WILLIAM THORNE WILLIAMS

A MAN OF INTEGRITY

Kathleen M. Todd
Dr. Warlick
History 300
Spring 1987
William Thorne Williams was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on June 24, 1785. He moved to Savannah, Georgia in 1805 and set up business as a printer and bookseller. He was active in historic preservation, religion, government, education and social events. He married Harriet Costigan and they had four children. Mr. Williams died of a heart attack in Savannah on October 3, 1868 at the age of sixty-five.
The late 1700's was a time of reconstruction in the United States, the Revolutionary War ended and life was returning to normal. People were getting back to their everyday ways of life. It was amidst this time of renewal of life that William Thorne Williams was born on Friday, June 24, 1785 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to James and Maria Williams. At the age of twenty, in 1805, he moved to Savannah, Georgia and there set up business as a printer and bookseller. Mr. Williams was a tall, dignified man who was well thought of in the community. He was active in political and civic affairs such as historic preservation, church, government, banking, and education.

By trade he was a printer and a bookseller. His shop was located at 149 Bay Street. He printed local pamphlets, as well as books. The shop was run in an easy-going manner and patrons were allowed to browse among the latest publications of the time. The selections ranged from periodicals to light reading to law and text books. There was a reading room upstairs which was the gathering place of the notables of Savannah. They would meet here to read newspapers and journals and discuss current events.

In February of 1839, the Georgia Historical Society was organized for "the purpose of collecting, preserving, and diffusing information relating to the State of Georgia, and to American history generally." Mr. Williams was a charter member and one of the first curators. This would only seem natural considering his occupation in life as a bookseller.

William was a communicant at Christ Church and served as a vestryman for over fifty years. During this time, he was on the building committee and was present when the cornerstone for the
reconstruction of the church was laid February 26, 1833. He also printed bulletins and sermons, and helped raise funds for the support of the church.

Coming from a family that had fought in the Revolutionary War, it was no surprise that Mr. Williams fulfilled his military obligations. He did so in the Georgia Militia. He was commissioned Colonel on October 12, 1816 and from 1816 through 1824 served as Colonel and President of the First Regiment of Georgia Militia, also known as the Chatham Artillery. His main accomplishment was the rebuilding of the depleted number of troops following service rendered by the militia in the War of 1812.

Colonel Williams, as he liked to be called, had a long political career. He was first elected to public office in 1825 as an alderman for the City of Savannah. He served four terms in this position — from September 8, 1825-September 7, 1828 and from September 10, 1832-September 10, 1833. He was elected mayor by the Board of Aldermen on six occasions. These six one-year terms were from September 8, 1828-September 13, 1830; July 11, 1833-September 8, 1834, and September 13, 1841-December 3, 1844. Mayor Williams had the distinction of being the last mayor of Savannah to be elected by the Board of Aldermen. One of the more significant dealings of his 1841-1844 administration was the question of whether or not to cut a canal from Savannah to Macon in order to facilitate trade. After much study it was decided that it would be more cost effective and less time consuming to build a railroad passage. He was also very active in the Whig Party, of which he served as chairman in 1852. Even in 1868,
the year of his death, he had run for public office but was defeated.

Mr. Williams was, among other interests, involved in banking. He served on the Board of Directors of the Bank of Georgia for over twenty years, having served as president pro-tem in 1854 and chairman in 1859.

Education was also a great concern of Colonel Williams. He was on the Board of Directors of the Chatham Academy. He was most successful as treasurer and in 1857 and 1858 acquired the land on which the academy was built in 1877 and today houses the Chatham County Board of Education.

Colonel Williams was very active in whatever was happening in Savannah. When LaFayette visited Savannah, he was on the committee to prepare the celebration which took place on March 13, 1825. He was among those at the banquet who offered a toast that went as follows:

Dekalb, Steuben, Pulaski and yet another and a greater -- The chivalry of other lands concentrated in the cause of ours their names are hallowed by the glory of their deeds, and ten millions of freemen express their gratitude to the survivor.

He was present when the cornerstone to the county jail was laid March 26, 1845. He helped arrange the procession in honor of the death of former President of the United States, Zachary Taylor, who died in 1850. He also participated in a meeting at the Exchange on January 6, 1903, which was called to establish a public library.
With all of this going on, William was a family-man as well.

On March 13, 1811 he married Harriet Costigan. They had four children, James Seymour, Maria, Catherine, and Henry.

James was born December 11, 1811. He was a surveyor for the city by trade. He served in the military and died in New York at the age of sixty on September 7, 1871, having never married.

Maria was born April 2, 1813 and died on September 4, 1833 at the age of twenty. Catherine, the next child, was born in 1814 and died in Columbia, South Carolina on January 1, 1880 at the age of eighty-five, having never married.

The last child of this union, Henry, was born in 1813. He went to Harvard and became a lawyer. He served as Lieutenant of the Irish Volunteers. He also served on the first public school board. Unlike the other children, on November 27, 1845, Henry married Williamina Moore Berrien, the daughter of John McPherson Berrien. They in turn had four children - William Thorne, Eliza Berrien, Louisa Berrien and James Seymour. Henry died July 11, 1878 of typhoid fever.

The fate of Mrs. Williams is not known. It can only be speculated that she died sometime between Henry’s birth in 1813 and before September 4, 1833, as the death announcement for Maria, her daughter, does not mention her name as a survivor, only that of Colonel Williams. The Vital Statistics Department of Chatham County records the death of a Harriet Williams on September 4, 1820 of fever. Unfortunately, her age is listed as fifteen, too young to be Mrs. Williams.

William Thorne Williams departed this life at four o’clock on
the afternoon of Friday, October 3, 1868 at the age of 83 of a heart attack. He had suffered several mild attacks and the last was very sudden. He lived a full and productive life and left his mark on life in Savannah. He left his entire estate to his spinster daughter Catherine - probably to insure her security, since the two boys were set in careers of their own. His funeral took place at four o'clock on October 10, 1868 at Christ Church. Pall bearers were Aldermen Villalinga and William Hunter from the City Council; William Duncan and Captain John F. Wheaton of the Chatham Artillery; and Robert Habersham, William P. Hunter, and Judge Williamson representing Christ Church. Reverend Charles H. Coley, rector of Christ Church, performed the service. Colonel Williams was interred in Laurel Grove Cemetery in lot 528. His headstone reads:

Faithful in the discharge of every trust, spotless personal and mercantile integrity, affectionate and just in domestic federations, honorable, courteous and hospitable in social intercourse, sincere and charitable in religious faith and practice. He lived and died an example of a true Christian gentleman.

Colonel Williams did not achieve great wealth in this life, indeed he only owned a little property - a house on Liberty Street and later one on Perry Street - but he was a successful man. He was involved in the community and interested in the betterment of his fellowmen. Today few people, if any, know of the deeds of this fine man, but his life can not go unnoticed for he did much to improve the quality of life in Savannah and indeed the world.

2. Savannah Morning News, October 12, 1863.


5. Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #1275, Box 22, Folder 296 - J. F. Waring Collection.


7. Ibid.

8. Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #978, Register #1, p. 76-77 - Christ Church, Savannah Records.


10. Georgia Historical Society Minutes, February 13, 1863

11. Henry Kennedy - President of the Chatham Artillery - Interview, May 10, 1887.

12. Know Your Chatham Artillery - Military vertical files Savannah Public Library.


15. Ibid., p. 170.

16. Ibid., p. 170-175.

17. Savannah Morning News, July 8, 1852.

18. Ibid., April 2, 1868.

19. Ibid., May 8, 1841-May 71862. (Elections were held every year on the first Tuesday of May.)

20. Chatham County Deedbooks - Book GGG, Folio 122; Book GGG, Folio 204; Book QQQ, Folio 58; Book RRR, Folio 144, Book SSS, Folio 81.

21. Facing of the old Chatham Academy building located on the corner of Bull and Oglethorpe in Savannah.

23. Ibid., p. 357-358.
25. Ibid., p. 527.
27. Tombstone - Laurell Grove Cemetery - Lot 528.
29. Ibid., September 11, 1871.
31. Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #878, Register #1, p. 42.
32. Tombstone - Laurell Grove Cemetery - Lot 528.
33. Savannah Morning News, July 12, 1870.
34. Harden, p. 469.
35. Savannah Morning News, December 19, 1866.
36. Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #378, Register #1 p. 85 and 102, Register #2, p. 21 and 30.
37. Savannah Morning News, July 12, 1870.
38. Georgian, September 10, 1833.
40. Chatham County Will Book - #334 - W. Thorne Williams.
41. Savannah Morning News, Ocotber 11, 1868.
42. Tombstone - Laurell Grove Cemetery - Lot 528.
43. Chatham County Deedbook SS, Folio 524.
Liberty Inn Brochure.
Savannah City Directory 1858, p. 85.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Chatham Artillery Memorial - Bay Street, Savannah, Georgia.

Chatham County Index to Marriages 1806-1851, Page 263, Item 793.

Chatham County Index to Marriages 1851-1866.

Chatham County Index to Marriages 1866-1873.

Chatham County Public Library Vertical Files on the Military and Public Education.

Chatham County Superior Court Records - Deed Books - Book QQ, Folio 337; Book QQ, Folio 493; Book RR, Folio 327; Book ZZ, Folio 524; Book DDD, Folio 28; Book EEE, Folio 112; Book FFF, Folio 86; Book FFF, Folio 231; Book GGG, Folio 122; Book HHH, Folio 204; Book HHH, Folio 500; Book XXX, Folio 502; Book QQQ, Folio 58; Book RRR, Folio 144; Book SSS, Folio 81; Book XXX, Folio 162.

Chatham County Will Book: File #334 - Williams, W. Thorne; File #355 - James S. Williams; File #443 - Henry Williams.

Georgia Historical Society Minutes February 13, 1869.

Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #87, Box 1, Folder 2; Box 1, Folder 7; Box 2; Box 2; Box 3, Folder 1; Box 4, Folder 2; Box 5, Folder 1.

Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #112, Item 1.

Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #846, Box 10, Folder 174; Box 18, Folder 450; Box 20, Folder 495; Box 21, Folder 509A; Box 22, Folder 517; Box 22, Folder 522.

Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #871.

Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #978, Parrish Registers #1, #2, #3, #3 1/2, #4; Box 7, Folder 139; Box 8, Folder 154; Box 8, Folder 155.

Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #1070, Box 3, Folder 1; Box 17, Folder 3.

Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection #1275, Box 22, Folder 296; Box 22, Folder 298; Box 22, Folder 306; Box 22, Folder 307.

Kennedy, Henry - President of the Chatham Artillery - Interview May 10, 1987.

Know Your Chatham Artillery - Pamphlet.

Laurell Grove Cemetery - Savannah, Georgia: General Index to Keepers Record Books 1852-1938, Volume 4.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Liberty Inn Brochure.

Pennsylvania Historical Society Collection #167 - Records of Christ Church, Philadelphia, Baptisms 1763-1794.

Richland County Court House – Will of Catherine Williams – Box 157, Pack 4412.

Savannah City Directory – 1858, 1859, 1866, 1867.

United States Census Bureau, Heads of Families of the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790 – Pennsylvania, Volume 5.

Vital Statistics Records for Chatham County, Chatham County Board of Health for the years 1800-1900.

NEWSPAPERS


Georgian – 1818-1844.

Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger – 1808-1813.

Savannah Daily Republican – 1841.

OTHER SOURCES

City of Savannah, Department of Leisure Services, Savannah Heritage.


Georgia Chamber of Commerce. Facts of Georgia. Published by same, 1916.

Georgia Historical Society. Constitution, By-laws and List of
Members. Savannah: Published by Same, 1859.


APPENDIX

1. Baptismal Record Christ Church, Philadelphia.

2. Deed to Williams' home on Liberty Street - The present-day Liberty Inn.

3. William Thorne Williams' will.


5. Funeral account of William Thorne Williams.

6. Picture Cerveau's Savannah showing Williams' print shop.

7. Catherine Williams' will.
COLLECTIONS
OF
THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
OF
PENNSYLVANIA.

VOL. I

Christ Church

Baptisms 1769-1794.

PHILADELPHIA.
1906.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE OF BAPTISM</th>
<th>BAPTISMS</th>
<th>DATE OF BIRTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1785 Oct 23</td>
<td>Mary Daughter of Tho. &amp; Sarah</td>
<td>Sept. 26 1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murtagroyd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Oct. 23 1784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Son of Rob. &amp; Mary Christy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>Sept. 25 1785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Son of John &amp; Ann Chaloner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Aug. 22 1785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter of Tho. &amp; Mary Pratt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Aug. 6 1784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter of Tho. &amp; Mary Tot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>Mar. 12 1785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter of Robert &amp; Damaris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murphy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Will. H. Thorn</td>
<td>June 24 1785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Son of James &amp; Maria Williams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harris — aged 17 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is a handwritten document that is difficult to decipher due to the condition of the image. The text appears to be a legal document, possibly a mortgage or land grant, written in English. The text is not legible enough to transcribe accurately.
I, William Thorne Williams, of the City of Savannah, State of Georgia, do hereby declare to the one and only testator, myself, and my estate, all future lifetime.

I further direct that all the real estate as appraised which I have devise to any and said Daughter Catherine, shall be sold at such time during my lifetime may deem most advantageous, and the proceeds thereof shall be invested in bonds, stocks or other productive securities, or may be considered most advantageous, with liberty to sell any part or the whole before the proceeds be invested in other property.

I further further will and direct that in the defense of my said Daughter Catherine, that the said property, in whatsoever form it may be invested, be and it is hereby bequeathed to my Son Henry in Trust under the guard for the care and benefit of my wife and Children of the present marriage.

I hereby appoint my sons James, Francis, and Wesley my Executor and my Daughter Catherine Executrix of this my last Will and Testament.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 26th day of September, in the one thousand eight hundred and thirty-first year of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the reign of King George the third, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, the thirty-third.
State of Georgia,
County of Chatham:

PRESENT, Honorable Dominick J. Wyche, Ordinary for the

Personally appeared, William Nash 

subscribing witness to the annexed instrument of writing, purporting to be the last Will and Testament of William Henry Williams, late of Chatham County, deceased, who being duly sworn, deposed and said that he was present, and did see the said instrument of writing duly executed by the said William Henry Williams, and deponent further saith that the said William Henry Williams at the time of executing the said instrument of writing was, to the best of deponent's knowledge and belief of sound and disposing mind, memory and understanding; and that William Nash and Edward Jackson, in the presence of each other, and of the said William Henry Williams and at her request, signed their names as witnesses, to the due execution of the same.

Sworn and subscribed to before me this thirtieth day of ________, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and ______.

Henry Williams
Ordinary of Co.

Do solemnly swear that this writing contains the last Will and Testament of the within named William Henry Williams, deceased, so far as I know or believe, and that I will will and truly execute the same, in accordance with the laws of this State. So help me God.

Sworn and subscribed to before me this thirtieth day of ________, 1855.

Henry Williams
Ordinary of Co.
Court of Ordinary
Chatham County, November 27th 1868
Ordered by the Court that James S. Williams, and Henry Williams, Executor
and Catherina Williams, of the State of the State of Williams, appear
at the next December term of this Court
be held on the 7th day of December
next, and show cause, if any they can,
why judgement in fees for
Admissibly 0 is 0 fee
At f(1) two-fifths pence 1500
Tro an injury of six shillings 1.50
Recording six 2.50
Tro a Certificate 4.00
At. Rev. stamps for fees 11.00.
Should not be held against them; and
that a copy of this Rule be served
on them within ten days before the next term
of this Court.

November 27th 1868
Henry H. Metcalf
Ordinary, etc.
I, William Thorne Williams, do hereby make and declare this to be my last Will and Testament, revoking all prior Wills.

I further desire and request of my Daughter Catherine all the Estate I may die possessed of, both Real and Personal, to her sole use and disposing her natural lifetime.

I further will and direct that all the Real Estate as aforesaid which I may devise to my said Daughter Catherine shall be sold at such time and in such manner as the Executor may deem most advantageous; and the proceeds of such sale shall be invested in Money, Stocks, or other productive securities as may be considered most advantageous, with intent to sell any part of the whole proceed of the proceeds be invested in other property.

I hereby further will and direct that on the decease of my said Daughter Catherine, that the said property as mentioned from it may be invested, and it is declared is bequeathed to one son in trust, which may be for the use and benefit of himself and children of the present marriage.

I hereby appoint my Son James Semmes, and heirs, my Executors and my Daughter Catherine Executors of this my last Will and Testament.

In accordance with law, I have hereunto set my hand and seal in the City of Savannah, State of Georgia, this twentieth day of December, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-five.

William Thorne Williams

[Signature]
DEATH OF COL. WILLIAM THOMAS WILLIAMS.

Many of our readers, even in this city, will be startled by the announcement of the death of Col. William Thomas Williams, one of the oldest and most respected of the citizens of Savannah. He expired, calmly and peacefully, at half past four yesterday afternoon, at his residence on Orleans Square, in the eighty-fourth year of his age. The death of such a man deserves a more extended notice than we are now able to give. For the present, the following summary of his life and character must suffice.

Col. Williams was born in Philadelphia on the 24th day of June, 1785, and in 1805 removed to Savannah, where he constantly resided down to the time of his decease. He here engaged in the book trade, and for a period of about half a century was one of the most active, successful, and honorable of Savannah merchants. Probably since the beginning of the late war, that increasing age and the adverse circumstances of the Southern country compelled him to give up business.

It is difficult to enumerate all the public trusts which during a prolonged life, Col. Williams filled with honor to himself and to the advantage of the public. For several years, he was an Alderman of Savannah, and he was repeatedly elected Mayor.

In social as well as mercantile life, Col. Williams was a man of mark. Truly a refined and cultivated gentleman, his associations in earlier and in more mature life were of that class which gave to Savannah some of its greatest attractions. Some of them, in fact, to this day, others are fallen.

It is indeed to think how nearly all generation of men has passed away, and the associates to whom we refer for recreation, Wharton, W. M. Goodrich, and J. W. H. Herndon, and Col. J. W. Williams, R. W. Hyneman, and W. R. S. Bock and others, the association whose names recall thousand memories of their day. Col. Williams early and intimate associates we can recount but two or three survivors.

For some years, Col. Williams had suffered much from an affection of the chest, which occasionally disabled him from attending to business. Still, he permitted no trifling cause to keep him in doors. His last illness was sudden and severe, but his mind was clear and steady to the last, and his death peaceful. He was a communicant of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Savannah, and as will be seen by notice in another column, his funeral will take place to-morrow afternoon, at 4 o'clock. He died full of years, and was by all mourned as a man of a useful and an honorable career.

To his surviving children and grandchildren, we tender our heartfelt condolences for the loss which falls with peculiar heaviness on...
As the funeral procession moved up the aisle, a mournful strain was played upon the organ and when the service was ended and the last of the dead and quiet was restored, a service for the dead of the Protestant Royal Church was commenced by the Rev. Charles H. Coley, Rector of Chatham Church. He read the lesson beginning with the verse from Paul's First Epistle. The service closed with a prayer.

During the playing of the organ, the coffin was borne out again and placed in the hearse, where the lid of the coffin was closed. A silver plate containing the name and date of death of the deceased was placed upon the coffin. The men of the Chatham Artillery marched behind the hearse, followed by a long line of carriages containing relatives and friends of the deceased. On reaching Laurel Grove Cemetery, the military organization halted and formed by the gate, and paid a final salute to the remains. At the grave the funeral service was read by Rev. Charles H. Coley, and the body was deposited in its final resting place.

The funeral procession was one of the largest witnessed in Savannah for many years and showed the high respect and universal esteem with which the memory of Col. W. F. W. W. was regarded by all classes.
The State of South Carolina,
RICHLAND COUNTY.

By Archibald M. Ray, Judge of Probate of the County aforesaid:

TO ALL WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETING:

KNOW YE, that on the 26th day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine, the last will and testament of Miss Catherine Williams, deceased, was proved in open Court, and approved and allowed of before, and by the said Court, and the administration of all and singular the goods and chattels, rights and credits of the said deceased, within this State, was thereupon granted, and committed to the said Court unto

Mrs. Louise Berrien Kendall

being first duly sworn, well and faithfully to administer, and make a full and perfect inventory of all and singular the said goods and chattels, rights and credits, and to exhibit the same inventory unto the Clerk of the Court of Probate aforesaid, in order to be recorded on or before the 11th day of June next, and to render a true and just account, calculation and reckoning thereof, when thereunto required.

WITNESS, Archibald M. Ray, Judge of Probate of the said County, the 26th day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine, and in the 124th year of the Sovereignty and Independence of the United States of America.

Archibald M. Ray
Judge of Probate.
about $370.

Yours truly

Mabel B. Henderson

May 21st, 1910

Dear Mr. Boy.

The amount of property, left me by my aunt is as follows:

Cash $431.50

By R.R. Stocks $7.00

By Insurance $2,727

A trust bequest of $2,000 to the estate of

This is all that was in the package.