

Register of
Sunday “Blue” Laws
Collection 70

Center for Adventist Research
James White Library
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, Michigan
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Processed by Bianka Rinko

Sunday “Blue” Laws (Collection 70)

Context

This archival collection explores the cultural, religious, and political dimensions of the American Sunday laws - commonly known as “blue laws” - which sought to demand Sunday rest and worship. Rooted in Puritan ideals and sustained by religious and civic movements, these laws shaped public life from the 18th to the 20th century: regulating commerce, entertainment, and personal conduct.

The collection reflects both sides of opinions connected to the Sunday observance. Through sermons, proclamations, pamphlets, cartoons, and campaign materials, the archive captures the evolving debate over the role of Sabbath in American society. Many secular people opposed it because of the legal restrictions on individual freedoms. Most importantly, from the Adventist biblical perspective, many stood up for the Seventh-day Sabbath which is a gift of God to humanity since creation.

This collection is very useful for our Adventist church today as preparing to stand faithful during the nearing Sunday law before Jesus’s soon return. Especially because it provides a realization that if this happened once already, not so long ago, then it can and will happen again according to the evidences of history itself and biblical prophecy.

Scope

This collection includes printed materials, ephemera, and visual media from the 19th and early 20th centuries, spanning approximately 1830 to 1930. It features:

- Religious tracts, sermons, and proclamations advocating for Sunday observance;
- Political flyers, sermons, satirical cartoons, and popular media critiquing Sunday restrictions;
- Artifacts from both national and local contexts, including church publications, civic proclamations, and cultural commentary.

Arrangement

This is a curated collection acquired intentionally by the Center for Adventist Research. Unlike most collections, it was not donated as a complete entity. As a result, there is no “original order.” The collection also continues to grow. Based on format and content, future additions to the collection may necessitate changes to the arrangement, which will be documented here.

The collection is divided into *three thematic series*:

- (1) Support for Sunday Laws - including religious and civic documents promoting Sunday as a sacred day, such as sermons, proclamations, and moral appeals.
- (2) Opposition to Sunday Laws - includes political critiques, sermons, satirical illustrations, and cultural artifacts critiquing the enforcement of Sunday restrictions.
- (3) Other Material Related from a Neutral Standpoint to Sunday “Blue” Laws

Within each series, items are listed by title in alphabetical order, with standardized “biography” entries noting: category, author or publisher, title, and year (if available).

Extent

1 Records Center Box [2.7 linear feet]

Provenance

Dr. Kevin Burton acquired the first items for this collection on behalf of the Andrews University Center for Adventist Research in 2024. He continues to purchase and add to the collection.

Use

All users of this collection will complete the Application to Use Unpublished Records, and observe the regulation specified in the Patron's Agreement and Researcher's Code of Conduct. All records in this collection are open and available for research.

Suggested citation for this collection:

Box ____, fld ____, Sunday "Blue" Laws (Collection 70), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

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INVENTORY

I. Content in Support of Sunday “Blue” Laws

- Box 1** Framed Proclamation by C.E. Scott Burgess, Bristol, Pa., 1874.
Note: this is the last item in the collection.
- Box 1 Fld 2** Pamphlet printed by Daniel Fanshaw, “The Address of the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, to the People of the United States”, 1828.
Note: This is a description of an ecumenical meeting promoting the Sunday observance which they called as the “Christian Sabbath”.
- Box 1 Fld 3** Sermon by Rev. P. P. Sandford, “The Christian Sabbath”, 1837.
Note: Subtitle of the Sermon, “The Universal and Perpetual Obligation of the Sabbath, and the Divine Authority of its Change from the Seventh to the First Day of the Week Under the Christian Dispensation”.

II. Content in Opposition to Sunday “Blue” Laws

- Box 1 Fld 1** Pin / Ephemera, “End Blue Laws, Vote No”, undated.
Note: A campaign pin distributed by opponents of restrictive Sunday legislation.
- Box 1 Fld 1** Pin / Ephemera, “For Liberal Sunday Laws”, undated.
Note: A label pin advocating for loosening restrictions on Sunday activities - reflecting a movement toward personal liberty.
- Box 1 Fld 1** Pin / Ephemera, “Vote Yes for Sunday Movies”, undated.
Note: A pin promoting leisure freedoms worn by supporters of Sunday entertainment - highlighting opposition to bans on theaters.

- Box 1 Fld 1** Pin / Ephemera, Anti-Blue-Law, undated.
Note: Sold with information not verified.
- Box 1 Fld 4** “An Appeal for the Sabbath” possibly written by Gerrit Smith in the 1850s.
Note: Based on the content of the document, this was an encouraging note to keep the biblical seventh-day Sabbath.
2 copies.
- Box 1 Fld 5** Campaign Flyer by A. Scott Bullitt, “Blot Out the Blue”, 1926.
- Box 1 Fld 6** Sheet Music by Harry Pease, Ed. G. Nelson, and Mitchell Parish, “The Great Blue Sunday Law Song”.
Note: Title of the Song, “What Are We Goin’ to Do When There’s Nothing to Do on Sunday”, Copyright 1921 by Joe Morris Music Co.
- Box 1 Fld 7** Tract by Charles C. Burleigh, “The Sabbath Question”, 1847.
Note: Although this document was written for the opposition of the Sunday “Blue” Laws, it was not written for the support of the biblical seventh-day Sabbath. Burleigh wrote it from a secular point of view, arguing as if the Sabbath or Sunday keeping would’ve been abolished by God for everyone. Burleigh was prompted to write this after he was arrested for selling abolitionist literature on Sunday.
- Box 1 Fld 8** Pamphlet by the Fundamental Anti-Blue Law Party of U.S.A., “Platform”, 1930.
Note: The Pamphlet is addressed for the United States President and Vice President, including the National Chairman Campaign Committee. The purpose of the document is to list the 45 advocating points against the Sunday “Blue” Laws. Furthermore, the document includes a campaign song by Giles Marcello.
- Box 1 Fld 9** Political Satirical Illustration from *Judge Magazine*, “A Slave to the Blue Laws”, 1895.
Note: This illustration is the cover page of a magazine which was published weekly in New York. On the back of the document, there is an excerpt from the magazine.
- Box 1 Fld 10** Political Satirical Illustration from *Puck Magazine*, “In this ‘Land of the Free,’ when we Tolerate such Things as these?”, 1893.

Note: This illustration is the cover page of a magazine which was published weekly in New York. On the back of the document, there is an excerpt from the magazine.

Box 1 Fld 11 Political Satirical Illustration from *Puck* Magazine, "Painting the Fair Blue", 1893.

Note: This illustration is the cover page of a magazine which was published weekly in New York. On the back of the document, there is an excerpt from the magazine.

Box 1 Fld 12 Political Satirical Illustration from *Puck* Magazine, "The Sunday-Closing Fanatic", 1893.

Note: This illustration is the cover page of a magazine which was published weekly in New York. On the back of the document, there is an excerpt from the magazine.

Box 1 Fld 13 Political Satirical Illustration from *Puck* Magazine, "We Grow Wiser as we Grow Older: The Managers of the Buffalo Exposition have Decided to Open it on Sunday", 1901.

Note: This illustration is the cover page of a magazine which was published weekly in New York. On the back of the document, there is an excerpt from the magazine.

Box 1 Fld 14 Postcard by Nathan Ringer, "The Climate Up Here Is Just Grand", 1906.

Note: A postcard showing a man on a ladder drinking beer - which was prohibited on Sunday - with a salon-owner whose shop was closed for Sunday.

Box 1 Fld 14 Postcard by Tichnor Bros. INC., Boston, Mass., "This Town Is Dry on Sunday - But I'm Wet Seven Days a Week".

Note: A postcard featuring a baby with a bottle and a puddle, satirizing Sunday alcohol restrictions through wordplay.

III. Other Related Material, from a Neutral Standpoint, to Sunday "Blue" Laws

Box 1 Fld 15 Excerpt from *Harper's Weekly* by Mitchell & Miller, 1886.

Note: The magazine on the first page provides a story and an illustration connected to the Sunday Law.

Box 1 Fld 16 Excerpt from *Life* Magazine by Mitchell & Miller, 1886.

Note: The weekly magazine provides on pages 50-51 an illustration connected to the Sunday Law.

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