The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the
Grant Thorburn papers
1824-1863
MssCol 2985

Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2014

Summary

Creator: Thorburn, Grant, 1773-1863

Title: Grant Thorburn papers

Date: 1824-1863

Size: .2 linear feet (2 folders)

Source: Gift of John Pierpont Morgan, 1899, with additional gifts and purchases.

Abstract: Grant Thorburn was a Scottish-born New York City nurseryman and author. The collection consists mainly of letters and letter fragments from his friend William Carver, a mutual acquaintance of Thomas Paine, with a loose poem by Carver on Nature and Her Laws, and miscellaneous holograph writings by Thorburn. Letters concern Carver's poverty and troubled life in New York; his efforts to find a publisher for a sketch of Paine's life; and his atheism, disputed in Thorburn's copy of a letter he wrote to Carver, and a memorandum of a conversation with him. There are also two letters discussing family and business matters; Thorburn autographs and a letter fragment; and several receipts for purchases from G. Thorburn & Son, seedsmen and florists in Manhattan. Writings by Thorburn are: Pocahontas, 1852 (her story, inspired by a visit to Yorktown in 1848); Life of Thomas Paine, No. 1, 1852; his unfinished autobiographical History of Lawrie Todd, 1862, with lithograph portrait; Grant Thorburn Sinior's (sic) Manuscript No. 2, undated; Churches and Meetinghouses in New York, undated; and Anecdote of George Watson, undated. Also present is an 1849 manuscript, "Hints to Doctors, Quacks, and Grave-Diggers" by Lawrie Todd (Thorburn), a vituperative attack on the skill of physicians during epidemics, and the personal and political character of William Cobbett, his business competitor, and Thomas Paine. The name Lawrie Todd also appears as Laurie Todd.

Preferred citation: Grant Thorburn papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2014

Related Materials:

Forms part of Ford collection

Scope and Content Note

Grant Thorburn was a Scottish-born New York City nurseryman and author. The collection consists mainly of letters and letter fragments from his friend William Carver, a mutual acquaintance of Thomas Paine, with a loose poem by Carver on Nature and Her Laws, and miscellaneous holograph writings by Thorburn. Letters concern Carver's poverty and troubled life in New York; his efforts to find a publisher for a sketch of Paine's life; and his atheism, disputed in Thorburn's copy of a letter he wrote to Carver, and a memorandum of a conversation with him. There are also two letters discussing family and business matters; Thorburn autographs and a letter fragment; and several receipts for purchases from G. Thorburn & Son, seedsmen and florists in Manhattan. Writings by Thorburn are: Pocahontas, 1852 (her story, inspired by a visit to Yorktown in 1848); Life of Thomas Paine, No. 1, 1852; his unfinished autobiographical History of Lawrie Todd, 1862, with lithograph portrait; Grant Thorburn Sinior's (sic) Manuscript No. 2, undated; Churches and Meetinghouses in New York, undated; and Anecdote of George Watson, undated. Also present is an 1849 manuscript, "Hints to Doctors, Quacks, and Grave-Diggers" by Lawrie Todd (Thorburn), a vituperative attack on the skill of physicians during epidemics, and the personal and political character of William Cobbett, his business competitor, and Thomas Paine. The name Lawrie Todd also appears as Laurie Todd.

Key Terms

Occupations
Authors, American
Merchants
Nursery growers

Subjects
Church buildings -- New York (State) -- New York

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Memoirs

Geographic Names
New York (N.Y.) -- Commerce -- 19th century
New York (N.Y.) -- Religious life and customs -- 19th century
Scotland -- Social life and customs -- 18th century

Names
Carver, William
Cobbett, William, 1763-1835
Paine, Thomas, 1737-1809
Thorburn, Grant, 1773-1863
G. Thorburn & Son