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Guide to the George Gordon Coulton Papers 1875-1941



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.COULTON
Title	Coulton, George Gordon. Papers
Date	1875-1941
Size	19.5 linear feet (38 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	G. G. (George Gordon) Coulton (1858-1957), Professor of Medieval History. The collection includes correspondence, photographs, notes and writings documenting Coulton's scholarship and his advocacy of compulsory national service.

Information on Use

Access

Open for research. No restrictions.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Coulton, George Gordon. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

G. G. (George Gordon) Coulton, Historian, was born in King's Lynn, Norfolk, England in 1858. He was educated at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge. Although ordained as a deacon in the Church of England in 1883, Coulton served only briefly before spiritual doubts led him to resign his curacy in 1885. For the next decades, he held a series of teaching and tutoring positions and studied and wrote extensively in medieval history.

In 1911, Coulton was named Birkbeck Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History at Trinity College, Cambridge, and in 1919, he became a Lecturer in English and a Fellow St. John's College. He retired from his faculty position in 1934, and devoted himself to research and writing. He spent the majority of the war years (1940-1944) in Canada, as a guest lecturer at the University of Toronto. Coulton married Rose Dorothy Ilbert in 1904; they had two daughters. He died in Cambridge in 1947.

As an historian, Coulton was most noted for his attention to primary sources, particularly those illuminating religious, social and economic topics, and the controversy generated by his disputes with mostly Roman Catholic scholars. Among his published works are the anthologies of medieval sources *A Medieval Garner*, 1910 and *Social Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation*, 1918, monographs, including *The Medieval Village*, 1925; *Art and the Reformation*, 1928; *Inquisition and Liberty*, 1938 and *Medieval Panorama*, 1938 and the four-volume work *Five Centuries of Religion*, 1923-1950.

In addition to his scholarship, Coulton was a strong advocate for compulsory military service and an active member of the National Service League. He wrote and spoke publicly on the subject, particularly in the first two decades of the 20th century.

Scope Note

The Coulton papers have been divided into six series.

Series I: Correspondence and Personal, contains mostly correspondence received by Coulton from 1905 to 1939. Some copies or drafts of outgoing letters are included. Most of the correspondence concerns Coulton's scholarship and his advocacy of compulsory national service; little personal material is included. Among Coulton's major correspondents are fellow historians James Gairdner, H. G. Richardson and H. P. Stokes, and Reginald L. Poole, editor of the *English Historical Review*. The correspondence with Poole includes Coulton's essay "A Point of Monastic Costume and Discipline," on codpieces in monastic dress, which Poole declined to publish.

Series I also includes several files of unidentified and undated photographs. The photos appear to be snapshots taken on travels through towns and countryside in Britain, Switzerland and Germany, in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Many of the photos are likely to have been taken in Stein am Rhein, Switzerland. A small group of photos are identified as having been taken at Coulton's family home, Pentney, Norfolk, in 1901.

Series II: War and National Service, contains Coulton's notes from his readings and writings about compulsory military service, pamphlets he collected on the subject during the first World War, and annotated proofs of his book *The Case for Compulsory Military Service*, 1917.

Series III: Writings by Others, contains two MA theses on late medieval and early modern English nunneries by British women historians. Particularly notable is *Some Chapters in the History of English Nunneries in the Later Middle Ages, (c. 1250-1535)*, University of London, 1916, by Eileen E. Power, a prominent economic historian and pioneer in the study of medieval women's history.

Series IV: Writings and Notes contains notes and transcriptions on a variety of subjects, particularly monasticism, usury and the 13th century Italian chronicler Salimbene. Also included are annotated proofs of Coulton's *Christ, Saint Francis and Today*, 1918. The material in Series IV is similar to that in Series VI, but does not form part of Coulton's designated series of "British Museum Notebooks."

Series V and VI contain the volumes Coulton called his "British Museum Notebooks." Originally comprising "extracts and notes made when [Coulton] could manage to get to the British Museum," the scope of the notebooks expanded to include notes, transcriptions of articles and historic documents, clippings, and a small amount of correspondence relating to Coulton's widespread scholarly and civic interests. While the majority of the volumes focus on medieval social, economic and religious history, the notebooks also demonstrate the degree to which Coulton's historical studies were matched by an interest in the role of religion in contemporary life. Notebook 53, for example, is a scrapbook of clippings of a 1901 debate carried on among Coulton and others in the pages of the *New Statesman*, on the relative "morality," as defined by the rate of illegitimate birth, of Protestant and Catholic regions. The notebooks in Series VI are numbered from one to 271. Volumes 24, 38, 150, 180 and 269 are not included in the collection.

Series V contains indexes to the British Museum notebooks. The most complete are Index A, by author and title, and Index B, a subject index. Index B also includes various other sources, not in the notebooks, which are listed in the beginning of the book. The other notebooks and note cards in the series are less complete; several appear to be early drafts superseded by Indexes A and B.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Subject Headings

- Coulton, G. G. (George Gordon), 1858-1947
- Power, Eileen Edna, 1889-1940
- Middle Ages -- History
- National Service -- Great Britain

INVENTORY

Series I: Correspondence and Personal

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Correspondence A-B, 1875, 1905-1939

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Correspondence C, 1909-1911

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Photographs, undated

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Photographs, Pentney, ca. 1901

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Series II: War and National Service

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Notes

Box 2

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Notebook, "War and Education"

Box 2

Folder 3

Notebook, notes and transcriptions of scholarship on war and service in world history

Box 2

Folder 4

Pamphlets

- G. G. Coulton, "Our National Army. A Question for the People," 1900
- National Service League, "A Speakers' Handbook," 1914
- Socialist Labour Party, "Compulsory Military Service. Should the Working Class Support It?" undated
- Charles Roden Buxton, "A Practical, Permanent, and Honourable Settlement of the War," 1916

Box 2

Folder 5

Pamphlets and notes

- Union of Democratic Control, "The Peace Debate in the House of Commons (May 23, 1916)
- Arthur Ponsonby, "Why Must the War Go On?" undated
- Charles Trevelyan, "The Case for Negotiation," 1916
- Charles Roden Buxton, "Peace this Winter: A Reply to Mr. Lloyd George," undated
- Union of Democratic Control, "The Morrow of the War," undated
- Union of Democratic Control, "The Union of Democratic Control: Its Motives, Object and Policy," 1916
- Norman Angell, "The Prussian in Our Midst," undated
- Union of Democratic Control, "The Attack upon Freedom of Speech: The Broken-Up Meeting at the Memorial Hall, 29th November, 1915"
- Norman Angell, "Shall this War End German Militarism," undated
- Norman Angell, "American and the Cause of the Allies," 1916
- New Statesman, "An Allied Peace: Being an Unofficial Forecast of the Terms of Peace," 1916

- J. Ramsay MacDonald, "War and the Workers: A Plea for Democratic Control," undated

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Folder 6

G. G. Coulton, The Case for Compulsory Military Service, annotated proofs, 1917

Series III: Writings by Others

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Folder 1

H. T. Jacka, The Dissolution of the English Nunneries, MA Thesis, University of London, typescript, 1917

Box 3

Folder 2

E. E. Power, Some Chapters in the History of English Nunneries in the Later Middle Ages, (c. 1250-1535), MA Thesis, University of London, typescript, 1916

Series IV: Writings and Notes

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Folder 1-10

Monasticism, notes, transcriptions and correspondence, ca. 1930-1940

Box 4

Folder 11

Usury, notes, transcriptions and correspondence, ca. 1927

Box 5

Folder 1

Skeat's Piers Ploughman B-Text (EETS, 1869), heavily annotated

Box 5

Folder 2

Notes and "From St. Francis to Dante: Translations from the Chronicle of the Franciscan Salimbene," chapters 26-end, typescript, circa 1905

Box 5

Folder 3

"Salimbene Index," notebook

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"Salimbene Additions, Vol II," notebook

Box 5

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"Christ, St Francis and Today," annotated proofs, 1918

Series V: Indexes

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Notecards

Box 6

Folder 6

Index A, Author-Title Index to British Museum notebooks

Box 7

Index B, the most complete subject index of the British Museum notebooks and of other works indicated.

Box 8

Folder 1

Index C, partial index to British Museum notebooks and other texts

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Index F, partial index to British Museum notebooks and other texts

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Index G, partial index to British Museum notebooks and other texts

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Index H, partial index to British Museum notebooks and other texts

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Folder 5

Indexes to British Museum notebooks and other texts

- Index I
- Index to multiple works
- Unidentified index

Series VI: British Museum Notebooks

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