

McLean County Museum of History

Julia Palmer Stevens Collection

Processed by  
JoAnna Mink  
Winter 2021

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	c.1870-1909
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	

Brief History

Julia Parnelle Palmer Stevens was born January 3, 1835, in Madison County, Illinois, the daughter of Louis Palmer. She died on September 9, 1909, having been an invalid for several years. Her siblings include brothers Quiney Palmer and Henry Palmer, who was a missionary physician in India. Her half-brother General John M. Palmer attained great renown as a soldier, governor, senator, and candidate for President of the United States.

After her mother's death when Julia was quite young, the family home was broken up and Julia lived with relatives. During that time, she developed a great passion for study. She mastered seven foreign languages and made translations from French and other languages. Even during the day before her death, she worked on a translation from a French work about the Buddhist Nirvana. Julia Palmer Stevens possessed an inquiring mind and was most interested in religious and scientific treatises. She enjoyed a wide range of literary friendships, including a personal friendship with Ralph Waldo Emerson.

After teaching in the schools of Bunker Hill, Julia Palmer joined the faculty of the Illinois Female College in Jacksonville (renamed in 1899 the Illinois Woman's College and in 1930 MacMurray College for Women). She was chair of languages. On August 21, 1877, she married the Reverend George Stevens (1829-1896) and went to live in Carlinville, where he was pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church. After her husband's death in October 1896, Julia Stevens became interested in the Roman Catholic church and was confirmed in that faith a few months before her death. Her funeral was a requiem high mass in Holy Trinity Church on September 11, 1909. Julia and George Stevens are buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Bloomington, Illinois.

Julia Palmer Stevens is described in her obituary as "a woman of remarkable poise and strength of character, always fair and just even with those who disagreed with her. ... [She was] a brilliant personality and a splendid woman." During her residence in Bloomington, she often spoke at the Woman's Club on topics such as allegory, Plato, and Dante.

--Information summarized from "Mrs. Julia Palmer Stevens Dies Suddenly," *Pantagraph*, September 10, 1909.

## Scope

The Julia Palmer Collection consists of a few newspaper clippings, her Songbook, and two books from her husband's library. Materials donated by Mary Ryder, January 2021.

## Inventory

### Folder 1: Newspaper Clippings

- 1.1 "The Plato Symposium," *Pantagraph*, November 8, 1889.
- 1.2 "Plato's Birthday (sort of)," previously published article found <<https://paganreveries.wordpress.com/2012/11/07/>>.
- 1.3 "Mrs. Stevens at Woman's Club," *Pantagraph*, April 25, 1904.
- 1.4 "Mrs. Julia Palmer Stevens Dies Suddenly," *Pantagraph*, September 10, 1909.

### Folder 2: Contents of Songbook

- 2.1 Listing of the 35 songs in the Songbook with publication and other information.
- 2.2 Listing of songs with additional information interspersed.

## Loose

Julia P. Palmer's Song Book. Cover has embossed black boards in fragile condition, pages are brittle and foxed. 10.5" x 13" Front Cover has Julia P. Palmer in gold inside artistic border, also gold.

*Critical Historical, and Miscellaneous Essays and Poems*, by Thomas Babington Macaulay, Vol. II, New York: American Book Exchange, 1880. 814 pp. From the library of Rev. George Stevens.

*Voices of the Day* by the Rev. John Cumming, Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1854. 300 pp.  
Foxed and fragile condition. From the library of Rev. George Stevens.