

C Thomas, David E. (1878-1935) and Horace E. (1910-2001), Papers, 1904-1985, n.d.
4002 2.0 cubic feet (114 folders), 4 oversize items

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INTRODUCTION

The papers of David E. Thomas, Congregational minister and professor of religion, and his son, Horace E. Thomas, a Columbia, Missouri, surgeon who spent World War II in military hospitals in the South Pacific consist of correspondence, manuscripts, class notes, research notes, photographs, printed articles and pamphlets, scrapbooks, and miscellaneous materials related to their careers, including research for Horace's medical school thesis, *Chronic Radiation Poisoning in Rats*. See also two oral history interviews with Dr. H.E. Thomas in C3963 SHS Audio Cassette Collection, a.c. 19-20.

DONOR INFORMATION

The Horace E. Thomas Papers were donated to the University of Missouri by his daughter, Davika Thomas, on 17 July 2001 (Accession No. 5889).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David Edward Thomas was born in Iowa in 1878 and reared in southeastern Nebraska. He received his A.B. degree from the University of Nebraska in 1902, spent the next years at Yale Divinity School, and five years in resident graduate work at the University of Chicago. He earned a B.D. in 1906 and Ph.D. in 1913, with a major in Old Testament studies and a minor in languages. During this time Thomas also taught Classics at Western Union College and was pastor of the College church from 1904 to 1905; student pastor at Deerfield, Illinois, from 1905 to 1906; pastor at Aurora, Illinois, from 1906 to 1908; and acting president and professor of philosophy at Western Union College, LeMars, Iowa, from 1908 to 1911.

After receiving his doctorate, he became chair of Old Testament Languages and Literature at Alberta Theological College, Edmonton, Canada, as well as special lecturer in Hebrew, Oriental History, and Sociology at the University of Alberta from 1913 to 1920. On returning to the U.S. in 1920, he became Congregational University pastor at the University of Nebraska.

In 1922, Thomas was called by the Missouri State Congregational Conference to the University of Missouri to teach the History and Philosophy of Religion in the Cooperative School of Religion and to work with Congregational students. He also founded the University Congregational Church, but after six years, the State Conference found its funds exhausted and the work was discontinued. From 1930 to 1933, Thomas was professor of social science at Iowa Wesleyan University and pastor of the Mt. Pleasant Congregational Church.

Thomas was not a "fire and brimstone" preacher, but an intellectual one – constantly writing sermons and articles relating to the comparison of social philosophy, psychology and/or science to religion. He published his thesis, *The Psychological Approach to the Study of Prophecy*, in 1914, and several articles throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

D.E. Thomas married Rose Brewster, who was born in Nebraska in 1880. They had three children, Lloyd, Horace, and Margaret (M.J.) all of whom earned doctorate degrees – Horace and M.J. were M.D.'s, while Lloyd had a Ph.D. in Chemistry and spent most of his career at the

University of Missouri. Besides teaching high school until she was 80 years old, Rose was the perfect minister's wife, taking care of many of the social aspects of the congregation for her shy, more intellectual husband. D.E. Thomas died in 1935, and Rose died in 1974.

Horace Edward Thomas was born in LeMars, Iowa, in 1910 and moved to Columbia with his parents in 1922. He graduated from high school in 1926 and received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri in 1930. Horace continued his education at MU's 2-year medical school, earning a Master's degree in Anatomy in 1932. While there, he worked with Professor Herman Schlundt and completed research on his thesis, *Chronic Radiation Poisoning in Rats*, which was published in 1933.

He attended Harvard Medical School, graduating in 1934, followed by a rotating internship at San Diego County Hospital, from 1935 to 1936. He completed a surgical internship, from 1936 to 1938, and residency in surgery from 1938 to 1940, both at New Haven Hospital (Yale University). Thomas was called to active duty in the Army in October 1940 and assigned to the station hospital at Fort Benning, Georgia.

In mid-1942, he was appointed chief of surgery for a new station hospital that shipped out to Australia. The 171st Station Hospital moved from Melbourne to Port Moresby, New Guinea in December 1942, and within a few days began to receive casualties from operations in New Guinea and points north. After two years at Port Moresby, the fighting had moved much further north, so the hospital moved to Biak Island. However, Thomas was transferred to Hollandia, New Guinea, to become chief of surgery at the 167th Evacuation Hospital. The 167th moved to the Philippines and was being outfitted for an invasion of Japan when the atomic bombs were dropped. Thomas spent a brief time in occupied Japan before rotating back to the U.S. By the end of the war he had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

After a few months at a military hospital in California, he left the service and took a position as chief surgical resident at New Haven Hospital to brush up on civilian medicine before starting his private practice. He also took the examinations and was certified by the American Board of Surgery during the same period. Dr. Thomas set up a private surgical practice back in Columbia, Missouri, in October 1947, becoming the first board certified surgeon in town. In addition, he was surgeon to Stephens College and the University Student Health Services and Clinical Professor of Surgery at the Medical School.

In 1949, he married Helen Yeager, a pediatrician he met in Columbia. They had five daughters, Mary, JoAnn, Carol, Katherine (Davika), and Nancy, all of whom kept Thomas as their surname, even after they married. Helen Yeager Thomas died in 1981 at the age of 61. After more than 50 years in medicine, H.E. Thomas retired in 1985 to an active life of being a timekeeper for MU track meets, helping found the Columbia chapter of Habitat for Humanity, and working in his garden. He died in 2001 at the age of 91.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The David E. and Horace E. Thomas Papers consist of correspondence, manuscripts, class and clinical notes, research notes, photographs, printed articles and pamphlets, scrapbooks and miscellaneous materials related to the careers of a Congregational minister and professor of religion, and his son, a Columbia, Missouri, surgeon who spent World War II in military hospitals in the South Pacific. The papers include many of David's sermons, research for Horace's medical school thesis, *Chronic Radiation Poisoning in Rats*, and three years worth of weekly correspondence from Horace to his mother during WWII. See also two oral history interviews with Dr. H.E. Thomas in C3963 SHS Audio Cassette Collection, a.c. 19-20.

The papers are divided into three series, the **David E. Thomas** series and the **Horace E. Thomas** series, which are further subdivided, and the **Oversize** series. The papers are not representative of their entire lives, and not even all of their professional lives, but do allow enough of a glimpse into the minds of these two men to make this a worthwhile collection of documents.

The **D.E. Thomas** series is divided into two folders of biographical material and some 1934 correspondence, then 28 folders of religious writings, mostly by Thomas, arranged first by type of document, then alphabetically by title. It is evident by reading the titles of the sermons, articles, and chapter titles of his books, which are enumerated in the folder list following this inventory, that D.E. Thomas was not a typical “fire-and-brimstone” preacher, but very much the intellectual.

The series ends with a scrapbook of the University Congregational Church, Columbia, during the years that Thomas was the pastor, 1922-1927. The scrapbook has been taken apart and some of the material has been photocopied or scanned for preservation, but the original order has been maintained. Included are notices of lecture series; information about Bible College classes; reports and notices of various church activities; reports and information about the Junior Branch of the Church School; photos of student activities; a copy of the 1926 *Rosetta*, the annual of the Students Religious Council; and journal articles written by Rev. Thomas.

The **H.E. Thomas** series is arranged chronologically. Subseries include UM medical school notes; research and drafts of his thesis; Harvard Medical School class and clinical notes; prewar correspondence, photos and miscellaneous items; World War II correspondence and other military documents; a scrapbook of photographs of the places Thomas was stationed during the war; and miscellaneous postwar items.

Of particular interest are the painstaking research notes describing Thomas’s experiments with the laboratory rats for his master’s thesis at the University of Missouri medical school. At that time, it was thought that radium was actually beneficial for certain illnesses, but some people were beginning to realize that even low dosages of radiation could have adverse effects. Thomas’s mentor, Herman Schlundt, was himself doing pioneer work with radiation at MU. The medical school class notes, and especially the clinical notes, may be of interest to scholars of the history of medical education.

The correspondence and photographs that Horace sent to his mother every week from the South Pacific during World War II provide a glimpse of what it was like to spend the war in a situation that was away from the actual fighting. Although the doctors and nurses cared for war casualties and at times saw some terrible things, working at the hospitals in the South Pacific was often like working in a hospital almost anywhere, especially once the main construction was completed and they had all the equipment they needed. The letters and photographs reflect more of the tropical climate, the indigenous people, culture and scenery of New Guinea, and the off-hours recreation than the horrors of war. The documents even show how they spent the last year or so trying to beautify the area by planting flowers, etc. There are also several photographs of airplanes—some of them sporting “nose art” in the form of drawings of “mascots.”

There is very little information about Dr. Thomas’s private practice in Columbia, but there is one very interesting case study on the treatment and course of recovery of a woman upon whom he performed a difficult aortic embolectomy, including his operative note and post-operative progress notes. In addition to the case study, the postwar miscellaneous subseries consists of two folders of correspondence; four folders of personal business documents relating

to real estate and homebuilding matters; a folder of biographical material and awards; and two folders relating to the 1983 reunion of the 171st Hospital staff from World War II.

The **Oversize** series consists of diplomas from the family.

FOLDER LIST

David E. Thomas Series

- f. 1 Biographical materials
- f. 2 Correspondence, 1934
- f. 3-30 Religious writings, 1900s-1930s
 - f. 3-8 Articles/sermons – manuscripts
 - f. 3 D-G “Does Religion Improve with Age?” “Eternal Life,” “Fishers of Men,” “The Gloomy Optimist”
 - f. 4 H-I “How Much Would You Be Willing to Pay for Genuine Religion?” “Is the Present a Time of Crisis?” “It Is Finished”
 - f. 5 M-O “The Marks of a Great Teacher,” “The New and Living Way,” “Our Own Sacred Selves”
 - f. 6 R-T “Religion’s Silences,” “Some Intellectual Problems in Modern Religion,” “Tomorrow’s Leaders”
 - f. 7 U “The Unexplored Self,” “Unity and Progress in the Poem of Job”
 - f. 8 W, Misc. “Who Cares Where a Child Is Born?” “Will He Find Faith?”
 - f. 9-22 Book manuscript, *Religion as a Social Influence*
 - f. 9 Table of Contents/Introduction/Chapter 2 “Primitive Religion”
 - f. 10 Chap. 3-5 “Polytheistic Religions,” “The Higher Religions,” “Religion as a Search for Philosophical Unity”
 - f. 11 Chap. 6-7 “Religion, Psychologically Considered,” “Religion and Magic”
 - f. 12 Chap. 8-10 “Religion, Science,” “Religion & Mores,” “Religion & Ethics”
 - f. 13 Chap. 11-12 “Religion and the Economic Order,” “Religion & Govt.”
 - f. 14 Chap 12 (cont.)-14 “Religion and Education,” “Religious Education”
 - f. 15 Chap 14 (cont.)-16 “Religion and Art,” “Sociology of Religion: Materials”
 - f. 16 Chap. 17-18 “The Sociology of Religion: Procedure,” “Religious Leaders”
 - f. 17 Chap. 19 “Religious Founders”
 - f. 18 Chap. 20 “The Institutions of Religion: Their Characteristics”
 - f. 19 Chap. 21-22 “The Institutions of Religion: Their Tactics,” “The Evolution of Religion”
 - f. 20 Chap. 22 (cont.)-23 “Evolution of Religion”
 - f. 21 Chap. 24-25 “The Degradation of Religion,” “Social Control through Religion”
 - f. 22 Early draft of ending chapters
 - f. 23-28 Book manuscript, *The Church and the State University*
 - f. 23 Table of Contents, Introduction, Chap. 2 “The Church at Work at the State University Center”
 - f. 24 Chap. 2 (cont.)-3 “The Influence of the Church upon University Morals”
 - f. 25 Chap. 3 (cont.)-4 “Constructive Cooperation”
 - f. 26 Chap. 5-6 “Appreciation of the Science Mind by the Religionist” “Qualifications Required in University Religious Workers”
 - f. 27 Chap. 6 (cont.)-7 “The Church and the Educational Point of View”
 - f. 28 Chap. 8-9 “The School of Religion in a State University Atmosphere” “An Experiment in Religious Education by a Church at a State University”

- f. 29 Misc. manuscripts
- f. 30 Printed material, 1904-1930 – some of Thomas's articles/sermons
- f. 31-33 Scrapbook – University Congregational Church, Columbia, 1922-1927

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 - f. 34-48 Class notes, 1931-1932
 - f. 34-43 Pathology notes
 - f. 44-46 Pathology drawings
 - f. 47 Pathology tests
 - f. 48 Pharmacology notes
 - f. 49-59 Thesis: *Chronic Radium Poisoning in Rats*
 - f. 49-52 Research notes, 1931
 - f. 53 Review of literature
 - f. 54 Correspondence
 - f. 55-56 Early draft
 - f. 57-58 Final draft
 - f. 59 Published reprint of thesis, 1933
- f. 60-82 Harvard Medical School, 1932-1934
 - f. 60 Correspondence, 1932-1934
 - f. 61 Medical school notebooks
 - f. 62-72 Class notes, 1932-1933 – Surgery, Bacteriology, Endocrinology, Pediatrics, Cardiovascular disease, Diseases of the eyes, Gastro-intestinal, Infectious diseases, Pulmonary diseases
 - f. 73-82 Clinic notes, 1932-1934 – Dermatology, Genito-Urinary, Laryngology, Medicine, Nephritis, Neurology, Pediatrics, Otology, Public Health
- f. 83-85 Miscellaneous, 1935-1940
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- f. 86-104 World War II, 1942-1945
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 - f. 94-96 Military Records – 201 file, special orders, misc.
 - f. 97-104 Scrapbook, 1942-1945 – photos of the stations, hospitals, natives and countryside in Australia and New Guinea, also airplanes and news clippings
- f. 105-114 Miscellaneous materials, 1946-1985, n.d.
 - f. 105-106 Correspondence, 1946-1984
 - f. 107 Biographical materials
 - f. 108 Case Study – aortic embolectomy, 1949
 - f. 109-112 Personal Business – real estate and home building records, 1947-1967
 - f. 113-114 Reunion of 171st Station Hospital, 1983

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 Item 2 Diploma of David E. Thomas, Philosophy Degree
 Item 3 Diploma of Horace Thomas, 1930
 Item 4 Diploma of Elizabeth Yeager, 1940

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