

Williamson, Thom

Thom Williamson Papers

1853-1913, undated

Title Statement

Williamson, Thom A Guide to the Thom Williamson Papers MG 11

Author: Dr. James R. Sweeney

Publication Statement

Publisher: ODU Community Collections

3000 Perry Library

4427 Hampton Blvd.

Norfolk, VA 23529

Business Number: 757-683-5350

libspecialcollections@odu.edu

URL: <https://www.odu.edu/library/special-collections>

01/22/2013

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-04-01 11:21:58 -0400.

Language Usage: Finding aid written in English.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MG 11

Unit ID

/repositories/5/resources/212

Unit Date

1853-1913, undated

Unit Date

Date acquired: 11/02/1976

Language

English

Abstract

Engineer in United States Navy from 1853 until 1912, when he was relieved from active duty as a Chief Engineer with the rank of Rear Admiral. During the Civil War he served on the U.S.S. Hartford, the flagship of Rear Admiral David Farragut, and was present at the Battle of Mobile Bay in 1864. Collection consists of general correspondence, naval correspondence, diaries, and military papers from his service in the Navy.

Creator

Williamson, Thom (1833-1918)

Extent

0.40 Linear Feet

Extent

1 Hollinger document case boxes

Repository

ODU Community Collections

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

Open to researchers without restrictions.

Conditions Governing Use

Before publishing quotations or excerpts from any materials, permission must be obtained from Special Collections and University Archives, and the holder of the copyright, if not Old Dominion University Libraries.

Source of Acquisition

Julia Williamson Hall Blair

Method of Acquisition

Gift. Accession #A76-61

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Box [insert number], Folder [insert number and title], Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Biographical or Historical Information

Thom Williamson was born on August 5, 1833, at Edenton, North Carolina. Williamson spent his childhood in Norfolk, Baltimore and Philadelphia. He received his principal education in Norfolk at the Norfolk Military Academy. In 1847 his father was ordered to Baltimore, Maryland to which the family moved. He attended St. Mary's College in Baltimore from 1847 to 1850. His father was transferred in 1850 to Philadelphia where Thom went and stayed about one year. In Philadelphia the young man went to work at the Vulcan Iron Works which was outfitting the U.S.S. Susquehanna with machinery built for her under the superintendence of William Price Williamson in Baltimore. The family returned to Norfolk in 1851. Thom was placed in charge of a small farm not far from the city--"Sycamore Cottage." A. Mehaffy employed young Williamson as an assistant draftsman, working on drawings of machinery for the United States steamers Powhatan and Allegheny.

Williamson entered the United States Navy as Third Assistant Engineer in 1853. Thom Williamson was an engineer in the United States Navy from 1853 until he was relieved from active duty with the rank of Rear Admiral in 1912. His first ship was the U.S.S. Saranac where he was a shipmate of his father Chief Engineer William Price Williamson.

The Saranac made a cruise in the Mediterranean Sea, which lasted almost three years. Thom Williamson was promoted to second assistant engineer in 1855. In July 1857, he was ordered to the Wabash, which he joined at the Isthmus of Panama. He landed at Greytown (San Juan del Norte) with the naval force which captured "General" Walker, the filibusterer.

Promotions continued to follow one another rapidly. In 1858 Williamson became first assistant engineer and in 1861 he was promoted to Chief Engineer. He married Julia Price on December 2, 1861. She was the daughter of William Ferdinand Price, who was employed in the office of the Secretary of the United States Senate. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, Williamson faced a serious dilemma. Thom's father, William P. Williamson resigned from the United States Navy and accepted an appointment as Engineer in the Navy of the Confederate States of America. The elder Williamson became Engineer-in-Chief and took a prominent part in the construction of the Confederate ironclads, e.g., the Merrimac or Virginia. The rest of the Williamson family also supported the Confederacy. Thom however, renewed his oath of allegiance to the United States of America and declined a commission, filled out and signed by Jefferson Davis, appointing him a Chief Engineer in the Navy of the Confederate States of America. This action cut Thom Williamson off from his family and friends, but he was reconciled to them after the war.

During the Civil War, Williamson served on the U.S.S. Hartford, the flagship of Rear Admiral Farragut. He was present at the Battle of Mobile Bay in which the Union forces captured or sunk several vessels, including the Confederate ram Tennessee. Chief Engineer Williamson made frequent inspections of the Engineer Division on the Hartford during the battle. He was also involved in the capture of Forts Gaines and Morgan on August 8th and 23rd. He and three other officers were ordered by Admiral Farragut on the day after the battle of Mobile Bay to make a "strict and careful survey" of the Confederate ram Tennessee captured on August 5th. He died on March 17, 1918.

Scope and Contents

The papers of Thom Williamson consist of orders, general correspondence, naval correspondence, two diaries, and a notebook, among others. The collection also includes letters of appointment to commissions, notices, certificates, a biographical sketch of Rear Admiral John W. Moore, and a survey of the iron clad casemated steamer "Tennessee" written in 1864 after its capture by Union forces in the Battle of Mobile Bay.

Keywords

United States. Navy--Officers

Tennessee (Ironclad)

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations

United States. Navy

Williamson, Thom (1833-1918)

Description of Subordinate Components

Box 1

Unit ID Box 1

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52464

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Folder 1: Biographical Sketch-Rear Admiral John W. Moore

Unit ID Folder 1

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52465

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 1, Biographical Sketch-Rear Admiral John W. Moore, undated, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 2: Certificates of Membership

Unit ID Folder 2

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52466

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 2, Certificates of Membership, undated, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 3: Commissions, Letters of Appointment

Unit ID Folder 3

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52467

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 3, Commissions, Letters of Appointment, undated, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 4: Correspondence, General

Unit ID Folder 4

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52468

Unit Date 1891-1912

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 4, Correspondence, General, 1891-1912, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 5: Correspondence, Naval

Unit ID Folder 5

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52469

Unit Date 1853-1913

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 5, Correspondence, Naval, 1853-1913, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 6: Correspondence, William P. Williamson

Unit ID Folder 6

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52470

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 6, Correspondence, William P. Williamson, undated, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 7: Deed-Thomas J. Carson and William P. Williamson

Unit ID Folder 7

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52471

Unit Date 1868 March 7

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 7, Deed-Thomas J. Carson and William P. Williamson, 1868 March 7, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 8: Diary

Unit ID Folder 8

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52472

Unit Date 1853-1855

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 8, Diary, 1853-1855, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 9: Diary

Unit ID Folder 9

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52473

Unit Date 1856-1857

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 9, Diary, 1856-1857, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 10: Notebook

Unit ID Folder 10

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52474

Unit Date 1867-1869

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 10, Notebook, 1867-1869, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 11: Notices, Forms--Naval

Unit ID Folder 11

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52475

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 11, Notices, Forms--Naval, undated, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 12: Orders

Unit ID Folder 12

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52476

Unit Date 1853-1859

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 12, Orders, 1853-1859, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 13: Orders

Unit ID Folder 13

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52477

Unit Date 1861-1869

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 13, Orders, 1861-1869, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 14: Orders

Unit ID Folder 14

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52478

Unit Date 1871-1878

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 14, Orders, 1871-1878, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 15: Orders

Unit ID Folder 15

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52479

Unit Date 1881-1887

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 15 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 15, Orders, 1881-1887, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 16: Orders

Unit ID Folder 16

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52480

Unit Date 1890-1899

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 16 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 16, Orders, 1890-1899, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 17: Orders

Unit ID Folder 17

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52481

Unit Date 1901-1912

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 17 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 17, Orders, 1901-1912, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 18: Receipt

Unit ID Folder 18

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52482

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 18 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 18, Receipt, undated, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 19: Reports--The Survey of the Iron Clad Casemated Steamer "Tennessee"

Unit ID Folder 19

Unit ID /repositories/5/archival_objects/52483

Unit Date 1864

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Container 19 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 1, Folder 19, Reports--The Survey of the Iron Clad Casemated Steamer "Tennessee", 1864, Thom Williamson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.