

# Guide to the Robert Cowden Papers

1858 - 1920





## Robert Cowden Papers

1858 - 1920

0.36 cubic foot

gcsh.ms.3640

The purpose of this finding aid is to help you understand the nature of this collection and to assist you in the retrieval of material from this collection. The following pages contain a brief biographical history of the person, or persons, who created or collected these papers, followed by a general description of the collection in the scope and content note. If more detailed information is warranted then series descriptions also appear. The container listing appears last and is the listing of material in each box, or container, of this collection. To request material you need to turn to the container listing section. It is essentially a listing of file folders, or artifact items, in the collection. Each folder, or item, has a call number associated with it. Each folder also lists the inclusive dates of the material in the folder. On the material request form list both the call number and the folder, or item, title. Use a different line for each folder, or item, requested. When your request sheet is complete, or full, bring it to the archivist and the material will be retrieved.

### Biographical Note

Robert Cowden (1833-1922), United Brethren Church minister and educator, was born May 24, 1833, in Ohio.

Cowden began his church career by assuming leadership in his local church's Sunday School. Beginning in 1877, Colonel Cowden, as he was known throughout the church because of his military service during the Civil War, served as executive secretary of the Sunday School Association for thirty-six.

During his years of service, two significant developments occurred: First, following the example of the Chautauqua camp meeting organization and the New York Normal Union, a school for training teachers and leaders, the United Brethren Church organized the Bible Normal Union in 1886. It issued diplomas to those who completed a prescribed course of study. Second, the Home Reading Circle was organized in 1887, and provided a three-year reading course of study. In 1889, the United Brethren Church Sabbath School was managed by Cowden as its secretary.

Cowden was charged with organizing and maintaining the Sunday School which replaced the Sabbath School in 1905. The General Conference of 1909 decreed that there should be a unified denominational program for the Sunday School, the Youth Society, and Men's work. As a result the Departments of Sunday School, Brotherhood, and Young Peoples work were created. Cowden assumed leadership of the Sunday School Department. He continued in this work until his retirement in 1919. Cowden died in 1922.

### Scope Note

The Cowden collection is a significant representation of family records and genealogy together with records of his work in developing the Sunday School work of the United Brethren Church. The materials regarding the Sunday School offer a window on the progress in developing the administrative and educational practices of the church. Cowden gave creative leadership in applying the Chautauqua format to the work of the Sunday School. The collection also includes Cowden's manuscript of his autobiography. It was published by the United Brethren Publishing House in 1915. Two items included are over-size and are packaged separately: a marked map of the Battle of Shiloh, and an architectural drawing of a tablet commemorating the life and work of Rev. John George Pfrimmerer, M.D., who established the first United Brethren Churches in Indiana and the first United Brethren Sunday School in 1820 on the site of this tablet.

## Arrangement

Material has been arranged in the following manner. The Robert Cowden Collection has no formal series arrangement due to its small size.

## Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding this collection.

## Preferred Citation

When citing material from this collection please use the following format: Direct reference to the item or its file folder, Robert Cowden Collection, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey. Do not make use of the item's call number as that is not a stable descriptor.

## Index Terms

### *Subject Terms*

Sunday schools

United States-History-Civil War, 1861-1865

### *Subject Geographic*

United States

### *Genre*

Architectural drawings

Autobiographies

Clippings

Genealogies

Journals

Manuscripts

Maps

Photographs

## Container List

Call Number	Folder Title	Date(s)
1350-5-2:1	Correspondence	1882-1892
1350-5-2:2	Correspondence	1906-1915
1350-5-2:3	Correspondence	1916
1350-5-2:4	Photographs	undated
1350-5-2:5	Family Genealogy	1915
1350-5-2:6	Autobiography Manuscript	1916
1350-5-2:7	Notes and Journal Trip to Orient and Egypt	1858-1904
1350-5-2:8	Articles by Cowden	1889-1920
1350-5-2:9	Sunday School Reports and Records	1892-1916
1350-5-2:10	Minutes Sunday School Congress	1880
1350-5-2:11	World Sunday School Congress	1904
1350-5-2:12	Sabbath School Board	1881-1886
1350-5-2:13	Sunday School Magazines	1881-1897
2457-2-1:26	Map of Pittsburg Landing	1900
2457-2-1:34	Architectural Drawing	1920