

Connecticut Historical Society  
museum & library

William H. Thomas Papers, 1860-1915

A Guide to the collection at the Connecticut Historical Society

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Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
<b>Creator :</b>	Thomas, William H.
<b>Title :</b>	William H. Thomas Papers
<b>Dates :</b>	1860-1915
<b>Extent :</b>	3 linear feet (6 boxes)
<b>Location:</b>	Ms 98318
<b>Language:</b>	English

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Biographical Sketch

William H. Thomas was born about 1840 in New York. He became a minister after serving as a soldier in the 4th New Hampshire Regiment in the Civil War, where he was chaplain. Before moving to South Norwalk, Connecticut in 1904, he lived and preached in New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

William and his wife Sarah had at least three children, as far as can be ascertained from the collection. Daughter Mabel Thomas taught school in Cambridge, Massachusetts and in Norwalk. Son William H. Thomas Jr. was in the textile business in Rhode Island and for about a year in Quebec, Canada. A second daughter, Eleanor Thomas, married John Doughty. In the 1910 federal census, the Doughty family, including daughter Felicia, lived in Winchester, Connecticut. By 1930, John Doughty was dead and Mabel and Eleanor taught school in Norwalk.

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Scope and Content

The collection came with no discernable organization. The diaries were arranged first, chronologically. William Thomas' incoming correspondence was arranged with family letters first, followed by general correspondence. If there was incoming correspondence to the family, it was filed after the letters to their father. Since Thomas was a minister, his church-related

papers follow the correspondence. Military and financial records complete the collection.

This collection was transferred from the New Hampshire Historical Society after they removed all of the Civil War and New Hampshire-related material. What was left reflects Thomas' activities in Massachusetts before 1904, and in Connecticut from 1904-1915. Perhaps the most interesting documents are the letters from Mabel, an independent single woman living and working near Boston.

The diaries cover the years 1860-1906, with gaps, particularly between 1861-1866. The entries are rather sparse and provide little insight into his daily activities, although some of them are reflective of the moral and religious conflicts in his mind.

Thomas's children wrote to him often, at least in the years 1909 and 1915. There is very little material from the intervening years. Mabel was the most prolific writer as she described her daily activities and the progress of granddaughter Felicia Doughty, 1902-1915. William Jr. wrote detailed letters about setting up a mill in Quebec, Canada, and about his work in Rhode Island, 1908-1915. Only a few letters exist that were written by daughter Eleanor or granddaughter Felicia.

The bulk of the collection consists of incoming letters and circulars to William Thomas. Some appear to be from former parishioners keeping him up to date on their lives. Others are from magazines seeking subscriptions, or from people in Norwalk asking him to supply the pulpit in their church while the regular pastor is on vacation.

Among Thomas's church-related papers are a volume with the names of church members and a list of those who needed pastoral visits. His mind must have been constantly working, as he kept notes on possible themes for sermons on scraps of paper of all sizes and shapes. These have been gathered into one folder and are accompanied by a combination note- and scrapbook also used for citing religious themes.

The only remnants of Thomas's military service are a few circulars about the formation of a military chaplain's association and a number of form letters from lawyers in Washington, DC offering to help him recover lost wages from the war. None of the forms appear to have been filled out.

Financial records are sparse and consist of one volume recording his stocks, 1873, and receipts from 1909 only, divided into those for milk and those for other household goods. Also among the receipts are two dog licenses. Printed materials are primarily church-related which warranted their retention. There are two letters and one formula for a prescription in the folder of non-family materials.

## **Restrictions**

### **Access Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on access to the collection.

### **Use Restrictions**

Use of the material requires compliance with the Connecticut Historical Society's Research Center regulations.

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## **Subject Headings**

### **Personal Names**

Thomas, William H.

### **Subjects**

Diaries.  
Norwalk (Conn.)  
Sermons.  
United States --History --Civil War, 1861-1865 --Chaplains.

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## **Administrative Information**

### **Preferred Citation**

Item, Collection Title, Collection number (Box #, Folder #). Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

### **Processing Details**

Collection was processed by Barbara Austen in 2006.

EAD Finding Aid created July 2011.

### **Accruals**

The collection is closed.

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## **Contents:**

## Papers

### Box

1 Diaries 1860-1872

### Box

2 Diaries 1873-1886

### Box

3 Diaries and memorandum books, 1887-1906, 1867, 1878

### Box Folder

4	1-11	Letters from Mabel Thomas to William Thomas, 1902-1915
4	12	Incoming correspondence to Mabel, 1907, 1915
4	13-16	Letters from William H. Thomas, Jr. to William Thomas, 1908-1915
4	17	Letters from Eleanor Doughty to William Thomas, 1909, 1915
4	18	Letters to and from Eleanor from others, undated
4	19	Letters from Felicia Doughty to William Thomas, 1909, 1915
4	20	Letters from Addie Smith to William Thomas, 1914-1915

### Box Folder

5	1	Incoming correspondence, 1902-1905
5	2	Incoming correspondence, 1908
5	3-9	Incoming correspondence, 1909
5	10	Incoming correspondence, 1911, 1914
5	11-15	Incoming correspondence, 1915
5	16	Incoming correspondence, undated

### Box Folder

6	1	Church membership and visiting directory, undated
6	2-3	Notes for sermons, undated
6	4	Military papers, 1899-1903
6	5	Reminiscences of his life as a soldier, undated and incomplete
6	6	Stock account, 1873
6	7	Receipted bills for milk, 1909
6	8	Receipted bills, 1909
6	9	Printed material
6	10	Non-family items