

# Guide to the James Monroe Taylor Papers, 1865-1916

## Biographical Note

James Monroe Taylor (1848-1916), fourth president of Vassar College, was born in Brooklyn, NY, and pursued his undergraduate studies at the University of Rochester. In 1871 he was graduated from Rochester Theological Seminary and was ordained in the Baptist ministry. After a year of travel in Europe he assumed pastorates in South Norwalk CT, and later in Providence, RI. He was married in 1873 to Kate Huntington.

In 1886 the trustees of Vassar elected James Monroe Taylor president of the college. One of his first actions upon arriving at Vassar was to abolish the preparatory division, a step that did much to raise academic standards. Taylor also worked for the endowment of professorships and broadened the curriculum to include history, economics, psychology, religion, art, and music, as well as more laboratory-based science courses. During his twenty-eight-year administration the student body more than tripled in size, and Taylor inspired in Vassar graduates an intense loyalty to the college. He turned down an offer to the presidency of Brown University in 1899. As president, Taylor conducted daily chapel, regularly taught classes, administered most of the details of the college's academic operations, and found time to write several books. He set a high standard at Vassar for academic excellence. He also toured and spoke frequently, enhancing both Vassar's reputation and his own standing as an educator. When Taylor retired in 1914, he had been in poor health; and he died from pneumonia two years later.

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## Scope and Content Note

The Taylor Papers primarily concern Vassar College and the education of women and include his manuscript addresses, articles, and sermons, 1868-1913; records of faculty appointments at Vassar, ca. 1887-ca. 1913; correspondence, including his letters to Cornelia M. Raymond, 1886-1916, concerning offer of the Presidency at Brown University, lecture at Vassar by Charles Zueblin, student issues, woman's suffrage, founding date of Mount Holyoke College, religious questions, protection of Vassar students, Vassar students and the New York shirtwaist workers strike of 1910, faculty matters including a conflict between Abby Leach and Grace H. Macurdy, and other issues related to women's education; copies of his publications; notes, research materials, and manuscript of his book Before Vassar Opened; and clippings, photographs, passport, certificates, and other miscellaneous items.

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

James Monroe Taylor Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

## Processing Information

Original processing date unknown. Description of materials in box 19 added March 2007 by Laura Finkel. Items from Mary Taylor Gunman (A2007-038) added July 2007 by Laura Streett.

## Acquisition Information

Gifts of James Monroe Taylor, Margaret E. Taylor, Cornelia Raymond, and Mary Taylor Gunman.

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