# JAMES L. THOMPSON PAPERS, 1869-1911

Collection #: M 696 BV 3189-3199

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Processed by Chris Harter 24 September 1997

### **USER INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 3 manuscript boxes, 10 bound volumes

COLLECTION DATES: 1869-1911

PROVENANCE: John Mullins, Indianapolis, IN, 23 May 1996

**RESTRICTIONS: None** 

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in

writing from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

**RELATED HOLDINGS: None** 

ACCESSION NUMBERS: 1996.0448

NOTES:

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

James Livingstone Thompson (1832-1913), the son of John and Ann (Rossiter) Thompson, was born in London, England. He attended private schools there before emigrating to the United States when he was 18 years old. Two years later, Thompson settled in Rush County, Indiana, and began to study medicine. He graduated from Rush Medical College of Chicago in 1860. The following year, he married Martha J. Trevis (d. 1898). They had two children: Daniel A. (1862-1904) and Emma Louis, who married Dr. J.H. Oliver of Indianapolis.

Thompson moved to Shelby County, Indiana, where he entered the army as assistant surgeon of the 4th U.S. Colored Artillery. He remained in that post from May, 1863 to February, 1864, when he was promoted to major. He was made surgeon of the post at Columbia, Kentucky, and medical director of western Kentucky. Thompson resigned his directorship due to physical disability, and began private practice in Rush County, Indiana and at Harrison, Ohio. He soon moved to Cincinnati, where he studied under and was assistant to Dr. Elkanah Williams, a pioneer in the field of eye surgery.

In 1871, Thompson relocated to Indianapolis, becoming the first doctor in Indiana to specialize solely on diseases of the eye. He was widely sought out for cataract surgery, for which he invented a special scalpel. His patients included many noted midwesterners, including former Vice-President Thomas Hendricks (See also: SC 737, Thomas A. Hendricks Papers) and General, later President, Benjamin Harrison (See also: card catalog under Harrison, Benjamin).

Thompson was a professor at the Medical College of Indiana (See also: SC 1058, Medical College of Indiana Programs) from 1874 to 1889, when he was made the chair of diseases of the eye and ear. He was a member of the American Medical Association, Marion County and Indiana State Medical Societies (See also: M 457, Indiana State Medical Association, County Medical Society Records), as well as the Indianapolis Literary Club (See also: M 338, Indianapolis Literary Club Records).

Sources: Material in collection Collection accession file

Dunn, Jacob Piatt. Greater Indianapolis. Vol. II. p. 765-766.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of diaries, medical casebooks, and a letter book kept by James L. Thompson. They are arranged chronologically. Included are 31 diaries (1869-1911), which detail Thompson's personal and professional lives. In them, he recorded the amount of business his medical practice received, and he noted patients' conditions. He also commented on family life, as well as local, national, and worldly events. His observations range from the mundane to the marvelous. Highlights include:

October 1871 - move from Harrison, Ohio, to Indianapolis

December 9, 1876 - Benjamin Harrison's wife brought to his office as a patient

June 19, 1878 - Thompson's impressions after hearing a phonograph

October 15, 1882 - Thompson's first visit to Broad Ripple in Indianapolis

October 1, 1884 - James Whitcomb Riley poetry reading (also Oct. 19, 1885)

December 10, 1884 - Anna Dickinson visits Indianapolis

January 7, 1885 - Mark Twain visits Indianapolis

August 7, 1885 - the appearance of electric lights in Indianapolis

August 14-15, 1885 - Thompson's visit to West Baden Springs in southern Indiana

circa November 26 - death and funeral of Vice-President Thomas Hendricks

January 7, 1889 - Thompson meets President-elected Benjamin Harrison

June 6, 1890 - appearance of electric streetcars in Indianapolis

January 21, 1898 - Thompson's wife dies

March 13, 1901 - Benjamin Harrison dies

May 18, 1904 - Prince of China visits Indianapolis October 22, 1904 - Thompson's son dies

The collection contains three of Thompson's medical casebooks, covering 10 years of eye surgeries. They contain written notes with many detailed, hand-drawn corneal/retinal maps, including one for President Benjamin Harrison. Also present are a diary kept by Emma Thompson during her 1890 trip to Europe; Thompson's business letter book; and a letter book index used by Thompson and his son, Daniel.

#### **BOX AND FOLDER LISTING**

# BOX 1: 1869-1880 FOLDER CONTENTS

- 1 Diaries--1869, 1870
- 2 Material laid in 1869 diary
- 3 Diaries--1871, 1875
- 4 Material laid in 1875 diary
- 5 (BV 3189) Letter Book Index, 1871-1896
- 6 Diary, 1876
- 7 (BV 3190) Letterbook, 1876-1880
- 8 Diary, 1877
- 9 (BV 3191) Casebook, 1877-1880

10 Diary, 1878

## BOX 2: 1880-1890 FOLDER CONTENTS

- 1 Diaries--1880 (annual and vacation, August 18-September 28)
- 2 Material laid in 1880 annual diary
- 3 Diaries--1881, 1882
- 4 Material laid in 1882 diary
- 5 (BV 3192) Casebook, 1883-1885
- 6 Diaries--1884, 1885
- 7 (BV 3193) Diary, 1885
- 8 Diaries--1888, 1889
- 9 (BV 3194) Casebook, 1889-1891

10 James Thompson diary, 1890; Emma Thompson vacation diary, 1890

# BOX 3: 1892-1911 FOLDER CONTENTS

1 (BV 3195-6) Diaries--1892, 1893

2 Diaries--1895, 1897

3 Diary, 1898

4 (BV 3197) Diary, 1899

5 Material laid in 1899 diary

6 (BV 3198-9) Diaries--1901, 1902

7 Diaries--1902, 1904

8 Diaries--1905, 1907

9 Diaries--1908, 1911

10 In Memory of Dr. James Livingstone Thompson, 1832-1913, and his son Dr. Daniel A. Thompson, 1862-1904

## **CATALOGUING INFORMATION**

MAIN ENTRY: Thompson, James L. (James Livingstone), 1832-1913

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Thompson, James L. (James Livingstone), 1832-1913

Oliver, Emma Louis Thompson

Thompson, Daniel A., 1862-1904

Harrison, Benjamin, 1833-1901--Health

Hendricks, Thomas A. (Thomas Andrews), 1819-1885--Health

Medical College of Indiana

Ophthalmologists--Indiana--Indianapolis

Ophthalmology--Practice--Indiana--Indianapolis

Medicine--Specialties and specialists--Indiana--Indianapolis

Women travelers--Indiana--Indianapolis--Diaries

**END**