



BHC-MSS 0046  
Guide to the Papers of Ethan Ferris Bishop  
By Meg Rinn, 2019

**Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Bishop, Ethan Ferris

**Title:** Papers of Ethan Ferris Bishop

**Dates:** 1851-1864

**Quantity:** 7 manuscript boxes

**Abstract:** The papers of Ethan Ferris Bishop (1825-1883) are primarily letter books that relate to the business and personal life of Ethan Ferris Bishop. Later a minister in the Episcopal Church (ordained 1863), Bishop heavily invested in railroads, as did other men in his family. That investment is reflected heavily in the papers, as is the impact of the Civil War upon commerce and railroads – especially those out west along the American frontier.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

**Note:** Biographical history was written by archivist David Palmquist upon the acquisition of the Ethan Ferris Bishop papers in 1976. It has been lightly edited for clarity.

**Biographical History**

Reverend Ethan Ferris Bishop was born in Madison, NJ on March 27, 1825. He graduated Yale College, and was ordained an Episcopal minister. With his own funds, he built the Church of the Nativity (Episcopal) in North Bridgeport at Sylvan Avenue and Carlson Street. This monastery-style Gothic structure was later sold to the Ukrainians Orthodox Church and was torn down to make way for route 25 in 1968. Bishop served at the Church's rector and ran a boy's school there.

Ethan's father, Alfred, and brother, William Darius, were involved in the railroad business with the former a founder of the New Haven Division of the Penn Central Railroad. Ethan Ferris Bishop served as president of the Naugatuck Railroad from 1851-1855 and president of the Bridgeport Steamboat Company. After 1855, Ethan Ferris Bishop held interest in Western railroads, chiefly the Milwaukee and Chicago, Milwaukee and Watertown, and the Dubuque and Sioux City.

In 181, Bishop was admitted to the bar, but he never practiced law. He had a more natural interest in theology, and after his ordination in 1863, Bishop represented the Anglo-Catholic or "high church" movement with the Episcopal Church.

Bishop married Miss Georgianna Moody in 1847. They had 11 children. Bishop died in Bridgeport on December 7, 1883.

**Scope and Content note:**

The papers of Ethan Ferris Bishop contain letters sent and received, invoices, and account information for 1851-1864. Bishop had a variety of business interests, which are reflected in the

papers, but there is a great focus on railroad history due to his family's investments and how business was conducted during the Civil War. As a great number of Bishop's investments were in western railroads, this is a particularly rich source for examining the war's impact on the fringes of the American frontier.

Most of the letter books are in fact letters that have been pasted into the spines of various bindings. As a result, early acquisition notes refers to these things as "binders", which is not inaccurate, as the inconsistent shape of the letter books creates uneven and overstuffed triangle shaped binders.

There is no particular division between personal accounts, business ones, and specific individuals. As a result, researchers will need to examine the material on an item level.

**Arrangement note:** Arranged chronologically.

**Administrative information:**

**Provenance:** The papers were kept in Bishop's home at Fairfield Avenue and Courtland Street when they were sold at a house sale into private hands. The Bridgeport History Center acquired the papers through purchase in 1976. Accession #1976.28.

**Restrictions**

Due to the nature of how the letters are bound together, the Ethan Ferris Bishop Papers are stored flat with additional supports in each box. When working with the material, supports are required. The archivist will place the letter books back into their boxes.

**Preferred Citation:**

Papers of Ethan Ferris Bishop (BHC-MSS 0046), Bridgeport History Center.

**Names and Subject Tracings**

*Personal names*

Bishop, Ethan Ferris.

*Corporate names*

Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad Company  
Milwaukee & Watertown Railroad Company  
Naugatuck Railroad

*Subject tracings*

Bridgeport, Conn.  
Episcopal Church.  
Railroads.

**Detailed box and folder listing**

Box 1

1. Letters sent, 1851-1855
2. Letters sent, January-September 1854
3. Letter copy press book, 1854
4. Index to letters received, 1857-1858
5. Loose correspondence, 1850s-1860s

Box 2

1. Letter book, 1853-1857

Box 3

1. Letter book, 1857-1858

Box 4

1. Letter book, 1859

Box 5

1. Letter book, January-May 1860
2. Letter book, May-November 1860

Box 6

1. Letter book, January-June 1861
2. Letter book, July-December 1861

Box 7

1. Letter book, January-November 1862
2. Letter book, December 1862-1863

Box 8

1. Letter book, 1860, 1863-1864
2. Invoices, 1859-1862

Box 9

1. Invoices, 1859-1862
2. Invoices, 1862-1864