



James Simons personal papers, 1875-1919
SCHS 478.18
Boxes 478/58 – 478/66

Creator: James Simons, 1839-1919.

Description: 3.25 linear ft.

Biographical/historical note: James Simons, Jr. (1839-1919) was a South Carolina attorney and state legislator. In the 1860s, he practiced law with his father James Simons (1813-1879) in the firm of Simons & Simons, and he was later a law partner of Rudolph Siegling and John D. Cappelmann (Simons, Siegling & Cappelmann). Educated at South Carolina College and the University of Leipzig, James Simons, Jr. served as an officer in Bachman's Battery during the War Between the States. He was prominent in Charleston business and cultural affairs, serving as president of the News & Courier Company, the chairman of the Public School Commissioners of Charleston, and president of the Carolina Art Association. Simons was also the president of the South Carolina State Society of the Cincinnati, an honorary member of the German Rifle Club, and an officer of the German Artillery, SCV, a state militia company. He was a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1878 to 1891 and served as the speaker of the House from 1882-1890. Along with Wylie Jones of Columbia (S.C.), James Simons served as a vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League.

In his biographical sketch of James Simons, historian Yates Snowden includes the following quote from a Charleston newspaper: "Mr. Simons was one of the most charming of men in his personality and a man of much scholarship and varied accomplishments. He not only kept up his interest in classical learning but all his life was a student of music. He slept very little, generally working or reading until after midnight, and rising by or before six in the morning, when he usually played the violin until breakfast. On the streets of the city his has been one of the best known and most familiar figures and his passing will be looking upon as removing one who was not only a type of all that was best in the Old South but an example of that sort of citizenship which feels that useful public service comes ahead of everything else."

Scope and content: Papers of James Simons include personal correspondence; political papers; correspondence and papers reflecting his activities relating to Charleston schools, the Society of the Cincinnati, the German Artillery, and the News & Courier newspaper; speeches; papers concerning Confederate veterans; and miscellaneous items. Papers relating to the Society of the Cincinnati (1875-1919) chiefly consist of correspondence, but also include miscellaneous items, and speeches by James Simons, one of which is entitled "Memories of Fifty Years in the Society."

Forms part of: Simons, Siegling & Cappelmann Records.

Search terms:

Simons, James, 1839-1919.
Simmons family.
Simons family.
Lawyers -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
Legislators -- South Carolina.

Series Outline:

478.18.01 Personal correspondence
478.18.02 Personal correspondence, arranged by correspondent
478.18.03 Political papers, 1881-1917
478.18.04 School papers
478.18.05 Paper relating to the Society of the Cincinnati
478.18.06 Miscellaneous personal papers of James Simons, 1877-1918
478.18.07 Simons family papers, 1878-1913

Container list:**BOX 58***478.18.01 Personal correspondence*

This series of correspondence, mostly arranged chronologically, mainly concerns personal, family, business, and some organizational affairs of James Simons. The correspondents, most of whom are family members, friends, and business associates, include the following: Bond ("Bonnie") I'on Simons, T. Grange Simons, Charles F. Adams (Boston, Mass.), Frederick W. Wagener, Augustine T. Smythe, Mary S. LeClerq (New York), Albert Bushnell Hart (Mass.), Henry A.M. Smith, Archibald M. Howe (Boston), Rowland Alston, Thomas Della Torre, Julian Mitchell, John Reed Scott, Alfred Dearing Harden, N. H. Davis (Texas), Henry R. Goetchius (Ga.), Asa Bird Gardiner (N.Y.), Hugh R. Garden (N.Y.), Nicholas Murray Butler (N.Y.), Rudolph Siegling, Jr., D.E.H. Smith, James L. Orr, Julia R. Bachman, Dr. R.L. Brodie, Governor Richard I. Manning, J.C. Hemphill, Robert Aldrich (Barnwell, S.C.), Herman Glaesel (N.Y.), Mary B. Cooper (Texas), August Kohn, Winslow Warren (Washington, D.C.), and Oswald A. Schilbach (a New York violin maker). Simons' correspondence with William A. Courtenay, James Dugue Ferguson and family (including Samuel Wragg Ferguson), James Lowndes, Martha R. Singleton, and Eleanor T. Wragg is included, and is foldered separately according to correspondent. Detailed notes on the personal correspondence follow the box container list (pages 4-7).

BOX 58

Personal correspondence, 1880-1906.

BOX 59

Personal correspondence, 1907-1916.

BOX 60

Personal correspondence, 1917-1919; and undated letters.

BOX 61

478.18.02 Personal correspondence, arranged by correspondent

William A. Courtenay, James DuGue Ferguson, James Lowndes, Martha R. Singleton, and Eleanor T. Wragg.

478.18.03 Political papers, 1881-1917

Mostly correspondence, the political papers of James Simons mainly reflect his tenure as a state legislator and speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives. Also included are a few letters and a certificate pertaining to his membership in the Anti-Imperialist League, a national organization that began in 1898 to oppose the U.S. annexation of the Philippine islands.

Members of the League opposed such U.S. expansion as contrary to American ideals of self-government and non-intervention. Its constitution stated that "This League was organized to aid in holding the United States true to the principles of the Declaration of Independence." Its members included such well-known figures as Mark Twain, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Andrew Carnegie, Henry James, Carl Schurz, and Edgar Lee Masters. A letter dated Feb. 21, 1910, to James Simons from Erving Winslow, secretary of the League, informs him that his name has been submitted as a vice-president. The position of vice-president in the League was largely ceremonial and Simons' participation in the organization is most prominently represented by a few documents of 1909-1910 (though there may be further mention of the subject in the personal and/or political correspondence; Winslow Warren, for instance, was an officer in the League, and one of Simons' frequent correspondents). A printed sheet (ca. 1917?) offers resolutions of citizens of Charleston, S.C. expressing their desire that "this nation be preserved from hostilities with any and all powers that are parties to the present unprecedented war."

BOX 62

478.18.04 School papers

School papers: correspondence, 1886-1912.

BOX 63

School papers: correspondence, 1912-1919.

School papers: miscellaneous records, 1877-1918.

BOX 64

478.18.05 Paper relating to the Society of the Cincinnati

Papers relating to the Society of the Cincinnati, 1875-1919:

Correspondence, 1875-1919.

Miscellaneous records, 1895-1899; and undated items.

Speeches by James Simons

BOX 65

478.18.06 Miscellaneous personal papers of James Simons, 1877-1918

.01 Correspondence relating to the News & Courier newspaper, 1895-1918, including Gustavus M. Middleton correspondence, 1911-1916.

.02 Speeches by James Simons.

.03 Papers relating to the German Artillery, 1877-1917.

- .04 Papers relating to Confederate veterans and the War Between the States, including the 1899 reunion at Thomson Auditorium in Charleston (program, etc.)
- .05 Miscellaneous items.

BOX 66

478.18. 07 Simons family papers, 1878-1913

These papers chiefly consist of legal documents pertaining to members of the Simons family. They include records relating to the estates of Thomas Grange Simons (1789-1863) and his wife Catherine Hume Simons (1787-1872); and the estate of Benjamin Simons (1860-1904). Other persons represented include Bond I'on Simons (the brother of Jame Simons, Jr.), Francis Kinloch Simons (1843-1927), I'on Simons (1839-1899), Mary Calder Simons (1873-1903), Thomas Grange Simons (1843-1927), William Lucas Simons (1845-1891), William Haskell Simons (1858-1893), Henry Mazyck Simons (1841-1909), and John Hume Simons (1823-1891). Also included is an agreement (1892) for the construction of a house "at the northeast corner of Broad and Trapman streets" in Charleston, with attached specifications. This is possibly 170 Broad Street.

Notes on the Personal Correspondence of James Simons:

1889:

Nov. 5, letter from Wade H. Manning concerning the last days and death of his father, Governor John L. Manning.

1894:

October, two letters from Mary Moncrief Allen concerning family matters and "the genealogy of the Simons family."

1896:

March/April, letters between Hugh R. Garden and Stuyvesant Fish (New York).

1897:

Dec. 12, letter from William A. Courtenay proposing the formation of a "publishing club foundation" to publish books of "literary merit in Charleston." Courtenay suggests beginning with the publication of poems by William J. Grayson. Another letter dated 29 April 1898 deals with the same subject.

1898:

Sept. 10, letter from Frederick W. Wagener concerning Charleston commerce, prohibition, the dispensary, etc.

1898-1899:

Letters to James Simons from Alfred Dearing Harden (New York).

1900:

March 8, printed letter from the Timrod Association regarding sales of reissued works by Henry Timrod.

March 17, letter from James Simons, gives advice to his brother Bond ("Bonnie") I'on Simons, who is having financial troubles and is unable to support himself.

April 2, letter from D.E.H. Smith concerning the genealogy of Thomas Middleton.

1901:

Jan. 30, letter about obtaining an African parrot.

March 5, letter from Asa Bird Gardiner in Savannah, Ga., concerning the remains of General Nathanael Greene.

August 13, letter from Eleanor T. Wragg regarding the “disposition” of the art school building of the Carolina Art Association. Her letters continue on into 1904.

Oct. 23, James Dugue Ferguson (Baltimore, Md.) writes about his wedding anniversary and the health of his wife Henrietta (sister of James Simons).

Nov. 5, letter from James D. Ferguson gives details on his wife’s medical condition.

1902:

Jan. 4, letter from August Kohn mentions the artist John Stolle and a portrait of William Crafts.

Feb. 11, letter from James D. Ferguson concerning the death of his wife Henrietta.

March 15, copies of letters between James Dugue Ferguson and a clergyman, Rev. Arthur C. Powell, who writes to JDF about his late wife’s concern for the spiritual welfare of their son James, and who invites JDF be confirmed in the church to set a good example for his son. JDF’s reply declines the invitation. There is also a letter of March 19 from JDF to James Simons regarding this exchange. Another (undated) letter of this period from Rheta Ferguson Brune concerns the death of her mother Henrietta Simons Ferguson.

Aug. 9, a cover letter from William A. Courtenay transmits a copy of an 1816 letter (translated from the German) from Jakob Stiefer in “Middle Rhine” (Germany) regarding conditions in the area, which is under Russian occupation. “We have seen and come in contact with the word and man from Russian campaign. It is said that war is God’s punishment, but instead of bettering, it demoralizes the human race.” Stiefer comments on European government, who wish to destroy “republics” and enslave the populace. The letter then goes into details about the settlement of the estate of Henry Diemroth (“this in the English is written as Thimroth”) who owned a “business house” in Charleston, S.C., as well as other property. This refers to Henry Timrod, the father of the poet Henry Timrod.

1903:

May 13, William A. Courtenay, writing from Florence, Italy, concerns, among other things, the “mismanagement” of a proposed monument to General Wade Hampton.

1904:

Feb. 19, letter from William A. Courtenay concerns a portrait of Dr. David Ramsay.

March 19, letter from James Fitz James Caldwell (1837-1925), a Greenwood and Newberry attorney, concerning “Pinckney’s Life of Calhoun,” and misconceptions about the character of South Carolina statesman John C. Calhoun.

Aug. 11, letter from WAC concerning a portrait by artist John Stolle.

Aug. 24 (and Sept. 7), letters from Mary B. Cooper in San Antonio, Texas, concerning parrots.

1906:

July 16, letter from St. J. Courtenay in Newry, S.C., regarding the health of his father, William A. Courtenay.

Sept. 10, letter from D.E.H. Smith regarding a painting of William Mason Smith “believed to be by St. Memin.”

Nov. 16, letter from James Lowndes concerning Rev. John Johnson, Rev. William Elliott (who “ended his days as an exile in Australia”), Thomas Jefferson, and other topics.

1907:

Several letters from Nicholas Murray Butler of New York.

1908:

Jan. 4, letter from Woodrow Wilson at Princeton University (N.J.) regarding some writings by Wilson.

1909:

Sept. 23, letter from Theodore Dreiser (author, and editor of *The Delineator*) writing to Simons as “some one who is interested in the sociological progress of America,” asking him to “make some suggestions for subjects” that might be appropriate for Dreiser’s publications.

1911:

Jan. 26, letter from William H. Taft (president of the American Red Cross) appointed James Simons as a member of the Charleston American Red Cross Endowment Fund Committee.

1912:

Aug. 20, letter from Charles Lawrence (N.Y.) regarding portraits of “two grandchildren of Major Gen. William Moultrie” on deposit at the Gibbes Art Gallery.

1913:

April-June, several letters from Samuel Wragg Ferguson in Biloxi, Miss., mainly concerning late Reconstruction politics in South Carolina, Ferguson’s involvement in Mississippi politics, and his efforts to obtain an appointment in the U.S. consular service.

1915:

Feb. 11, Winslow Warren, an attorney of Washington, D.C., writes of politics, the Panama Canal, government regulation of business, etc.

1916:

Aug. 16 (and Sept. 16) letter from Wm. [H.] Perkins, Jr. (Baltimore, Md.) regarding the origin of the “old Southern word josey” (a female garment). His letter also mentions that James D. Ferguson is at Mercy Hospital.

Oct. 23 (and Oct. 29), letter from James [F.] Ferguson, son of James Dugue Ferguson, regarding his father’s health and “final resting place.”

1917:

May 7, letter from Alexander Bruce of Toronto, Canada, sending an article to James Simons that was published in the *Church Times* (England), in which the “writer is bold enough to say...that the War between the North and the South did not arise out of the question of the abolition of slavery.”

Nov. 26, letter from Rheta Ferguson Brune, concerns the last illness and death of her father, James D. Ferguson, her need to bring his body to Charleston for burial, and funeral arrangements. "Papa has so often repeated the first line of the hymn 'Jesus, Savior of my soul' that I wish to have that sung..."

1918:

April 23, letter from Charles Van Dyke (Charleston, S.C.) regarding James Simons' invitation to him to "show my portraits at the Art Association reception to Mrs. Taft wife of the president."

May 20, letter from Rheta Ferguson Brune regarding the death of her brother James Ferguson, who died of pneumonia in Boston, Mass.

1919:

March 23, letter from J.C. Hemphill in Lexington (Va.), regarding the illness of James Simons. The letter also mentions changes in Charleston, which is "taking on cosmopolitan airs."