

Baylor University . The Texas Collection

Lyrics to "America" Manuscript. 1895

Summary Information

Creator	Smith, Samuel Francis, 1808 - 1895
Extent (quantity/size)	1 folder.
Language	English
Abstract	The Lyrics to "America" Manuscript contains a handwritten copy of the song "America" or, alternatively, "My Country Tis of Thee," by the composer Samuel Francis Smith.

Subjects

Patriotism -- United States. / Smith, Samuel Francis, 1808-1895.

Administrative Information

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Preferred Citation When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is:

Lyrics to "America" Manuscript, Accession #3852, Box#, Folder #, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

Processing Information Described by Paul T. Fisher and released on 2013-06-14.

Scope and Content

The Lyrics to "America" Manuscript was acquired by gift from A.F. Beddoe in 1929 May 29. The manuscript was transferred from Strecker Museum (now Mayborn Museum) in 1983 November 2. The collection contains one document, the lyrics to "America."

The document was one of six written in 1832, when Smith composed the song. However, Smith's autograph on the document includes the date 1895, the year of his death. It is mentioned in other documentation that Smith held onto the lyrics he wrote in 1832 until the 1890s, then gave them to friends and family. Other documentation, including notarized documents certifying that the lyrics document is authentic, are available.

Administrative/Biographical History

One of the most popular of United States patriotic songs, "America" or "My County Tis of Thee" was written by Samuel Francis Smith in the early 1800s. This collection contains one of six copies handwritten by Smith existing in the world today.

Samuel Francis Smith was born on 1808 October 21 in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended public school in Boston, and then attended Harvard University, graduating in 1829. After Harvard, Smith attended Andover Theological Seminary (today Andover-Newton Theological School), and graduated from Andover in 1832. This is about the time he wrote "America." Smith then served as editor of the American Baptist Magazine, Baptist pastor in Maine, professor at Waterville College (today Colby College), and Baptist pastor in Massachusetts. Smith also served as secretary of the Baptist Missionary Union for 15 years.

Smith wrote many hymns and poems, including "America," by far his most popular song. Unfortunately, there are several different versions of how Smith wrote the song, and they do not always agree. It seems he wrote the song quickly, within half an hour, after studying songs used in German public schools. The song was performed for the first time at a church on Park Street in Boston in 1831, for a celebration of American identity and freedom. Since then, it has been one of the most well-loved patriotic songs of the United States.

In 1895, the last year of Smith's life, he presented a handwritten copy of his most famous song to his friend A.F. Beddoe of Texas. Beddoe donated his treasured copy of "America" to Baylor University in 1929.

Related Resources

Related citations

Branham, Robert James. "Of Thee I Sing": Contesting "America." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 623-652. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30041551>.

Music, David W. "The Hymns of Samuel Francis Smith." *The Hymn - A Journal of Congregational Song* Vol. 59, no. 2 (2008): 25-44, <http://ezproxy.baylor.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1075209?accountid=7014>.

Archival Arrangement

The Lyrics to "America" Manuscript was organized prior to this finding aid. Currently, the collection is arranged in one series: I. Song Lyrics.

Series 1: Song Lyrics. 1832, 1895

Administrative/Biographical History

This series contains one document, the lyrics to "America" written by Samuel Francis Smith.

Item List

Box 1. Folder 1. "America", 1832, 1895

