

Thomas Hale Williams Collection

M/A 1998.36.01

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Summary Information

Repository	James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
Creator - Author	Williams, Thomas Hale, 1814-1901
Title	Thomas Hale Williams Collection
Date	1827-1937
Extent	3.0 boxes
Language	English

Biography

A native of Rhode Island, Thomas Hale Williams was born in 1814 and died March 9, 1901. A printer by trade, he later studied law at Harvard but decided to pursue his love of librarianship, first at the Providence Athenaeum, then, after settling in Minneapolis in either 1854 or 1856, at the Minneapolis Athenaeum as the first Minneapolis public librarian. Before coming to Minneapolis, his travels west in 1837 allowed him to witness the "pro-slavery" mob in Alton, Illinois who killed abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy and destroyed his printing presses, and it, along with the prospect of staying in a city ruled by "mob law," remained a poignant memory for him. Williams wrote, "Four presses have been destroyed in this land of liberty, because they dared to tell the truth." Williams was a member of the board of supervisors from 1864 to 1867, and after the adoption of the city charter government in 1867, served as city clerk until 1872. His book store housed the Young Men's Literary Association for eight years rent-free, until the Association was incorporated in 1860 as the Minneapolis Athenaeum. Williams drafted its charter based upon the Providence charter, and he also raised \$1500 for the purchase of the Athenaeum site, where he served as head librarian until 1889 when its collections were moved to the public library building. At his suggestion the U.S. Commissioner of Education convened in 1876 a meeting of librarians nation wide at the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition to organize the American Library Association. In later years Williams retired with his family west of Cedar Lake where he enjoyed showing visitors his scrapbooks and diaries, which he began in 1827. He left one daughter, Mary Williams.

Description of Collection

Photocopied correspondence, 1837-1867. Also includes photocopied articles of Williams' death; photocopied letter from Margaret Renshaw Carroll to Carl Vitz, librarian, Minneapolis Public Library, dated November 26, 1937; and original scrapbooks (numbers 25 and 26) with indices.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library

Controlled Access Headings

Subject(s)

- Librarians -- United States.
- Public librarians -- Minnesota -- Minneapolis.

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
M/A 1998.36.01 Photocopied correspondence, 1837 ("Journey to Alton, Ill.")-1867; photocopied articles of Williams' death; photocopied letter from Margaret Renshaw Carroll to Carl Vitz, librarian, Minneapolis Public Library, dated November 26, 1937 1837-1867 3.0 boxes	1	1
	Box	Box-folder
M/A 1998.36.01 Scrapbook number 25 with index; from "air as a stimulant" to "schools in Germany." 1827-? 3.0 boxes	1	2
Scrapbook number 26 with index; from "Narragansett Pier" to "Yates and Gen. Grant, Senator" 1827-?	1	3