

A Guide to the Henry Wirtz Thomas Collection, 1834-1952

The Henry Wirtz Thomas Collection, 1834-1952
1834-1952



A Collection in The Fairfax County Public Library MSS 06-26

Title Statement

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Subtitle: Henry Wirtz Thomas Collection

Collection: MSS 06-26

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Record Group Number

MSS 06-26

Language

English

Abstract

The Henry Wirtz Thomas Collection consists of 0.5 linear feet, spans the years 1834-1952, and consists of correspondence, newspaper clippings, brochures, albumen photographs, pamphlets, an advertising card, and an account book.

Creator

Thomas, Henry Wirtz (1812-1890)

Extent

0.5 linear feet

Repository

Fairfax County Public Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

None

Use Restrictions

Consult repository for information

Acquisition Information

Col. Henry W. Thomas Elgin of McLean, VA initially donated this collection to the Historical Society of Fairfax County during 1950-1951. They transferred the collection to the Virginia Room on an unknown date. Mrs. Arthur J. Mourot of Alexandria, VA donated the portraits of Judge and Mrs. Henry Wirtz Thomas in May 1982. Lee Hubbard, Fairfax, VA donated the 1834 "H.W. Thomas, Attorney at Law" advertising card in 2001. Mrs. Anne Paul donated the albumen print of the Henry W. Thomas House, Fairfax, VA, in August 2005. William "Wild Bill" Patram, Fairfax, VA, donated Thomas' 1854-1872 account book in January 2019. Patram found the account book in an unknown house that he moved during his long career.

Processing Information

Chris Barbuschak, July 2019

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Preferred Citation

Henry Wirtz Thomas Collection, MSS 06-26, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Separated Material

None

Historical and Biographical Information

Henry Wirtz Thomas was born in Leesburg, Virginia on October 20, 1812, to Margaret and John Henry Thomas. After studying law in a Washington, D.C. college, he taught school for a period, and moved to Fairfax Court House in 1833. In 1837, Thomas served as a Major in the Virginia Militia. At age 26, Thomas was selected as the Commonwealth's Attorney, followed by his election to the House of Delegates for the 1841-1842 and 1847-1849 sessions. He went on to serve as the Fairfax County and Alexandria County representative in the Senate from 1850-1863, and from 1871-1875.

During the outbreak of the Civil War when the residents of Fairfax County deliberated on seceding, Thomas initially opposed secession, but later changed course. He is alleged to have stood in the Fairfax Courthouse's doorway intimidating voters into voting for secession. After seceding, Thomas moved to Richmond and offered his services to President Jefferson Davis.

On April 5, 1865, Thomas was appointed to a committee of three to wait on President Abraham Lincoln and discussed with him how to reestablish civil government in Virginia. On August 12, 1867, Thomas, then a judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit of Virginia was arrested by the U.S. Grand Jury for violating the Civil Rights Bill. He had earlier refused to allow Jane Taylor, an African American, to testify in his court in May 1866. Despite this, he was elected as the 12th Lieutenant Governor of Virginia from 1875-1878, and continued to serve as a judge on the Fairfax County Circuit Court until shortly before his death in June 1890.

Scope and Content

The Henry Wirtz Thomas Collection consists of 0.5 linear feet, spans the years 1834-1952, and consists of correspondence, newspaper clippings, brochures, albumen photographs, pamphlets, an advertising card, and an account book. The 1834 advertising card notes that Thomas' office was in Allison's Hotel in Fairfax, VA. Also included are pamphlets containing excerpts from a speech Thomas delivered to the Senate of Virginia on April 4, 1872. Thomas' account book contains notes on law, his financial dealings, and newspaper clippings from 1854-1857 chronicling court cases he was involved with and other happenings.

Index Terms

Fairfax (Va.) - History

Lawyers - Virginia - Fairfax - Biography

Thomas, Henry Wirtz (1812-1890)

Container List

Box 1 Folder 1: Correspondence, Col. Henry W. Thomas Elgin, 1952

Box 1 Folder 2: Correspondence, Henry Wirtz Thomas, 1860-1865

Box 1 Folder 3: Newspaper clippings, 1843-1872

Box 1 Folder 4: Brochures and pamphlets, 1861-1872

Box 1 Folder 5: Obituary of Henry W. Thomas, 1890 [photocopy], Undated

Box 1 Folder 6: Advertising Card. "H.W. Thomas, Attorney at Law" , 1834 July 12

Box 1 Folder 7: Judge Henry Wirtz Thomas' Account Book, 1854-1872

Box 1 Folder 8: Albumen photograph. Henry W. Thomas House, Fairfax, VA, c. 1885

Box 1 Folder 9: Albumen photograph. Henry Wirtz Thomas , Undated

Box 1 Folder 10: Albumen photograph. Julia Jackson Thomas (1822-1902), Undated