

ArMs 1977.326, 1985.010
16 Boxes
(8 cubic feet in 16 legal ms boxes)
4C-5.4.E
RLIN No. (NIC) NYKI590-940-0197

John Howard Melish,
William Howard Melish, and
Protestant Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity
(Brooklyn, NY) Collection
1904–1985
Bulk dates: 1947–1958

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May 2006
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May 2006

Introduction

The Rev. John Howard Melish (1874–1969) was pastor at the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity, Brooklyn, New York, 1904–1949, while his son, the Rev. William Howard Melish (1910–1986), was associate rector at the same church from 1938 to 1957. The bulk of this collection covers 1947–1958, a period of time during which the two clergymen, with the support of parish congregants, struggled to remain attached to the Church of the Holy Trinity despite efforts by the church vestry and the Episcopal Bishop of Long Island to remove them.

The Church of the Holy Trinity, now known as the Church of Saint Ann's and the Holy Trinity, is located in downtown Brooklyn at 157 Montague St., Brooklyn, NY, 11201. It is well known in architectural circles for its gothic revival style and stained glass windows by William Jay Bolton, thought to be the earliest stained glass windows in the United States, c. 1822.

Provenance

John V. Mason, the nephew of Ms. Anna May Mason (1876–1969) and the executor of her estate, donated to the Brooklyn Historical Society in 1969 a collection of materials that included Church of the Holy Trinity Materials, Trinity House Materials, Anna May Mason Materials, and various newspaper clippings, publications, and legal papers. Anna May Mason was a Holy Trinity congregant and partisan of Melish father and son. At the time of donation, Mason requested that “any of the records of a non-public nature (personal correspondence, etc.) not be made available to the public until the year 2000.” (Accession No. 1977.326)

Accession No. 1985.010 consists of materials received from William Howard Melish in 1983, Francis H. Touchet in 1985, and Mary Jane Melish (1913–1999) in 1987. The material from William Howard Melish includes newspaper clippings, notes, etc. contained in Series 5, as well as publications, correspondence, and the obituary of John Howard Melish. Francis H. Touchet donated his doctoral research materials on “the Melish Case,” which consisted of materials in Series 6 and some correspondence and publications. Mary Jane Melish was responsible for the reel-to-reel tapes in Series 3: “Melish Family Materials” with a few publications. This collection contains very few original papers belonging to John or William Howard Melish, from which it is surmised that there may be more materials relevant to this collection elsewhere.

Biographical Note

John Howard Melish was born in Milford, Ohio in 1874; attended the University of Cincinnati, Harvard Divinity School, and the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass.; became associate rector of Christ Church in Cincinnati in 1900; and came to Brooklyn to serve as the rector for the Church of the Holy Trinity in 1904. In 1915–16, he gained some fame within the church for his efforts to give women the right to vote in the annual parish meetings of the Episcopal Church. He was also a fraternal delegate to the Central Trades Labor Council of Greater New York and Chairman of the Brooklyn Committee for Better Housing.

His son, William Howard Melish, was born in Brooklyn in 1910; attended Harvard, Union Theological Seminary, Jesus College at Cambridge University, and the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass.; began his ministry at Christ Church in Cincinnati in 1935, and joined his father as assistant rector at the Church of the Holy Trinity in 1938. At various times he served as the Chairman

of the Cincinnati Forum Committee, Vice-President of the Kings County American Labor Party, and Chairman of the National Council for Soviet-American Friendship. It was this last position in particular that led to the famed "Melish Controversy."

The Attorney General of the United States in 1948 labeled the "National Council for Soviet-American Friendship" a subversive organization. Soon after, "the vestry sought to persuade the elder Melish to dismiss his son from the position of associate minister because they considered "that certain outside activities of the Assistant Rector were most detrimental to the interests of Holy Trinity Church." The elder Melish declined, and the vestry attempted to remove them both. The ensuing battle involved the parishioners of Holy Trinity church, Bishop James Pernette DeWolfe, the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Long Island, and wound up going to the New York Supreme Court twice in the course of the ensuing decade. Increasing conflict between the bishop's new rector and some parishioners brought about the closing of the church in 1957, by order of the Bishop.

After a few years spent in an effort to re-open Holy Trinity, William Howard Melish was called to be the rector of Grace Church, in Corona, Queens. Holy Trinity was eventually re-opened by the congregation of St. Ann's, and was henceforth known as the Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity. John Howard Melish lived in the rectory of Holy Trinity Church until his death in 1969.

A portion of the material came from Anna May Mason, who was a longtime, heavily involved parishioner in the Church of the Holy Trinity. She was born in 1876 and baptized in Holy Trinity, and when she died in 1969, her funeral was held in the Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity. During the period of the Melish Controversy, she was the most senior member of the parish.

Scope and Content

This collection covers the years 1904 to 1985. A few twentieth-century copies of materials concerning the origins of the Church of the Holy Trinity in 1847 are included. The collection really begins at 1904, at which time the Rev. John Howard Melish came to Brooklyn as pastor. The collection is also quite sparse after 1969, the year the Rev. John Howard Melish died. The bulk of the material is newspaper clippings, but also includes correspondence, publications, legal records, photographs, notes, ephemera, financial records, and minutes of meetings. It centers on the decade from 1948–1958, the period of the "Melish Case."

The collection consists of sixteen boxes, equal to 8 cubic feet of material. It is arranged into nine series, beginning with background on the Church of the Holy Trinity and the Trinity House in Series 1 and 2, then materials from the Melish Family in Series 3 and materials in Series 4 from Anna May Mason, the elderly parishioner of Holy Trinity who stood by the Melishes throughout the controversy. Series 5–7 contains chiefly newspaper clippings from William Howard Melish, Francis H. Touchet, and Anna May Mason, respectively, and make up the bulk of the material in the collection. Series 8 consists of various publications and Series 9 contains the court records from the Melish Case.

Series 1, Church of the Holy Trinity Materials, 1933–1957, contains a small amount of architectural information, fundraising pamphlets, and financial records on the Church of the Holy Trinity, most of which is from Accession No. 1977.326.

Series 2, Trinity House Records, 1950–1959, contains materials on Trinity House, which was a “non-sectarian, co-ed residence club located at 124 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY.” Anna May Mason was Chairman of the Trinity House Committee from 1950–1959.

Series 3, Melish Family Materials, *ca.* 1950s–1969, contains materials that give some background on the Melish Family, including various correspondence, photographs, obituaries, and a reel-to-reel audio tape recording of a memorial service Wm. Howard Melish gave for Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois in 1963.

Series 4, Anna May Mason Materials, 1947–1969, contains materials from Anna May Mason that give more background on the Melish Case, including correspondence, a scrapbook, a photo, and ephemera. It also includes the records of a committee, of which Anna May Mason was a leading member, known alternately as the Committee to Retain Our Rector, the Parishioners’ Committee for Holy Trinity, and the Defense Committee.

Series 5, William Howard Melish Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes, 1939–1958, contains materials from scrapbooks of William Howard Melish. The newspaper clippings come from such sources as the *New York Times*, the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and the *Daily News*. These clippings, while not original, are a thorough collection of research material. In 1952 Melish began to combine notes, programs, correspondence, and ephemera with the clippings. The original order, with materials filed together chronologically, gives context to the notes and correspondence and greater meaning to the newspaper clippings. They were therefore placed more forward in the collection than they would be otherwise. Photocopies are included for many of the clippings in this series. Sometimes two sets of photocopies have been made, marked “BHS Copies” and “Melish Copies.” Photocopies should be consulted where available to minimize wear and tear on the originals.

Series 6, Francis H. Touchet Clippings, Ephemera, Notes, 1904–1980, contains materials from the research of Francis H. Touchet, kept in the order in which he organized it. Most of the series is newspaper clippings, many of which are duplicates of clippings found in Series 5. The folder that covers the year 1955, which contains only a small number of clippings, includes a few programs from Holy Trinity, an issue of *Parish News*, and the minutes from a meeting of the vestry. The last folder of the series contains clippings, programs, and charts laid out for inclusion in the appendix of *The Social Gospel and the Cold War: A History of the Melish Case*, Touchet’s doctoral thesis, as well as some handwritten notes. It also includes twentieth-century copies of records from the opening of the Church of the Holy Trinity in 1847. Photocopies should be consulted where available.

Series 7, Anna May Mason Clippings, 1947–1969, contains newspaper clippings from the Anna May Mason materials. All of these are photocopies of articles, the originals of which are not in the collection.

Series 8, Publications, 1913–1985, contains various publications. The first folder in the series contains a few pamphlets authored by John Howard Melish. The next few folders contain pamphlets and sermons authored by William Howard Melish. Some miscellaneous publications follow, which include *Father and Son*, a pamphlet written by Arthur Miller in support of the Melishes. Next in the series is a folder of press releases from the years of the Melish Case. Next is a run of *Parish News* from 1946–1959, and *The Churchman* from 1948–1963. Finally, a few copies of *The Witness* are included.

Series 9, Court Records, 1949–1979, contains court records from the Melish Case. Some records from Touchet’s research, including a letter to a judge who was involved in the case and some handwritten

notes from an interview, are in this series. Court briefs from the first court actions, in 1949–1950, and the second, in 1956–1959, are also included.

Processing Note

This collection was initially organized and described in 1985 and 1987, and consisted of materials received between 1983 and 1987. The materials from the estate of Anna May Mason, accessioned in 1977 and originally titled the Church of the Holy Trinity Records, were released from restriction and incorporated in the spring of 2006. The full collection was processed at that time by Gabriel Farrell, an intern at the Brooklyn Historical Society in the Pratt GATEWAY program. Dr. Pettit edited the text, May, 2006. Minor editing to the finding aid was done in November 2008 by Chela Scott Weber, BHS Archivist.

Related Material

The Social Gospel and the Cold War: A History of the Melish Case, Doctoral Thesis of Francis Henry Touchet, 1981. Library of Congress Classification: BX5995 .M44. A copy of this thesis is kept in the library at the Brooklyn Historical Society.

Wolcott Cutler Papers at Harvard Divinity School
Includes articles and clippings about the Melish Case.

National Council of American Soviet Friendship Records 1919-1990 at New York University's Tamiment Library
<http://dlib.nyu.edu:8083/tamwagead/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=ncasf.xml&style=saxon01tw2002.xsl>

Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers at Harvard University
<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:RAD.SCHL:sch00211>
Includes correspondence with William Howard Melish.

Mary Elisabeth Dreier Papers at Harvard University
<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:RAD.SCHL:sch00136>
Includes correspondence with William Howard Melish.

International Labor Defense Correspondence with Wanda Gág at the University of Pennsylvania
Includes correspondence with William Howard Melish.

Photographs and postcards of the Melish family and the Church of the Holy Trinity in the image collection at the Brooklyn Historical Society, Accession Number V1997.22

Records of the Protestant Episcopal Church Diocese of Long Island at the Brooklyn Historical Society (unprocessed collection)

Subject Headings

Melish, John Howard, 1874–1951
 Melish, William Howard, 1910–1986
 Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963
 Miller, Arthur, 1915-2005
 White, Bouck, b. 1874
 Church of the Holy Trinity (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
 Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
 Church controversies.
 Anti-communist movements--United States--History.
 City clergy.
 Episcopalians--United States.

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Accession</u>
Series 1: Church of the Holy Trinity Materials, 1933–1957			
1	1 Architectural Information	1933–1955	1977.326
	2 Centennial	1947	1977.326
	3 Finances	1950–1955	1977.326
	4 Fundraising	1948–1957	1977.326
	5 Programs	1950, 1955, and undated	1977.326
	6 Inventory of the Church Archives of NYC—Protestant Episcopal Church Diocese of Long Island—Reference Collection	1940	1985.010
		Note: Separated, June 6 2006, to Archives	
Series 2: Trinity House Records, 1950–1959			
	1 Correspondence	1950–1959	1977.326
	2 Finance	1950–1959	1977.326
	3 General	1950–1956	1977.326
	4 Minutes	1951–1959	1977.326
Series 3: Melish Family Materials, ca. 1950s–1969			
	1 William Howard Melish Correspondence	1982–1985	1985.010
	2 Francis H. Touchet Correspondence	1955–1984	1985.010
	3 Correspondence concerning Bouck White	1965–1966	1985.010

4	Includes photographs of Bouck White Photographs (Photocopies)	ca. 1950s	1985.010
5	John Howard Melish Obituaries	1969	1985.010
6	Reel-to-reel tape recordings—Memorial service at Achimota for the late Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois	1963	1985.010

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Accession</u>
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Series 4: Anna May Mason Materials, 1947–1969

2	1	Ephemera Includes member lists, correspondence	1948–1958	1977.326
	2	Scrapbook Includes clippings, letters to the congregation, event announcements	1948–1951	1977.326
	3	Correspondence with John Howard Melish	1941–1960	1977.326
	4	Correspondence with William Howard Melish	1951–1963	1977.326
	5	Incoming Correspondence	1948–1961	1977.326
	6	Outgoing Correspondence	1947–1959	1977.326
	7	Photograph of John and William Howard Melish, Anna May Mason Obituary	ca. 1940, 1969	1977.326
	8	Defense Committee Records	1949–1960	1977.326
	9	Diocese Hearing Transcription	1949	1977.326

Series 5: William Howard Melish Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes, 1939–1958

	1	Clippings (Originals)	1935–1946	1985.010
	2	Clippings (BHS copies)	1935–1946	1985.010
	3	Clippings (Melish copies)	1935–1946	1985.010
3	4	Clippings (Originals)	1947, Jan.–Jun.	1985.010
	5	Clippings (BHS copies)	1947, Jan.–Jun.	1985.010
	6	Clippings (Melish copies)	1947, Jan.–Jun.	1985.010
	7	Clippings (Originals)	1947, Oct.–Dec.	1985.010
	8	Clippings (BHS copies)	1947, Oct.–Dec.	1985.010
	9	Clippings (Melish copies)	1947, Oct.–Dec.	1985.010
	10	Clippings (Originals)	1948, Jan.–May.	1985.010

4	11	Clippings (Originals)	1948, Jun.–Dec.	1985.010
	12	Clippings, Correspondence (Originals) Includes Pastoral Letter from Pernette DeWolfe	1949, Jan. 6–Mar. 14	1985.010
	13	Clippings, Correspondence (BHS copies) Includes Pastoral Letter from Pernette DeWolfe	1949, Jan. 6–Mar. 14	1985.010
	14	Clippings (Originals)	1949, Mar. 14–Apr. 29	1985.010
<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Accession</u>
4	15	Clippings (BHS copies)	1949, Mar. 14–Apr. 29	1985.010
	16	Clippings (Originals)	1949, May 1–Dec. 8	1985.010
5	17	Clippings (BHS copies)	1949, May 1–Dec. 8	1985.010
	18	Clippings (Originals)	1950, Jan. 1–Mar. 31	1985.010
	19	Clippings (BHS copies)	1950, Jan. 1–Mar. 31	1985.010
	20	Clippings (Melish copies)	1950, Jan. 1–Mar. 31	1985.010
	21	Clippings (Originals)	1950, Apr. 1–May 31	1985.010
	22	Clippings (BHS copies)	1950, Apr. 1–May 31	1985.010
	23	Clippings (Melish copies)	1950, Apr. 1–May 31	1985.010
	24	Clippings (Originals)	1950, Jun. 1–Dec. 30	1985.010
	25	Clippings (BHS copies)	1950, Jun. 1–Dec. 30	1985.010
	26	Clippings (Melish copies)	1950, Jun. 1–Dec. 30	1985.010
6	27	Clippings (Originals)	1951, Jan. 12–May 22	1985.010
	28	Clippings (Copies)	1951, Jan. 12–May 22	1985.010
	29	Clippings (Originals)	1951, Sep. 21–Dec. 30	1985.010
	30	Clippings (Copies)	1951, Sep. 21–Dec. 30	1985.010
	31	Clippings and Ephemera	1952	1985.010
	32	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence	1953	1985.010
	33	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes	1954	1985.010
7	34	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes	1956, Jan.–Feb.	1985.010
	35	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes	1956, Mar.–Dec.	1985.010

	36	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes	1957, Jan.–Jul.	1985.010
8	37	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes	1957, Aug.–Dec.	1985.010
	38	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes (Originals)	1958, Jan.–Jul.	1985.010
	39	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes (Copies)	1958, Jan. 5–Apr. 30	1985.010
	40	Clippings, Ephemera, Correspondence, Notes (Copies)	1958, May 1–Jul.	1985.010

Series 6: Francis H. Touchet Clippings, Ephemera, Notes, 1904–1980

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Accession</u>
9	1	Clippings (Originals)	1904–1938	1985.010
	2	Clippings (BHS Copies)	1904–1938	1985.010
	3	Clippings (Melish Copies)	1904–1938	1985.010
	4	Clippings	1939–1945	1985.010
	5	Clippings	1946	1985.010
	6	Clippings	1947, Jan.–Jun.	1985.010
10	7	Clippings	1947, Jul.–Dec.	1985.010
	8	Clippings	1948	1985.010
	9	Clippings	1949, Jan.–Feb. 28	1985.010
	10	Clippings	1949, Mar. 1–Mar. 30	1985.010
	11	Clippings	1949, Apr. 1–Apr. 24	1985.010
11	12	Clippings	1949, Apr. 25–Nov. 27	1985.010
	13	Clippings	1950, Jan. 1–Jun. 15	1985.010
	14	Clippings	1950, Jul. 1–Dec. 29	1985.010
	15	Clippings (Originals)	1951, Jan. 4–May 23	1985.010
	16	Clippings (Copies)	1951, Jan. 4–May 23	1985.010
	17	Clippings (Duplicates)	1951	1985.010
	18	Clippings	1952, Jan. 4–Oct. 16	1985.010
	19	Clippings	1953, Jan. 1–Nov. 19	1985.010

12	20	Clippings	1954, Jan. 17–Oct. 4	1985.010
	21	Clippings and Ephemera Includes program, church meeting minutes	1955	1985.010
	22	Clippings	1956, Jan. 9–Jan. 30	1985.010
	23	Clippings	1956, Feb. 1–Mar. 30	1985.010
	24	Clippings	1956, Apr. 1–Dec. 24	1985.010

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Accession</u>
12	25	Clippings	1957, Jan.–Jun. 28	1985.010
	26	Clippings	1957, Jul. 1–Jul. 14	1985.010
13	27	Clippings	1957, Jul. 15–Jul. 31	1985.010
	28	Clippings	1957, Aug. 1–Aug. 31	1985.010
	29	Clippings	1957, Sep. 1–Dec.	1985.010
	30	Clippings	1960–1965	1985.010
	31	Dissertation Research (Clippings, pamphlets, programs, charts, notes), includes copies of records of church from 1847	1906–1980	1985.010

Series 7: Anna May Mason Clippings, 1947–1969

14	1	Clippings	1947–1949	1977.326
	2	Clippings	1950–1955	1977.326
	3	Clippings	1956–1960	1977.326
	4	Clippings	1961–1962, 1969	1977.326

Series 8: Publications, 1913–1985

1	John Howard Melish Publications	1913, 1941–1942, 1946, 1954	1985.010
2	William Howard Melish Sermons and Speeches	1947, 1955, 1963, 1980–1985	1985.010
3	“Melish Case: Challenge to the Church,” edited by W. H. Melish, and Melish’s explanatory notes on various pamphlets	ca. 1949, 1985	1985.010
4	“The Story of a Congregation,” edited by W. H. Melish	ca. 1950	1985.010
5	Miscellaneous Publications	1949–1959	1985.010
6	Press Releases	1947–1961	1985.010

	7	<i>The Parish News</i>	1946–1956	1977.326
15	8	<i>The Parish News</i>	1957	1977.326
	9	<i>The Parish News</i>	1958–1959	1977.326
	10	<i>The Churchman</i>	1948–1957	1977.326
	11	<i>The Churchman</i>	1958–1963	1977.326
	12	<i>The Witness</i>	1950, 1955	1977.326

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Accession</u>
Series 9: Court Records, 1949–1979				
15	1	Court Records, Notes by Francis H. Touchet Includes chronology of newspaper stories, 1949–1956	1949–1979	1985.010
	2	Legal Papers of the Defense Committee	1949–1956	1977.326
	3	Court Records	1949–1950	1985.010
16	4	Court Records	1956–1959	1985.010
	5	Record on Appeal	1949	1985.010
	6	Record on Appeal (Duplicate)	1949	1985.010