

DIXON, THOMAS, 1864-1946.

Thomas Dixon papers, 1901-1905

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Dixon, Thomas, 1864-1946.
Title: Thomas Dixon papers, 1901-1905
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 23
Extent: .25 linear ft. (1 box)
Abstract: Correspondence, photographs, and clippings of Thomas Dixon, the Southern author, lecturer, and clergyman.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Source

Gift, 1950 with subsequent additions.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Thomas Dixon papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by JVC, July 1977.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Thomas Dixon (January 11, 1864-April 3, 1946), clergyman, lecturer, and novelist, was born in Shelby, North Carolina, the son of Thomas Dixon, a Baptist minister, and Amanda Elizabeth

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McAfee Dixon. He attended Shelby Academy and Wake Forest College, where he received his A.M. degree with honor in 1883. He won a scholarship to study history and politics at Johns Hopkins University in 1883, but he left after a few months to pursue an acting career. He entered Greensboro (NC) Law School, graduating with an LL.B. degree in 1886. That year he also received admission to the bar in all courts in North Carolina, including the United States District Court. Dixon served one term in the North Carolina Legislature (1885-1886), during which he introduced the first bill in the South to provide pensions to Confederate veterans.

Dixon was ordained a minister in the Baptist Church in October, 1886. During his years as a Baptist minister, he held pastorates in Goldsboro and Raleigh, North Carolina and New York City. He left the ministry in 1899 to embark on a four-year tour as a lyceum lecturer.

Dixon published his first of twenty-two novels, *The Leopard's Spots*, in 1902. That novel and two others, *The Clansman* (1905) and *The Traitor* (1907), comprised his bestselling trilogy of books defending the South. Dixon wrote the screenplay for the movie *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), based on *The Clansman*. His three anti-socialist novels, beginning with *The One Woman* (1903), sold widely. He continued to publish novels through the 1930s, though his later works were not as successful as his earlier ones. In 1915, Dixon organized his own movie studio in Los Angeles and produced five films, none critically or financially successful. Dixon served as clerk of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina from 1938 to 1943.

He was married first to Harriet Bussey (d. 1937) of Columbus, Georgia on March 3, 1886. They had four children. His second wife was Madelyn Donovan of Raleigh, North Carolina, whom he married on March 20, 1939. Dixon died on April 3, 1946 in Raleigh after a long illness.

Biographical Source: Raymond A. Cook, Thomas Dixon (1974); *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*; *The Dictionary of American Biography*, supplement 4.

Scope and Content Note

The collection contains one folder of correspondence (1901-1905), which includes thirteen detailed letters from Thomas Dixon to publishers. Twelve of these letters were written to Wallace Hugh Cathcart (1865-), general manager of Burrows Brothers Publishing Company in Cleveland, Ohio. The letters were mailed from places Dixon visited on his lecture circuit as well as from his home, Elmington Manor, Dixondale, Virginia. Dixon discusses reviews of and arrangements for promotion in Cleveland of *The Leopard's Spots* and *The One Woman*. In one letter (October 30, 1902), he evaluates several well-known publishers he is considering for his next book. One letter to Walter Hines Page (1855-1918) of Doubleday, Page & Company mentions Dixon's work on plot development for *The Clansman* (February 7, 1904). The correspondence also includes four letters (1903-1905) from Harriet Bussey Dixon to Cathcart regarding his visit to their home and publishing matters.

The collection has one folder of miscellaneous items (1902-1903): a photograph of Thomas Dixon; a photograph of Dixon and his wife; Dixon's designs for the cover, title page, and list of characters for *The One Woman*; two clippings; and a brochure regarding Dixon's lecture tour. The Dixon papers also include a typescript (381 pp.) of *The One Woman* with penciled revisions.

Arrangement Note

Correspondence arranged in chronological order.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Correspondence, 1901-1905, including envelope
1	2	Miscellaneous items: photographs, clippings, 1902-1903
1	3	Typescript of <i>The One Woman</i>
