

UA1980.34

Catholic Church Extension Society Records

Subgroup 4: Chapel Car

Series 1: George Hennessey, Superintendent of Chapel Cars, Correspondence

Dates: 1911-1924

Creator: Catholic Church Extension Society (1906-)

Extent: 1.25 linear feet

Level of description: Folder

Processor & date: Brian F. Coffey, April 15, 1997; updated by K. Young and M. Leonard, August 2010

Administration Information

Restrictions: None

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Citation: Loyola University Chicago Archives and Special Collections. Catholic Church Extension Society Records. Subgroup 4: Chapel Car, Series 1: George Hennessey Correspondence. Box #, Folder #.

Provenance: The Catholic Church Extension Society records were gifted to Loyola University Chicago on June 13, 1967, by Rev. Joseph A. Cusack, Vice President and General Secretary of the Society.

Separations: None

See Also: CCES Subgroup 4: Chapel Car, Series 2: Chapel Car Logs

Administrative History

Inspired by a chapel car of a Baptist Ministry that he saw at the St. Louis World's Fair, Rev. Francis C. Kelley, president and founder of the CCES, began in 1907 a unique missionary component of the Society that used converted railroad cars as mobile chapels. The first Society chapel car, a wooden Wagner sleeper dubbed the "St. Anthony," started its missionary travels in the farmlands of Kansas and South Dakota. By 1912, the "St. Anthony" had toured the South and Northwest, establishing small churches with seed money from the Society. That same year, a wealthy lumber merchant from Dayton, Ohio, Peter Kuntz, donated the Society's second chapel car. The new "St. Peter" was a custom, all-steel car built by Barney & Smith of Dayton, Ohio. The "St. Peter" worked the rails in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Utah. Happy with the success of his first donation, Kuntz donated another chapel car to the fleet in 1915, with a stipulation that it work exclusively in the South. Accordingly, this car, dubbed the "St. Paul," toured Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

Equipped with both a chapel and chaplain's quarters, the Extension Society's chapel cars served as temporary places of worship as well as objects of curiosity in the many small towns where they visited. Despite their acknowledged role as an attention-getting novelty, the cars were also functioning churches, providing Mass, Holy Communion, youth education, and the administration of the other sacraments of the Church throughout rural towns and villages across the country. A favorite topic for the editors of the Society's monthly magazine *Extension*, The chapel cars

epitomized the work of the Society with their ability to attract rural Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

While an on-board chaplain administered the above religious services, basic operations of the chapel car required constant communications to both the CCES office in Chicago and the many private railroads that would pull the car to and from each town. Furthermore, the chapel cars were technologically complex, requiring constant upkeep and unique maintenance. Foreseeing the need of someone to manage such practical and essential aspects of operating a chapel car, Father Kelley had assigned George C. Hennessey, then Assistant Secretary for the Society, to accompany the "St. Anthony" on its inaugural trip. Though a layman, Hennessey was a devout Catholic, organist (each car had an on-board organ), and former altar boy, all traits that would help in his management of this unique missionary work. Hennessey was also an experienced liaison with the many business contacts of the Society. By the time the "St. Peter" and "St. Paul" had become part of the Society's chapel car fleet, Hennessey had permanently left the Chicago office to become the new Superintendent of Chapel Cars.

Alternately using chapel cars, bishops' residences, and hotels as his office, Hennessey oversaw the scheduling, operation, and maintenance of the chapel car fleet. After staying with the "St. Anthony" for a number of years, Hennessey spent most of the period covered by this correspondence on the "St. Peter." Portland, Oregon, was Hennessey's most frequented diocese, and from that city Hennessey would arrange missionary work for the "St. Anthony" and "St. Peter." However, Hennessey would often accompany various chaplains on their missions, adding his own missionary services by entertaining visiting children and rural residents with his informal conversation and organ playing and giving tours of the cars' ornate interiors.

Weather and season played a significant role in the scheduling of the cars as the blazing hot summers prohibited missions and as harvest periods reduced rural participation in the celebration of Masses and religious lectures. World War I also had its impact on the chapel car missions and some of the correspondence in this sub-series relates to this period of tenuous chapel car operations.

Sources:

Information on the CCES Chapel Cars can be found in Francis C. Kelley, *The Story of Extension* (Chicago: Extension Press, 1922) and in James P. Gaffey, ed., *Francis Clement Kelley & the American Catholic Dream* 2 vols. (Bensenville, IL: Heritage Foundation Press, 1980). Articles on the chapel cars can be found in back issues of *Extension*, the magazine of the CCES. One such article written by George Hennessey, "Thirteen Years with the Chapel Cars," is found in the May 1921 issue of *Extension*. All these materials are held by Loyola University.

Scope and Content

The George Hennessey Correspondence records comprise 1.50 linear feet spanning the years 1911 to 1924 and include correspondence, notes, invoices, receipts, subscription and attendance lists, reports, and clippings. Arrangement is chronological with undated correspondence, reports, and articles at the end.

Series

Series 1: George Hennessey, Superintendent of Chapel Cars, Correspondence, 1911-1924, Boxes 1-3

This series contains letters; telegrams; notes; invoices; receipts; subscription, attendance, contribution, and equipment lists; copies of chaplain reports; newspaper and magazine clippings; and contracts. Main correspondents include William D. O'Brien, E. B. Ledvina, and Francis C. Kelley of the Catholic Church Extension Society as well as other priests and friends.

Correspondence of Note

The correspondence contained in this series often includes information on the operations, politics, and culture of the Catholic Church Extension Society's chapel car missions; World War I; a devastating flu epidemic; and industrial depression in areas visited. The following correspondence is of particular note:

June 27, 1912 - List of car equipment for the chapel car "St. Peter" from Barney & Smith Car Company.

January 30, 1913 - Copy of letter to Oregon Short Line Railroad expressing thanks for services and importance of missions.

June 6, 1913 - Letter from Pastor Rompe, Nezperce, Idaho, requesting and questioning purpose of chapel car.

September 5, 1913 - Itinerary for chapel car "St. Peter" Chicago to Helena, MO.

October 24, 1914 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina mentioning war in Europe.

November 12, 1914 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina discussing salaries for chapel car chaplains.

November 21, 1914 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina noting donation of new chapel car "St. Paul."

September 23 - October 19, 1915 - Series of letters covering a range of topics including fire damage to the "St. Anthony" and the Panama Exhibition in San Francisco.

February 12, 1916 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina discussing "poison plot" at CCES dinner in Chicago.

June 24, 1918 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina describing train wreck in Texas.

August 17, 1918 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina regarding "embargo" on rail service imposed by the Federal Railroad Administration.

December, 1918 - Letters mentioning effects of flu outbreak.

February 2 - April 29, 1919 - Letters to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina regarding tentative status of chapel car program.

July 27, 1920 - Letter to G. Hennessey regarding conflicts with fall harvest.

October 22, 1920 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father Ledvina regarding imminent "amalgamation" of catholic charity organizations.

January 3, 1921 - Itinerary for "St. Peter" on Southern Pacific Railroad.

June 17, 1921 - Letter to G. Hennessey from Father O'Brien regarding regard for same, status of chapel car service.

June 1, 1922 - Correspondence from Great Northern Railway regarding free transport of chapel car.

Subjects:

Catholic Church Extension Society

Hennessey, George

Chapel Cars

Missions

Railroads

World War I

Federal Railroad Administration

Spanish Influenza epidemic

O'Brien, William D.

Kelley, Francis C.

Ledvina, E. B.

Oregon

United States Railroad Administration

Christie, A.

Accession No.: UA1980.34

Creator: Catholic Church Extension Society (1906-)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1	Correspondence	Sept. 3, 1911
1	2	Correspondence	Feb. 12 – Dec. 31, 1912
1	3	Correspondence	Jan. 2 – Apr. 30, 1913
1	4	Correspondence	May 1 – Dec. 19, 1913
1	5	Correspondence	Jan. 12 – Jul. 31, 1914
1	6	Correspondence	Aug. 1 – Dec. 31, 1914
1	7	Correspondence	Feb. 13 – Aug. 31, 1914
1	8	Correspondence	Sept. 2 – Dec. 27, 1915
2	1	Correspondence	Jan. 3 – Jun. 29, 1916
2	2	Correspondence	Jul. 6 – Dec. 30, 1916
2	3	Correspondence	Jan. 3 – Dec. 31, 1917
2	4	Correspondence	Jan. 3 – May 17, 1918
2	5	Correspondence	Jun. 1 – Dec. 30, 1918
2	6	Correspondence	Jan. 6 – Dec. 16, 1919
2	7	Correspondence	Jan. 4 – Dec. 20, 1920
2	8	Correspondence	Jan. 3 – Dec. 12, 1921
3	1	Correspondence	Jan. 3 – Dec. 26, 1922
3	2	Correspondence	Jan. 5 – May 6, 1923
3	3	Correspondence	n.d.
3	4	Correspondence: W. Cartwright	n.d.
3	5	Correspondence: Austin Fleming	n.d.
3	6	Correspondence: William Hampson	n.d.
3	7	Correspondence: William D. O'Brien	n.d.
3	8	Correspondence: Rev. Father Vollebright	n.d.
3	9	Correspondence: J. Wagner	n.d.
3	10	Amount raised by Archdiocese	1910
3	11	Cleveland, Tenn. Mission Church	1914, n.d.
3	12	Chapel Car "St. Paul" reports	1916
3	13	Chapel Car "St. Peter" reports	1916-1917
3	14	List of Attendees	n.d.
3	15	List of 1 st Communion Children	n.d.
3	16	Short History of St. Paul's Church, Silverton, OR	n.d.
3	17	"Converts in Wood"	n.d.
3	18	Guest, Edgar A. "On Going Home For Christmas"	n.d.
3	19	Articles	n.d.
3	20	32 Volt Storage Battery System Operating Directions	n.d.