

The Music Vale Seminary Papers

Misc. Ms. 218



1996-2007

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(203) 432-0497

musicspecialcollections@yale.edu

<https://guides.library.yale.edu/MusicSpecialCollections>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Gilmore Music Library
120 High Street
PO Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520
(203) 432-0497
musicsspecialcollections@yale.edu
<https://guides.library.yale.edu/MusicSpecialCollections>

CALL NUMBER: Misc. Ms. 218

CREATOR: Music Vale Seminary (Salem, Conn.)

TITLE: The Music Vale Seminary Papers

DATES: 1851-1959

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1 linear foot (4 boxes)

LANGUAGE: Materials chiefly in English.

SUMMARY: Correspondence, music, and other materials relating to Music Vale Seminary, a 19th-century music school for girls in Salem, Connecticut

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/music.misc.0218>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/music.misc.0218>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Music Vale Seminary Papers were established in the Music Library of Yale University by Frances Hall Johnson, ca. 1942.

Conditions Governing Access

The Papers are open to researchers by appointment. There are no restricted materials in the collection. Please contact the [Special Collections staff](#) to schedule an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

The Music Vale Seminary Papers are the physical property of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University. Copyrights belong to the composers and authors, or their legal heirs and assigns.

Preferred Citation

Misc. Ms. 218, The Music Vale Seminary Papers in the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University.

Biographical / Historical

Music Vale Seminary, the first music school established in this country, was founded by Orramel Whittlesey in Salem, Connecticut. The date of its founding is given variously as 1835, 1836, and 1839. This discrepancy is attributed to what Orramel Whittlesey describes as the "modest beginning" of the school. It was a boarding school for young women from across the country known consecutively as Mr. Whittlesey's School, Salem Normal Academy of Music, and finally as Music Vale Seminary and Normal Academy of Music. The student body averaged eighty each year, reaching a peak enrollment of one hundred pupils.

The curriculum included both instrumental and theoretical studies. Lessons were given in voice culture, organ, piano, harp, and guitar, while the theory teaching included instruction in notation, harmony, thoroughbass, and the general laws of counterpoint and fugue. One student's mother even discusses her daughter's course in piano tuning in a letter. The courses were entirely musical, and although the school prepared its students to be teachers, it functioned like a music conservatory. Whittlesey writes, "Music is distinct from all other parts of a young lady's education ... there is not needed an intimate acquaintance with Botany or Chemistry ... Our aim is not to make merely superficial players, of those committed to our care, but thorough pianists, skilled alike in theory and practice." In fact, the school's motto (borrowed from William Pitt) was, "If it be that I have done so much, it is that I have done one thing at a time."

The discipline was rigid. The students arose at 5:00 A.M., dusted their pianos, and prepared for a day of four hour practice periods with intermissions devoted to the study of theory. Monitors were posted outside the rooms to enforce these rules. A normal degree authorized by the state of Connecticut was awarded after one year of study and performance exams before a jury.

Orramel Whittlesey was the school's principal. His daughters began as students and some eventually became teachers there. Their compositions as well as those by students are included in this collection.

The school suffered a severe blow when enrollment dropped as a result of the Civil War. Many of the girls were from the South. A second blow came when the seminary was destroyed by fire in 1868. Although the new building offered such modern conveniences as bathrooms and water closets, the school never regained its former prosperity. Mrs. George Pratt, Orramel's daughter, closed the school after her father's death on September 9, 1876. The new buildings were also destroyed by fire, on March 16, 1897.

Scope and Contents

The collection contains correspondence, historical information, music by Orramel Whittlesey and others, and miscellaneous materials.

Arrangement

In 7 series as follows: I. Correspondence. II. Historical and biographical notes. III. Photographs. IV. Exhibition notes. V. Miscellaneous envelopes and notes. VI. Published musical works of Orramel Whittlesey, his family, students, and others. VII. Music Vale Seminary diploma.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence

Subseries I.A: To Jennie Louise Balch, student at Music Vale Seminary, from Individuals

- | | |
|------------|--|
| b. 1, f. 1 | Balch, Cornelia Anne
<i>[4] p. 25 cm.</i>
Autograph letter signed, 1859 Dec. 19, Sandisfield, to Jennie Louise Balch, Music Vale Seminary.
Relates to homelife and inquires about homesickness. Her mother adds her own remarks on the last page. |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Kittie
<i>[3] p. 16 cm.</i>
Autograph letter signed, [1860] Mar. 14, Music Vale, to Jennie Louise Balch.
Relates to life at Music Vale Seminary. |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Alma
<i>[3] p. 16 cm.</i>
Autograph letter signed, 1860 Mar. n.d., Happy Home [Music Vale Seminary], to Jennie Louise Balch.
Relates to activities at the Music Vale Seminary. |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Howard, Rosa
<i>[8] p. 16 cm.</i>
Autograph letter signed, [1860] Mar. 14, Happy Home [Music Vale Seminary], to Jennie Louise Balch.
Relates to life at Music Vale Seminary. |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Balch, M.A.
<i>[4] p. 21 cm.</i>
Autograph letter signed, 1861 Sep. 29, Sandisfield, to Jennie Louise Balch, Music Vale Seminary.
Mother reporting on life at home to her daughter, and of friends at home who are going off to fight in the Civil War. Speaks of her daughter learning to tune pianos. |
| b. 1, f. 1 | Taylor, Helen S.
<i>[4] p. 19 cm.</i>
Autograph letter signed, 1862 Jun. 23, n.p, to Jennie Louise Balch.
Personal. |
| b. 1, f. 1 | M. Lizzio B.
<i>[6] p. 21 cm.</i>
Autograph letter signed, 1869 Oct. 3, Suffield, to Jennie Louise Balch
Relates to life at Music Vale Seminary and describes the new building. |

Subseries I.B: Frances Hall Johnson and Eva J. O'Meara concerning Music Vale Seminary Memorabilia

Subseries I.B: Frances Hall Johnson and Eva J. O'Meara concernin [...] (continued)

- b. 1, f. 2 Johnson, Frances Hall, 1865-1947
[1] p. 14 cm.
Autograph postcard signed, 1933 Sep. 20, New Haven, to Eva J. O'Meara, New Haven.
Relates to an article in Dwight's Journal which she would like Miss O'Meara to read.
-
- b. 1, f. 2 Johnson, Frances Hall, 1865-1947
[4] p. 17 cm.
Autograph letter signed, 1933 Sep. 21, Hartford, to Eva J. O'Meara, [New Haven]
Relates to information found concerning the Music Vale Seminary.
-
- b. 1, f. 1 Johnson, Frances Hall, 1865-1947
[3] p. 20 cm.
Autograph letter signed, [1942] n.m. n.d., Hartford, to Eva J. O'Meara, [New Havens]
Relates to memorabilia of the Music Vale Seminary which she is offering to the Yale Music Library.
-
- b. 1, f. 1 O'Meara, Eva Judd
[1] leaf. 28 cm.
Typed letter, 1942 Jun. 11, [New Haven], to Frances Johnson, Hartford.
Relates to memorabilia of the Music Vale Seminary which the Yale Music Library is interested in receiving. A reply to the above letter.
-
- b. 1, f. 1 Johnson, Frances Hall, 1865-1947
[4] p. 19 cm.
Autograph letter signed, n.y. Sep. 27, n.p., to Eva J. O'Meara, [New Haven]
Relates to music she has concerning the Music Vale Seminary and a planned visit to Salem, Connecticut.
-

Series II: Historical and biographical notes

- b. 1, f. 3 *Music Vale Seminary, 1835-1976*. New Haven: Published for the Tercentenary commission by the Yale University Press, 1934.
Cover-title, 24 p. 2 pl. (incl. front) 23 cm.
Johnson, Frances Hall, 1865-1947

(At head of title: Tercentenary commission of the State of Connecticut. Committee on historical publications. [Publication no. 27])

Author's name in caption title.
-
- b. 1, f. 3 "*Notables in Connecticut History*," Hartford Courant, 1935 Jul. 8.
Britton, James II
Photocopy.

Clipping of a profile of Orramel Whittlesey and the Music Vale Seminary. A sketch of Whittlesey included.
-
- b. 1, f. 3 *Music Vale Seminary* by Mrs. Darwin S. Moore 1943 Sep. 9
8 leaves. 28 cm.
Moore, Celia Webster
Typescript.

Brief history of Orramel Whittlesey and the Music Vale Seminary written for the Yale School of Music. Notes are added at the end.
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- b. 1, f. 3 "*First U.S. Music School Disappeared from the State almost without a Trace*," New Haven Register 1948 Sep. 5
Photocopy.

Clipping of an article describing life at Music Vale Seminary. A picture of the original building included.
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Series III: Photographs

b. 1, f. 4 Four miscellaneous photos of the grave of Orramel Whittlesey and of a former student, Sarah M. Durand

Series IV: Exhibition notes

- b. 1, f. 5 Exhibition Nov. 17, 1958 - Jan. 10, 1959
Contains 9 exhibit notes, including a brief history of Music Vale Seminary. A memorandum (9/2/59) for "100 Years of Music at Yale" is included.
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Series V: Miscellaneous envelopes and notes

b. 1, f. 6

Miscellaneous

8 envelopes and notes concerning Music Vale Seminary.

Series VI: Published musical works of Orramel Whittlesey, his family, students, and others

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- b. 2, f. 7 *Harp of the Wild Wind. New York: Published by the author* c1851
Piano-vocal score (7 p.) 33 cm.
Whittlesey, Orramel, 1801-1876
- On t.p.: Composed and affectionately dedicated to his daughter, Eliza Tully Whittlesey by Orramel Whittlesey, Salem, Connecticut. Words by Miss Mary Bradford.
- Lithograph by William Endicott & Co., N.Y, on title page.
-
- b. 2, f. 7 *The Welcome. New York: Gould and Berry, c1852.*
Piano-vocal score (4 p.) 33 cm.
Whittlesey, Orramel, 1801-1876
- On t.p.: The Welcome. A ballad as sung and performed at the anniversary of the Music Vale Seminary and Normal Academy of Music at Salem, Conn., July 6th 1852. Aria Alla Scozzese by Orramel Whittlesey and respectfully inscribed to Miss Marion J. Holmes, Miss Frank Allen, etc... pupils of the above named seminary.
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- b. 2, f. 7 *Music Vale Seminary Quick Step. New York: Horace Waters, c1855.*
[1] p. 31 cm.
Whittlesey, Orramel, 1801-1876
- On t.p.: Arranged for piano and respectfully inscribed to Miss Mary V. Storm by her friend and teacher Orramel Whittlesey, Salem, Conn. Principal of the Music Vale Seminary and Normal Academy of Music.
- Lithograph of the original building, on title page.
- Incomplete copy.
-
- b. 2, f. 7 *Music Vale Seminary Quick Step. New York: Horace Waters, c1855.*
4 p. 33 cm.
Whittlesey, Orramel, 1801-1876
- On t.p.: Arranged for Piano and respectfully inscribed to Miss Mary V. Storm by her friend and teacher Orramel Whittlesey. Principal of the Music Vale Seminary and Normal Academy of Music, Salem, Conn.
- Lithograph of the original building on title page.
-
- b. 2, f. 7 Music Vale Seminary student music books
2 v. 34 cm.
- Two bound volumes of music include music by Orramel Whittlesey, his daughters, and students. Volumes are inscribed to "Lizziell and "Sarah M. Durand."
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Series VII: Music Vale Seminary diploma

- b. 3 *Diploma*, 1861 Dec. 21, by which Jennie L. Balch being a member of the Music Vale Seminary and Normal Academy of Music is considered qualified to give instruction in theory, thorough-bass, and pianoforte
In cylindrical tin case (length 62 cm., diameter 6.5 cm.)
Manuscript on parchment.
Ribbon with seal attached.
Endorsement: O. Whittlesey, Mrs. John Magennis, V.P, Rev. Nathaniel Meiner, Prof. E.V. Gould, Prof. W. [?], Prof. Louis Ernst, Edward Harland, and John S. Maginnis. Parchment is supposed to have been made from sheep raised on the farm at Music Vale Seminary.
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Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Music -- Instruction and study -- Connecticut

Geographic Names

Salem (Conn.) -- Musical life

Names

Whittlesey, Orramel, 1801-1876