

THOMSON, WILLIAM SYDNOR, 1843-1913.

William Sydnor Thomson papers, 1858-1906

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Thomson, William Sydnor, 1843-1913.
Title: William Sydnor Thomson papers, 1858-1906
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 96
Extent: 1.75 linear ft. (4 boxes), 1 oversized papers box and 1 oversized papers folder (OP), and 2 bound volumes (BV)
Abstract: Papers of William Sydnor Thomson and his family including correspondence, journals, and clippings about Thomson.
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, 1947, with subsequent additions.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], William Sydnor Thomson papers, 1858-1889, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by Linda Matthews, 1973.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

William Sydnor Thomson (April 12, 1843 - December 22, 1913) was born in Jefferson County, Virginia (later West Virginia), the son of Warner Alexander (December 1, 1814 - March 1, 1869) and Frances Sydnor Thomson. Warner Thomson was a small planter and slaveholder.

In the summer of 1860, William S. Thomson took a position as schoolmaster in a rural community in Calhoun County in East Tennessee. He remained in Tennessee until the Civil War whereupon he joined the Confederate Army and served in Stonewall Jackson's brigade (Virginia Calvary, 12th Battalion, Company B). After the war, unable to take the oath required in West Virginia, he moved to Marietta, Georgia, and read law with George N. Lester, qualifying for admittance to the bar in 1866. In 1871 he moved to Atlanta, where, in various partnerships, he practiced law until his death in 1913.

He was married to Cornelia Holiday Danner (May 28, 1847 - January 13, 1910) of Winchester, Virginia. Thomson served at one time as County Attorney of Fulton County, helped to organize the Atlanta Bar Association, served on the Atlanta Board of Education (1888-1897), and was elected to the City Council in 1897. Sources used to compile this biographical note include *Atlanta and Environs*, v. 3, pp. 556-557 by Franklin Garrett and the papers themselves.

Scope and Content Note

The majority of this collection consists of correspondence (1858-1880) between William Sydnor Thomson and his family and friends, the bulk of which is between William S. Thomson and his father, Warner A. Thomson. William S. Thomson also corresponded frequently with his brother John, a student at Fort Edward Institute in New York, and after the Civil War, the operator of a grist mill near Marietta.

Pre-Civil War correspondence between father and son, (43 letters, August 1860 - April 1861) reflects the rising excitement over secession in western Virginia and eastern Tennessee, where young Thomson was serving as a school master. William S. Thomson favors secession while his father resolutely and articulately opposes it. There is also a discussion of the trials and rewards of the teaching profession. There is little correspondence during the Civil War. William S. Thomson's letters tell of privation and hardship, but little of battles and military maneuvers. A letter to his wife in 1906 records memories of the battle at Manassas.

Correspondence between father and son resumes in late 1865 and is regular from 1866-1868, (54 letters). During this time, William S. Thomson was in Marietta, Georgia, preparing for a career as a lawyer. His letters discuss the agricultural and economic situation in his new home, his own prospects and ambitions, and occasionally touch on politics. The father in West Virginia, in poor health, destitute from the War and unable to educate his younger children by a second marriage, writes bitterly against Andrew Johnson and against Southern politicians and military men whom he blames for causing the war. His letters describe his own economic distress and the general poverty of the area. Scattered correspondence after his father's death in 1869 until 1881 is generally brief and personal.

The collection also contains two journals, dating January 1, 1873 - April 8, 1876, and April 12, 1876 - November 17, 1876, which discuss Thomson's personal and professional life and describe

events of the day. The second journal also contains deposit records dating January-May 1969 which probably belong to another family member.

Three account books, dated September 28, 1865 - December 23, 1871, January 1, 1877 - March 27, 1880, and January 1, 1886 - July 27, 1889, make up the last series in this collection. The first account book also contains "Brief Diary Relative to Garden Operations," February 28-June 10 [1873?]. The second account book also contains entries for Merritts Avenue property, 1877-1878, and McNabb Place, 1878-1879.

Writings about William Sydnor Thomson consists of clippings from 1897. These have been photocopied and researchers are asked to use the photocopy rather than the originals. The scrapbook primarily includes letters and printed material about Thomson.

The collection also contains three journals kept by Warner Alexander Thomson, William's father. These are roughly dated April 1861-February 1867.

Arrangement Note

Arranged by record type.

Container List

Correspondence, 1841-1880

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	1841, 1858-1859
1	2	1860 February-August
1	3	1860 September-October
1	4	1860 November-December
1	5	1861 January-February
1	6	1861 March-April
1	7	1861 May-October
1	8	1862-1865
1	9	1866
1	10	1867 February-March
1	11	1867 April-December
1	12	1868
1	13	1869-1871
1	14	1872-1875
1	15	1876-1906
BV1	-	Letterpress book, 1900-1904
1	16	Undated correspondence and miscellany

Photographs

1	17	Thomson, William Sydnor (2)
1	18	Boring, John (Dr.) of Tennessee, 1896
1	19	Currier, A.F. (Dr.), May 1907
1	20	King, Emma, taken in Glasgow, Kentucky
1	21	Lester, Mamie
1	22	Lyman, W.R. (Capt.) of New Orleans, ca. 1883

Journals

2	1	January 1, 1873 - April 8, 1876
2	2	April 12, 1876 - November 17, 1876 [also contains deposit records, Jan-May 1969]

Account books

2	3	September 28, 1865 - December 23, 1871 [also contains "Brief Diary Relative to Garden Operations," 28 February - 10 June [1873?]]
2	4	January 1, 1877 - March 27, 1880 [also contains entries for Merritts Avenue property, 1877-1878, and McNabb Place, 1878-1879]

2 5 January 1, 1886 - June 27, 1889

Writings about William Sydnor Thomson

OP1 1 Clippings, 1897 (photocopies)

OP2 - Clippings, 1897 (originals-RESTRICTED due to fragility)

Scrapbooks

BV2 - Circa 1830s-1890s

Warner Alexander Thomson papers

3 1 Journal pages, September 9, 1842 - July 23, 1844; February 7, 1865

3 2 Journal, April 5, 1861 - October 4, 1863

3 3 Journal, October 1, 1863 – February 15, 1867

Ephemera

4 Civil War era artifacts: two cannonballs and seven minie balls
