council for World Peace
Oratorical contest programs

1926 - Oratorical and heckling contest programs and clippings
Life insurance course of study plan
"Higher Education for Business" articles on Wharton (Pennsylvania), Illinois, Northwestern, Harvard, CCNY, Cincinnati and Wisconsin
"How to Remember" from September The Office Economist

1927 - Oratorical contest programs

1929 - Frederick B. Robinson, 5/28
Do You Think? magazine 1921-1941 on the philosophy and psychology of you, business, education, speech and the world

1933 - Eugene Davenport, 5/16 letter and clipping
ca. 1935 - "How to Study What When Where"
Detroiter Abendpost articles
P. L. Windsor, 9/6 and E. W. Phelps
1936 - "The Use of 'Lay' and 'Lie'" and articles on pronunciation with drafts
1945-51, 1963 - Correspondence with German prisoners of war who worked for Dr. Phelps at
Romulus Air Base during World War II
ca. 1950+ - "Do Your Want to Be Lucky and Liked" or "What? Why? How?" or "You and Other
Yous" and fifteen other chapters on public speaking and personality
1955 - Florence W. Burrell, 5/19
1957 - Florence W. Burrell, 3/19, 4/2 and 4/14
1955-68 - copies of letters from Dr. Phelps on universities, publications, University of Illinois
history, his collections, former students

Box 4:

1882-87 - Theological articles, Baptist newspaper clippings and The Way to God by Dwight L.
Moody (1884)
1890-95 - "The Kickapoo Indian Dream Book"
The Life of Charles H. Spurgeon
19 sermons of Charles H. Spurgeon
1896-1900 - Newspaper articles
"A Tract for the American People" and diet and temperance
"The Cigarette Must Go"
1901-10 - Clippings and reprints
1911 - "South American Trade" by Charles Pepper
1912 - "The Call to Teach" by David Felmley
1914 - "Why the German Nation has Gone to War" by G. S. Fullerton
1915 - "The Russian Plot to Seize Galicia"
The Continental Times, 2/1, 12/15, 12/17, 12/20, 12/24 1915 and 1/17 1916
"America and the European War" Norman Angell
"A Dishonoured Army" J. H. Morgan
Courrier Des Etats-Unis, 10/2/15
"Economic Life in Germany During the War" (Berlin)
1916 - "The Christian Sabbath" by Carlyle B. Haynes
"German War Finance" M. J. Bonn
"The Case of the Little White Slaver" Henry Ford
"Vocations Open to College Women"
Ford Motor Company Educational Work
Hamburger Fremdenblatt; "The Good Ship Illinois" H. M. Page

Box 5:
1917 - "Military and Naval Quiz" H. S. Kerrick
   "Conservation and Regulation" C. R. Van Hise
   Military manuals and wartime handbooks
   "The Second Liberty Loan of 1917"
   "Yale in the War" 11/23/17
1918 - Newspaper clippings
   YMCA camp bulletins
   Stars and Stripes, 10/11, 10/18 1918
1919 - Vocational training publications
1922 - Memoirs of the Kaiser (October)
1920s - Clippings on world affairs and World War I from Pathfinder and Detroit newspapers
ca. 1935 - Benefactor (A. Lawson)
1936 - Fichte Bund on Dr. Ley
1936 - Edith Bolling Wilson memoirs
1943-45 - World War II publications
1948-68
1968 - September 12 - oral history tape recording. See pp. 4-8 for contents.

Box 6:

The Roosevelt Book writings of T. R. (N.Y. 1904)
The Freshman and His College by F. C. Lockwood (N.Y. 1913)
A Book of English Essays C. T. Winchester, ed. (N.Y. 1914)
How to Speak: The Speech Slogan by Vergil V. Phelps (Detroit, 1927)
A Globegadder's Diary by Ralph Parlette (Chicago, 1927)
Col. Robert G. Ingersoll's 44 Complete Lectures (Chicago, ca. 1899)
Xerox copy of Brigham Young's Diary, 1857

Dr. Vergil V. Phelps Interview
September 12, 1968

Side 1:

1 - 5 Introductory remarks of interview of Dr. Vergil V. Phelps of Wayne, Michigan made September 12, 1968.

6 - 28 Phelps family. History in Europe and America. One line went to Connecticut - the line of William Lyon Phelps. My line went to Canada. My father, who lived in Boston, Ontario, decided he wanted to be a preacher while he was plowing in a field. He did his academic work at Woodstock and graduated from the University of Toronto. He was a minister at Fingall, Woodstock and Toronto.
I was born at Toronto. Older sister born at Woodstock.


In 1912, I started a college in Billings, Montana. Students agreed to continue classes in a log cabin. Graduation in 1913. One graduate went to McKeesport, Pennsylvania.

After my father graduated from the University of Toronto, he got the "western fever" and went to Clay Center, Kansas. He had not had any theological work, but he wrote a church paper "The Outlook" for Dr. John M. Gregory's 12 principles of public speaking. He had money from when he sold his farm to go to college. He put the money in western lands and lost it.

When he realized the need for theological training he took a church at Rochelle, Illinois, where I lived from age 6 to 13. The family moved to Hammond, Indiana after my brother studied at Morgan Park Academy, a Baptist Seminary taken over by the University of Chicago. Father got his B.D. at Chicago.

My brother was Chief Justice Warren's pastor. My teacher of old testament was Edgar Goodspeed.

I always had an ambition to be president of a university. When I went to the University of Illinois, I told President James I wanted to learn how to run a university. President James knew Dean Matthews of Chicago very well.

Matthews said that I could not get along with President James as we were both "bull headed". I never had any trouble.

President James never blamed anything on me, except once when I helped secure a draft exemption for a Hebrew at Illinois. James was indignant according to Albert Lee, but James said nothing to me.

Dean Thomas A. Clark once told President James that Phelps was a fool. Clark wanted me to employ only boys on the university directory project. Nepotism became illegal in the James period.

I helped bring Helen James and George Fraser together. We were going to Yellowstone Park, but her mother became ill. Fraser was a good friend of Filbey. Kelly couldn't get along with James or Filbey.
Friends at the University of Illinois. My brother and Warren Root married two girls and I didn't get one, perhaps because of my western debts.

President James kept telling me that I "ought to get married." My acquaintance with Florence Watson.

In 1912, Florence Watson and Col. John Trevett, a Champaign banker, were elected to the University Board of Trustees. Trevett's 92 year old son-in-law now lives in Belleville, Michigan.

Trevett and Watson were elected "to kick out President James." A vote was taken in the faculty Senate to support James. The students held a mass meeting at which James spoke. The 1914 Daily Illini editor arranged the meeting on October 31, 1914. World War I eliminated semi-centennial observances.

My resignation. President James knew how to do the work. When I left for the Army, I recommended Miss Anne Whitson as James' secretary.

In July 1918, I stopped at the University of Illinois when I was educational secretary for the Army YMCA in Texas. Friendship with Florence Watson. I was an Army private.

I organized post-war work at Fort Sheridan for the Army.

When I graduated from the divinity school at the University of Chicago, I was impressed by an Episcopalian. I took a $400 fellowship at Harvard. This took care of my expenses. I also preached at Unitarian, Congregational and Baptist churches.

In the summer, my brother and I worked our way to Europe on a cattle boat. I didn't swear at the workers. I have many souvenirs of this and other trips. Also photos of a dahlia exhibit.

I studied in an Episcopalian school and took a one man seminar from Dr. Emerton. He taught me to say the word man. He had the gout. Dean Fenn encouraged me. I went to Yale to study under Dean Walker.

I studied Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire to prepare for the University of Chicago entrance examination.

I took my master's degree in medieval history. My master's thesis was on representative government among Germanic tribes on the borders of the Roman Empire.
445 - 491  Xenophon's *Memorabilia* on friendship. Socrates' three rules were reverence God, respect your parents and requite your friends. I read and taught about philosophers.

492 - 511  I don't have much use for Aristotle and the Apostle Paul.

512 - 566  It is important to read the first book on economics, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*. Greek language. Unfavorable comparison of Queen Mary I with Queen Elizabeth I of England.

567 - 590  A Dutch dahlia friend told of his lineage. English language and slang.

591 - 619  I want to print Charles Dickens and other authors.

620 - 623  We should abolish abortion laws.

624 - 638  At Illinois, Dean Kinley was vice-president. I got along well with Kinley, but he was curt with everybody else. He was a Yale graduate.

639 - 656  Dean Babcock and Mrs. Busey egged on the president and made such and impression that he wanted to fire me from the university for my assistance to a Jewish student. Like Trevett, Mrs. Busey was critical.

657 - 665  "Florence Watson told me many times about that terrible board meeting and the way things went." When I won her away from that, President James and other members of the Board appreciated it. She forgot about firing James and made the motion that he be reappointed.

666 - 680  Difference of opinion with Dean Clark. Mrs. Evans and Florence Watson were some of the best friends I had. I took Florence Watson to the Junior Hop. After her husband died, Mrs. Evans and Florence Watson were going to take me to her home.

681 - 717  President James at Trustees meetings was successful. He didn't present things that might not win approval. I urged Florence Watson to back President James.

718 - 753  President James relied on me to arrange meetings. Dean Davenport was a nice man - always a gentleman. Dean Kinley was abrupt and sharp. Kinley was very helpful when I visited Illinois in January, 1920.

754 - 774  I was at Fort Sheridan and Chicago working with government students at Wisconsin, Northwestern, Michigan.

In 1916, we organized a Yale Club at Illinois. I became secretary.

Lobbying for the University of Illinois at the Legislature.

Essays To Do Good by Cotton Mather. Availability in libraries.

Christian Science Monitor articles about Illinois.

Article on Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin of Wyoming. She was unpopular for her anti-war stand. The Monitor refused to print Phelps' article saying she was unpopular.

Loaned Essays To Do Good to a Yale student who typed a copy.

Overcoming stuttering in students at Lewis Institute.

A student found Mather's Essays To Do Good in a bookstore where he worked.

Importance of soliciting alumni and others for books and valuable items stored in attics. Clipping and filing significant magazine articles.

Boneyard. Indian bones.

Dr. David D. Henry's pictures are not good.

About 1923, I took University of Illinois course in stock judging. Difficulties of the livestock business in the west.

In 1912-13, I had a ranch near Billings, Montana. After I went broke, I came back home, met a girl in Green Bay and decided to get a position. Through the teacher's agency, I got the job of executive clerk at University of Illinois. I didn't like the title of clerk, so President James changed it to "executive secretary."

Dr. N. W. Filbey. Doctoral degrees.

Kelly, President James' assistant didn't get along with Dr. Filbey and the athletic interests.

I went broke out west in 1920.

My wife from Oklahoma wanted to drill for oil in Wyoming.

Fisk Teachers Agency got me the job with President James.

Almost went to University of Cuzco in Peru. Letters of recommendation.

Moulton, Donald Richberg, John Dewey.


I came to Detroit from Milwaukee to train business executives. I didn't go to South America due to a revolution. I was busy contacting insurance companies about the methods of Roger Babson and Irving Allen. Salesmanship.

Substitute teacher in Detroit. Irving Allen method salesman.

Dean McKenzie of Detroit City College interviewed me and said they needed someone to teach public speaking. He wasn't interested in my degree in history.

Inadequacies of dictionaries. Pronunciation of "often."

Ella Flagg Young.

Taking Chicago girls through a steel mill.

Dr. Owen and Mr. Cody. Mr. Frank Cody, Detroit Superintendent of Schools, was a politician and became president of Wayne University.

In 1928, I quit Wayne University in disgust. Worked with Dean McKenzie. Met Dr. Henry in this work.

Dr. Henry became dean. I had taught public speaking at Illinois. I boosted Dr. Henry with Florence Watson Burrell. I did different things in my career.

I called Wayne University "America's educational headless horseman." My job was to educate the public in Detroit. They didn't believe in higher education. The papers had never heard of Detroit City College.

I gave lectures on the psychology of business and selling. Cadillac Motors, S. S.

335 - 351 Alan Campbell of the Detroit College of Law questioned Phelps. Art and Science.

352 - 361 1936 - snowstorm in Detroit. Science was the way a woman got to the top of a mound and art was the way she slid down.


377 - 379 Founding a college in the west.

380 - 390 President Charles Eliot of Harvard said he never made a mistake, but twiddled his thumbs when he spoke.

391 - 399 President James "was a rattling good speaker." He was an orator, a preacher.

400 - 408 My recollections, history of the Phelps family.