

CHARLES GUTEAU PAPERS

The Oskar Diethelm Library
DeWitt Wallace Institute for the History of Psychiatry
Weill Cornell Medical College
525 East 68th Street
New York, New York 10065

Arranged and described by:
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May 1989

Provenance

The Charles Guiteau Papers relating to the assassination of President James Garfield were purchased at auction from Charles Hamilton with funds provided by Mr. & Mrs. Charles H. Blatt.

The collection is comprised of six folders and has been placed in the second box of the Jacques Lacan Lectures Collection, because documents from both collections are legal sized.

There are no restrictions regarding use of the collection.

Additional papers relating to Guiteau's assassination of Garfield may be found in the Bernard Diamond Collection.

Biography

Charles Julius Guiteau was the assassin of President James A. Garfield. He shot the President on July 2, 1881, and Garfield died on September 19, 1881. The trial is considered important in forensic psychiatry and hinges on the issue of moral insanity. Guiteau wanted to be proved sane, stating that his act was committed for the greater good of the country and was sanctioned under orders from "Jesus Christ & Company." Judge John K. Porter, the eminent prosecuting attorney, was successful in proving Guiteau sane enough to differentiate between right and wrong, the definition of criminal responsibility under the M'Naghten Rule. The trial also continued the controversy over the extent to which heredity and environment contributed to aberrant behavior. The trial began in the fall of 1881 and was completed in January 1882. Guiteau was hanged June 30 of that year.

Scope and Content

The papers pertain to the trial of Guiteau for the assassination of President Garfield. The documents consist chiefly of trial notes of John K. Porter, the prosecuting attorney, and his preparation for trial. Included are legal notes on testimony of expert witnesses in cases of insanity, notes on his delusion, and notes on the trials of Ludwig Steiner and Mary Harris, both for murder involving legal insanity. Some of the trial notes contain numerous interesting quotes from Guiteau. Among other papers, there are a list of witnesses for the prosecution that served on the defense (including Guiteau's brother, John), lists of expert witnesses examined by the government and by the defense, legal precedents on insanity pleas, and a summary of Guiteau's evidence. Two printed pamphlets complete the collection: "Memorial Address on the Life and Character of James Abram Garfield," by Hon. James G. Blaine, and "A Protest Against the Destruction of Jury Trials," which is a reprint of a speech by James Garfield about the Milligan case trial in 1866. The range in dates of the collection is 1881 - 1885, with the publication date for the reprint being 1912.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1	Notes on expert testimony in cases of insanity Includes cases of Mary Harris and Ludwig Steiner in cases involving "moral insanity."	1881-1882
2	Notes of Reynold's examination and of others	1881-1882
3	List of experts examined by the government in rebuttal. List of experts examined by the defense. Letter written by E. A. Bailey to John K. Porter. Quotes by Guiteau, Guiteau's evidence.	1881-1882
4	Information re: Shaw and Edward's testimony, notes on Reynolds. Comparison to M'Naghten's case. Notes on religious inspiration of Guiteau. List of witnesses for government.	1881-1882
5	Newsclipping re: Porter and Union College. Notes including quotes by Guiteau, religious inspiration, court papers, letter written by Guiteau's brother, John N. Guiteau, to General Carr.	1881-1885
6	Pamphlets: "Memorial Address on the Life and Character of James Abram Garfield" by Hon. James G. Blaine. "A Protest Against the Destruction of Jury Trials," reprint of a speech by Garfield in the Milligan case tried in 1866.	1882-1912