



# ArchivesSpace

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## Dorothea Lynde Dix collection, 1848-1974

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Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Maine Women Writers Collection

Abplanalp Library

University of New England

716 Stevens Avenue

Portland, Maine 04103

[mwwc@une.edu](mailto:mwwc@une.edu)

URL: <https://library.une.edu/mwwc/>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Maine Women Writers Collection
<b>Creator:</b>	Dix, Dorothea Lynde, 1802-1887
<b>Title:</b>	Dorothea Lynde Dix collection
<b>ID:</b>	0089
<b>ID [aspace_uri]:</b>	/repositories/3/resources/517
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1848-1998
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 folders
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .

### Preferred Citation

Dorothea Lynde Dix collection, Maine Women Writers Collection, University of New England, Portland, Maine

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## Biographical/Historical Note

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Dorothea Dix was born Dorothy Lynde Dix on April 4, 1802 to Mary Biglow and Joseph Dix in Hampden, Maine. Dix's childhood was an unhappy one, as her father lacked ambition and her grandmother often ridiculed her. The strained relationship between Dix and her grandmother caused Dix to change her name from Dorothy – also her grandmother's name – to Dorothea. At age 10, Dix adopted the Unitarian faith, which she later saw as a very significant point in her life. This was also the time when her younger brother was born, who further diverted her parent's attention. As she did not find much love or companionship at home, Dix moved out of her parent's home and established a relationship with Anne Heath at age 14.

She was offered a job teaching at a young girl's school in Worcester and in 1824 she gained a position at the Female Monitorial School, one of the premier schools in Boston at the time, building her reputation as one of the best schoolmistresses in the area. In that same year, her first book was published: *Conversations on Common Things*, which was in the form of a dialogue between mother and daughter. The book was very popular and remained in print for

40 years. Her next books included *Evening Hours* (1825) and *Meditations for Private Hours* (1828). After her next book, *The Garlands of Flora* (1829) met with a tepid reception, Dix decided to devote her time to teaching.

In 1841, after an inspection at the Middlesex County House of Correction, Dix began teaching Sunday school classes there. She gained a fervent interest in the moral treatment of prisoners as well as those affected by mental illness. Dix toured as many as 35 asylums and houses of correction in one week, so strong was her desire to help. These visits led to her first "memorial" in 1843, which was a long narrative essay meant to present her arguments for the treatment. She presented these memorials to several state legislatures, and eventually one led to the passing of a bill by the U.S. Congress in 1854, although President Pierce vetoed the decision. Dix continued her crusade, however, her determination often viewed as difficult and unpleasant by her contemporaries, who thought, despite her good works, Dix was a narrow-minded religious fanatic. This may have led to her ultimate failure as Superintendent of Nursing for the Union Army during the Civil War. Dix found herself in conflict with both the Union doctors and the Sanitary Commission because of the rigorous standards she set for the nurses working under her. In 1863 Dix's program was eliminated by the War Department. Still, Dix did not stop her efforts to improve conditions for the insane, but towards the end of her life, while residing in a guest house in the Trenton hospital that she helped to found, her health deteriorated. She died on July 18, 1887 and was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery.

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## Collection Scope and Content

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The collection material is related to Dorothea Dix's work on behalf of society's disadvantaged members and war veterans as recorded in Congressional testimony. In addition is a tribute to Dix written in the 20th century among others.

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## Arrangement

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This collection is organized as a single series.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Maine Women Writers Collection

Abplanalp Library  
University of New England  
716 Stevens Avenue  
Portland, Maine 04103  
[mwwc@une.edu](mailto:mwwc@une.edu)  
URL: <https://library.une.edu/mwwc/>

### Access

Collection is open for research.

### Publication Rights

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

Dorothea Lynde Dix Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Veterans
- Hampden (Me.)
- Ephemera

- Leaflets
- Prisons -- United States
- Women social reformers -- United States
- Dix, Dorothea Lynde, 1802-1887

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## Collection Inventory

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Title/Description	Instances	
Congressional Record Misc No 150, 1848 June 27 <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">Congressional Record Misc No 150</a> <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 8	Folder 001
Messages from Pres. Pierce to Congress, 1854 May <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">Special Message of President Pierce to the Senate of the United States: May 3, 1854</a> <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">Message from the President of the United States, Returning to the Senate the Bill Entitled...</a> <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 8	Folder 002
Report of Officers and Soldiers Sufferings While POW <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 8	Folder 003
The Disciples' Pulpit <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">The Disciples' Pulpit : Sermons of James Freeman Clarke</a> <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 8	Folder 004
Kennebec Historical Society Brochures, 1924 <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">Maine's Joan of Arc : An Address Made Before the Kennebec Historical Society</a> <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 8	Folder 005
Monograph on Dix by Alfred S. Roe, 1889 <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">Dorothea Lynde Dix : A Paper Read Before the Worcester Society of Anitiquity</a> <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 8	Folder 006
The National Dorothea Dix Memorial Association <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">The National Dorothea Dix Memorial Association</a> <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 8	Folder 007
Teacher of America's Legislature, NRTA Journal article, 1998 <u>Digital Object:</u> <a href="#">Teacher of America's Legislatures</a>	Box 8	Folder 008

Language of the Material: English.