

Inventory to the  
NATHANIEL H. SHAW COLLECTION

1879 to 1912

AR. 839



Torino Baptist Church in Italy

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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives  
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## **I. Biographical Sketch**

The Reverend Nathaniel H. Shaw of England became a missionary of the General Baptist Missionary Society in 1879 and was sent to Rome, Italy. His appointment, the first of his mission board to Italy, was as a direct result of the weakening of the temporal power of the pope after Vatican I when the pope, in 1870, became a voluntary prisoner in the Vatican, remaining so until his agreement with Mussolini in 1929.

Rev. Shaw was for several years in charge of the Tuscan District and resided in Florence. He felt the work at Florence unusually difficult and included in his report for 1900: "Tuscany, this very hard field, has been specially hard of late. Evangelists of every denomination have felt the work to be more difficult. The cold indifference, if not the silent contempt, and the ingrained unbelief of one class of the population continually recall the words of Macchiavelli, a typical Florentine: 'We Italians owe it to the Church and the priests that we are become bad and without religion.'"

Rev. Shaw was in charge of a church built by the generosity of the founder of Thomas Cook and Son. When General and Particular Baptists in England merged in 1891 the work of the General Baptist Missionary Society and the Baptist Missionary Society (originally known as The Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen) merged as well in Italy. Shaw worked along side of pioneer missionaries to Italy, James Wall, Edward Clarke, John Walker and William K. Landels, of the Baptist Missionary Society and George B. Taylor and David G. Whittinghill of the Southern Baptist Convention and others.

In 1921 when the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States of America assumed, under agreement, the work of the Baptist Missionary Society in Italy, Rev. Shaw and Dr. William K. Landels were retained at the same salary as Baptist career missionaries who came from the United States. For Rev. Shaw this was the second time the missionary organization sponsoring his work merged with another and changed the specific name of Baptists under which he served.

## II. Scope and Contents

The collection consists of eight letter books of general correspondence. The letter books are written in Italian primarily and English and are dated from 1879 to 1912, while he served first with the General Baptist Missionary Society and afterward with the Baptist Missionary Society. Later, after 1921, Shaw served for a time with two other fellow BMS missionaries with the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States. Letter books for the years 1906 and 1907 are missing.

The correspondence concerns the work of a career foreign missionary representing a major evangelical Christian denomination, Baptist, in the city of Rome, home of the Vatican and stronghold of the Catholic Church. Letters relate to the buying and selling of property, disbursing funds and reporting to London, circumstances of the poor citizens of Italy to whom Shaw is ministering and the ever-present troublesome conditions imposed by Catholicism, the state church of Italy.

Names appearing frequently in the correspondence are: Mr. Bembridge, perhaps an officer in the General Baptist Missionary Society; A. H. Baynes, secretary of the British Missionary Society; fellow missionaries Clarke, Landels, John Walker, James Wall, J. Campbell Wall, Whittinghill; Italian associates, Sig. Bertola, Fratello and Galassi; presumed relatives, Rev. J. H. Shaw and H. B. Shaw; Rev. J. W. Kiddle and Rev. Charles Wilson, Mr. Stevenson and Edward Wilson of London.

The Shaw letter books were found in Rome about 1998 by Edie Jeter, archivist for the International Mission Board of Richmond, Virginia and returned to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee for processing and preservation. It was at first thought that the letter books were a part of the larger collection of William Kemme Landels (AR.829). Upon beginning processing of the Landels collection, the Shaw collection was discovered and processed in its own right.

The letter books, each of which contains correspondence for a number of years, are filed chronologically. The index form included in the back of each book was not used except for one book, 1908 – 1910, and there is no alphabetical index of correspondents.

The collection contains 1 ¼ linear feet of materials and additions to the collection are not anticipated. A few handwritten letters of Rev. W. Kemme Landels are contained in back of the last Shaw letter book for 1912. It is believed that when Rev. Landels took charge of the work in Rome in 1912, he used a book that had already been started. Rev. Shaw's last letter is dated May 29, 1912.

### III. Folder Listings

Box 1

- 1.1 Letter Book – 1879 to 1886
- 1.2 Letter Book – 1886 to 1893
- 1.3 Letter Book – 1893 to 1898
- 1.4 Letter Book – 1898 to 1901
- 1.5 Letter Book – 1901 to 1903
- 1.6 Letter Book – 1903 to 1905
- 1.7 Letter Book – 1908 to 1910
- 1.8 Letter Book – 1910 to 1912

### IV. References

#### Books:

Lord, F. Townley, Achievement: a Short History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792 – 1942, London, UK: The Carey Press, 1941.

Myers, John Brown (editor). The Centenary Celebration of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1892 – 3: Reports of the Commemoration Services Held at Nottingham, Leicester, Kettering, London, and Northampton, and List of Contributions to Thanksgiving Fund, London: The Baptist Missionary Society, 1893.

Myers, John Brown (Editor). The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792 – 1892, London: the Baptist Missionary Society, 1892.

Stanley, Brian. The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792 – 1992, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992.

#### Other Resources:

British Missionary Society Records, Microfilm Number 5350, Europe, Italy, roll 90

Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) Correspondence, Everett Gill, Sr. (1904 – 1939), Box 22; George B. Taylor (1873 – 19077), Box 54 and David Gooch Whittinghill, (1901 – 1939), Box 63

Lansdels, William Kemme Collection, AR. 829