

ArMs 1978.124  
3 Record Cartons (3 Cubic Feet)  
RLIN NYKI590-940-0548  
4C - 4.1.C

Thomas Messenger Family Papers  
1829-1923  
(Bulk dates: 1853-1881)

Brooklyn Historical Society  
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## Introduction

The Thomas Messenger Family Papers consist of 3 cubic feet of personal and business papers associated with prominent Brooklyn tobacco merchant and President of the Brooklyn Bank, Thomas Messenger and his family. The materials conveyed in the collection primarily consist of handwritten personal and business correspondences, as well as receipts, ephemera, insurance policies, writings and business transactions dating from 1829-1923 with bulk dates of 1853-1881. The bulk of the collection comprises of materials written for or by Thomas Messenger. Correspondences to his wife, Ann, and youngest daughter, Marie, are also represented within the papers. The Messenger family's eldest daughter, Emma, is not significantly represented in these papers. Many documents are undated or have approximate dates assigned to them. The collection's donor is unknown and there are no restrictions on its use.

## Biographical Note

Thomas Messenger, son of John Messenger Esq., was born in 1810 in the county of Surrey in Southeast England. Having relocated to New York City at a very young age, Thomas Messenger spent the majority of his early and adult life in the area of Great Neck, Long Island. Thomas Messenger, his wife Ann Messenger, and daughters Emma and Marie (also known as Minnie) resided at the family farm in Great Neck known as Minnamere (or referenced as Minna-mere in some key correspondences) and 27 Pierrepont Street in Brooklyn New York.

Messenger's influence on the Great Neck community was far-reaching. Messenger was assigned as the Trustee of the Aged and Infirm Clergy fund of the diocese of Long Island and was well-known as an early supporter and largest stockholder of the Great Neck branch of the Flushing and North Shore Railroad, for which he was the receiver after his death. One of Thomas Messenger's greatest passions involved enriching the agricultural community of Queens County, New York. Messenger placed significant attention to the importing and breeding of foreign cattle, having specifically introduced the Hampshire Down Sheep into the New York agricultural community. His passion garnered him awards at local agricultural shows and secured his elected position of President of the Queens County Agricultural Society in 1877. The Messengers gradually expanded their modest Minnamere farm, resulting in the family becoming the largest landowners in the Great Neck community.

Messenger's influence outside of Long Island included his position as a well-known merchant in the areas of Brooklyn and Manhattan. Thomas and his brother, Harry Messenger, went into the tobacco business, residing their headquarters at 161 Maiden Lane in New York City under the name of *T. & H. Messenger & Co.* Outside of his position as a tobacco merchant, Messenger would gain further notoriety as the President of the Brooklyn Bank, a position he held for 25 years and continued up until his death on October 20, 1881.

At the time of his death, Messenger retained positions as Senior Director of the Home Insurance Company of New York, Treasurer of the Brooklyn City Hospital, Trustee of the Brooklyn Eye and Ear Infirmary and the Industrial School. Upon the death of Thomas and Ann Messenger, a memorial window was erected at the All Saints' Church in Great Neck. The Messengers were well known for their generous donations to both All Saints' Church and St. Ann's Church in Brooklyn. Ann Messenger, whose exact date of death is unknown, survived her husband by no more than 15 years. The eldest Messenger daughter, Emma Gignoux-Messenger, died in 1915, survived by sister, Marie, whose date of death is unknown.

## Reference:

Bailey, L. H. Cyclopedia of American Agriculture: A Popular Survey of Agricultural Conditions, Practices and Ideals in the United States and Canada. New York: The Macmillan Co, 1907.

History of Queens County, New York With Illustrations, Portraits, and Sketches of Prominent Families and Individuals. New York: W.W. Munsell and Co, 1882.

“The Messenger Window.” Brooklyn Eagle 2 Nov. 1896: 5.

Spinzia, Raymond E., and Judith A. Spinzia. Long Island's Prominent North Shore Families Their Estates and Their Country Homes. College Station, Tex: VirtualBookworm.com Pub, 2006.

## Scope and Content

The collection consists of 3 cubic feet of materials comprising of the personal and business papers of Thomas Messenger, his wife Ann Messenger and daughter Marie (Minnie) Messenger. The dates represented in the collection range from 1829-1923 with bulk dates of 1853-1881. Many of the materials are undated or approximated. The papers are divided into two Series:

Series I: Personal Papers, 1831-1923 and undated

Series II: Business Papers, 1829-1881 and undated

The materials in this collection are primarily in English. There are materials also written in French, Italian, and German, reflecting the extensive traveling the Messenger Family did overseas ca. 1874. The majority of the materials are in good condition. Any fragile materials encountered in the papers were re-housed in mylar sleeves.

### **Series I: Personal Papers, 1831-1923 and undated**

This series consists mainly of letters written to and from Thomas (Tho), Ann, and Marie (Minnie) Messenger. Most correspondences are hand written and include two undated postcards sent to Minnie Messenger at her address in Westchester County, NY. Letters written by Ann, Thomas or Minnie Messenger that are to one another are filed under the recipient's name. Many letters of introduction were also written on behalf of the Messenger family while they traveled abroad. Various pieces of ephemera are represented in this Series and consist of newspaper clippings, brochures, and advertisements. A large portion of this series contains receipts from their travels abroad and purchases from local merchants throughout the New York area ca. 1834-1885. Documents associated with the Messenger family's ties to St. Ann's Church in Brooklyn in the form of invitations, donation receipts and correspondence between Thomas Messenger and the Parish, are also represented. The Visual Materials folder contains a drawn map of the corner of Front and Fulton Streets (1880), a printed map of the Diocese of New York based on census figures from 1870, and an architectural rendering of a house located in Rome, Italy. Photographs are also included in this folder, mostly of unknown subjects. Concluding the Series are writings done by unstated Messenger family members that mainly consist of poetry, prose, and biblical verse. The documents in this Series are arranged chronologically by year.

### **Series II: Business Papers, 1829-1881 and undated**

This series consists mainly of correspondences to and from Thomas Messenger in reference to his position as President of the Brooklyn Bank. Business transactions, banking deposits and contracts are also represented. Included in this Series is a contract regarding the building of the Long Island

Railroad signed by prominent Long Island residences. Concluding the Series are fire insurance policies relating to buildings and goods in Brooklyn and Ten Marine Cargo Insurance policies from 1836-1845, which mostly concern the shipping of tobacco to various locations around the United States. The documents in this Series are arranged chronologically by year.

### **Processing Note**

The Thomas Messenger Family Papers originally consisted of 7 document boxes of materials, with many documents arranged into broad categories by format and subject. Most of the materials were in need of re-housing and further arrangement. Series titles were made in order to separate business from personal papers. In September of 2007, three folders of materials on the Messenger family were added to the collection and arranged accordingly. The Thomas Messenger Family Papers now comprise of 3 record cartons of materials dating from 1829-1923.

### **Related Material**

The following are accession numbers for paintings in the Brooklyn Historical Society's Fine Art Collection associated with the Messenger family:

1988.201.1 Harry Messenger  
1988.201.2 Emma Messenger  
1988.201.3 Thomas Messenger  
1988.201.4 Ann Messenger

The following are accession numbers for two tintypes of unidentified Messenger Family Members found in the Brooklyn Historical Society's Photography Collection:

1988.484.1  
1988.484.2

### **Access Points**

#### Personal Names (DACs)

Messenger, Ann  
Messenger, Harry  
Messenger, Marie Gerard  
Messenger, Thomas

#### Corporate Names (LCSH)

Brooklyn Bank (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)  
St. Ann's Church (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)  
T. & H. Messenger & Co.

#### Forms/Genres (AAT)

contracts  
correspondence  
insurance policies  
invitations  
obituaries

photographs  
receipts (financial records)

Geographic Names (LCSH)

Great Neck (N.Y.)  
Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)  
Manhattan (New York, N.Y.)  
Westchester Co., N.Y.

Subject (LCSH)

Banking  
Tobacco industry New York (State) New York.  
Travel  
Long Island Railroad  
Queens County Agricultural Society (N.Y.)

**Container List**

**Series I: Personal Papers, 1831-1923 and undated**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1 Letters to Ann Messenger	1832-1854
	2 Letters to Ann Messenger	1856-1864
	3 Letters to Ann Messenger	1865-1870
	4 Letters to Ann Messenger	1871-1874
	5 Letters to Ann Messenger	1875-1877
	6 Letters to Ann Messenger	1878-1879
	7 Letters to Ann Messenger	1880
	8 Letters to Ann Messenger	1881
	9 Letters to Ann Messenger	1882-1895
	10 Letters to Ann Messenger	undated
	11 Letters to Ann Messenger	undated
	12 Letters to Marie Messenger	1850-1865
	13 Letters to Minnie Messenger	1866-1869
	14 Letters to Minnie Messenger	1870-1874
	15 Letters to Minnie Messenger	1875-1879
	16 Letters to Minnie Messenger	1880-1885

<b><u>Box</u></b>	<b><u>Folder Title</u></b>	<b><u>Dates</u></b>
1	17 Letters to Minnie Messenger	1892-1919
	18 Letters to Minnie Messenger	undated
	19 Letters to Minnie Messenger	undated
	20 Letters from Minnie Messenger	undated
	21 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1832-1850
	22 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1852-1853
	23 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1854-1859
	24 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1860
	25 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1861
	26 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1862
	27 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1863-1865
	28 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1866
	29 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1867-1868
2	30 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1869
	31 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1870-1871
	32 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1872
	33 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1873
	34 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1874
	35 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1874
	36 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1875
	37 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1876-1877
	38 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1878-1879
	39 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1880
	40 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1881
	41 Letters to Thomas Messenger	ca. 1876-1881
	42 Letters to Thomas Messenger	undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
2	43 Letters to Thomas Messenger	undated
	44 Miscellaneous Thomas Messenger Letters	undated
	45 Letters from Thomas Messenger	1831-1872
	46 Letters from Thomas Messenger	1873-1874
	47 Letters from Thomas Messenger	1875-1881
	48 Letters from Thomas Messenger	undated
	49 Letters to Misc. Messenger Family Relatives	1854-1917 and undated
	50 Letters to Unidentified Persons	1832-1923 and undated
	51 Letters of Introduction for the Messenger Family	1837-1879 and undated
	52 Letters of Introduction for the Messenger Family	undated
	53 Business and Calling Cards	undated
3	54 Ephemera	1869-1919 and undated
	55 Household Inventories and Lists	1884 and undated
	56 Invitations	1843-1883
	57 Obituaries	1853-1881 and undated
	58 Receipts	1834-1873
	59 Receipts	1874
	60 Receipts	1875-1885
	61 Receipts	undated
	62 St. Ann's Church Materials	1862-1869 and undated
	63 Visual Materials	1864-1881 and undated
	64 Writings	undated

**Series II: Business Papers, 1829-1881 and undated**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
3	1 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1829-1859
	2 Letters to Thomas Messenger	1860-1864

3	Letters to Thomas Messenger	1870-1871
4	Letters to Thomas Messenger	1872-1874
5	Letters to Thomas Messenger	1875-1876
6	Letters to Thomas Messenger	1877
7	Letters to Thomas Messenger	1878-1879
8	Banking and Business Transactions	1840-1881
9	Banking and Business Transactions	undated
10	Insurance Policies	1836-1845 and undated

**3 (sm. box) Envelopes**