

THOMAS, JAMES, 1799?-1866.
James Thomas correspondence, 1862-1864

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
Atlanta, GA 30322
404-727-6887
rose.library@emory.edu

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Thomas, James, 1799?-1866.
Title: James Thomas correspondence, 1862-1864
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 233
Extent: .125 linear ft. (1 partial box)
Abstract: Civil War-era correspondence of James Thomas, Georgia lawyer, judge and politician, from 1862-1864.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

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Source

Purchased, 1938.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], James Thomas correspondence, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by HEA, 1976.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

James Thomas (d. 1866), lawyer and judge, was probably born in 1799. He was a native of Hancock County, Georgia and attended the local schools. He taught briefly, then studied law

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and was admitted to the bar there. From the county seat of Sparta he conducted a successful law practice. In 1820 Thomas married Emmeline Gonder of Hancock County. They had two daughters: Acquila, who died in infancy, and Emmeline, who first married George Bell. In 1852, after Bell's death, Emmeline married Linton Stephens (1823-1872), who moved from Crawfordville to Sparta to form a law partnership with Richard Malcolm Johnston (1822-1898). After the death of Emmeline Stephens in 1857, Thomas maintained close ties with his son-in-law and his half-brother Alexander Hamilton Stephens (1812-1883). Between 1857 and 1859 [?] Thomas served as Superior Court Judge for the Northern Circuit, which included Hancock County. Then he retired from the active practice of law and spent much of his time at his country home in Lancaster, about seven miles from Sparta. In 1860 he was one of the delegates from Georgia who did not bolt from the Democratic Convention in Charleston. Later that year he was a member of Georgia's non-secessionist delegation which failed to win admission into the Democratic Convention in Baltimore. Thomas spent his last years as a planter in Hancock County, where he had considerable property holdings. The sources of this information were I. W. Avery, *The History of the State of Georgia from 1850 to 1881* (1881); biographical sketch by Frank W. Little in Elizabeth Wiley Smith, *The History of Hancock County, Georgia* (1974); Eudora Ramsay Richardson, *Little Aleck: A Life of Alexander H. Stephens* (1932); and James D. Waddell, *Biographical Sketch of Linton Stephens* (1877).

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of the letters of James Thomas from 1862-1864. The letters were written by various Georgians to James Thomas from September 10, 1862 to September 17, 1864, while he divided his time between his homes in Sparta and Lancaster. Two-thirds of the letters were written by Linton Stephens and Alexander H. Stephens; they contain much information on their health and family concerns. Half of the ten letters from Linton Stephens were written while he commanded a militia company organized for six-months service in Georgia from August 15, 1863. In these, Stephens criticizes Generals Braxton Bragg and D. H. Hill, President Jefferson Davis, and Confederate conscription laws. The six letters from Alexander H. Stephens deal mainly with health matters but include some comments on the Confederate Congress and the preliminaries to the battle of Atlanta. There is one letter on legal business from Thomas W. Thomas (d. 1864) which praises the sensible, law-abiding people of Hancock County. Also included are two letters, from Richard M. Johnston, and four from other Georgians on military and business matters.

Arrangement Note

Entire collection arranged in chronological order.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Correspondence, 1862-1864
