

ArMs 2006.030
1 box (1 document box)
0.5 cubic feet
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Guide to the William Patton Griffith Papers
1861-1937

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April, 2008
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April, 2008

Abstract

The William Patton Griffith Papers consist primarily of correspondence, writings, photographs, speeches, and clippings relating to all aspects of Griffith's participation as Grand Marshall in the Grand Army of the Republic and the Society of Old Brooklynites, among other civic activities in Brooklyn, with most of the collection focusing between the 1890s - 1930s. There are also a few items representative of Griffith's personal life, such as poems, programs, certificates and a swatch of flag bunting from the flag that flew over General Ulysses Grant's tomb in 1897.

Provenance

The William Patton Griffith Papers were donated to the Brooklyn Historical Society by Betty Shave in 2006 and subsequently accessioned as ArMs 2006.030.

Biographical Note

Civil War soldier William Patton Griffith was born in Washington, PA., on July 22, 1843. Griffith worked at *The Washington Reporter* as a reporter, editor, and poet, and enlisted in the Union Army in the 1860s. After the war Griffith served as New York State Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.). He also served as editor and publisher of *The Soldier's Journal*.¹ When the Order of Purple Heart was revived in 1932, he was the first Civil War veteran to receive the decoration.²

After his military service, Griffith went on to pursue a career as an editor at *The Pittsburgh Dispatch*, *The New York Herald*, *The World*, *The Brooklyn Eagle*, and *The Brooklyn Press*. Griffith later moved on to public service in Brooklyn, working as a court reporter in the Kings County Supreme Court and serving as the deputy City Clerk of Brooklyn. He was also an active member of the Kings County Republican Committee and served as a delegate to national and State encampments of the G.A.R., as well as aide to the staffs of G.A.R. Commanders-in-Chief, department commanders and local grand marshals.

Other veteran activities included being national commander of the Union Veteran Legion, the "long-service order" of the Civil War, commander of the G.A.R. Winchester Post 197 and G.A.R. county commander and State commander in 1928. In addition, Griffith served as marshal and patriarch of the Brooklyn Masonic Veterans and as historian and master of the Sylvan Grove Lodge 275. He was also a member of the Society of Old Brooklynites and the Kings County Republican Club.

At the age of 76, he studied chiropractic medicine and became a practicing chiropractor. Griffith participated in the New York State Chiropractic Society and the Long Island

¹ W.P. Griffith Dies; Civil War Soldier, (1936, February 18). *The New York Times*.

² Department of New York, G.A.R.- William Patton Griffith,
<http://www.suvcw.org/ny/gar/commanders/GARgriffith.htm>

District Chiropractic Society. William Patton Griffith died at the age of 92 on February 17, 1936.

Sources:

- 'Thinner Blue Line' Mourns Gen. Griffith, (1936, February 18). *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.
- W.P. Griffith Dies; Civil War Soldier, (1936, February 18). *The New York Times*.

Scope and Content

The William Patton Griffith Papers consist primarily of correspondence, writings, photographs, and clippings relating to all aspects of his activities in the Society of Old Brooklynites, the G.A.R., and other military veteran societies. Highlights of the collection include correspondence between William Patton Griffith and the general public, constituents, and political colleagues, such as letters to and from the office of Franklin Roosevelt, then Governor of New York. Among the notable items in this collection are a variety of speeches, clippings, programs, and certificates and other papers depicting Griffith's involvement in civic affairs such as the restoration of the General Slocum Statue in Brooklyn. In addition, there are some black and white photographs of Griffith attending a variety of public ceremonies and a few items representative of Griffith's personal life, such as poems, programs, certificates and a swatch of flag bunting from the flag that flew over General Ulysses Grant's tomb in 1897. Some items of correspondence are photocopies of originals not in this collection. The collection has no materials reflecting Griffith's time as a Civil War soldier.

System of Arrangement

The collection is organized thematically into the following six categories: Correspondence, Writings, Personal Papers, Professional Papers, Photographs, Clippings, and Artifact-swatch of flag bunting.

Conditions of Access and Use

Brooklyn Historical Society archives and manuscripts must be examined on site. Some materials in the collection are very brittle and fragile to touch. They must be handled with utmost care. Appointments to examine archives and manuscript materials must be made in advance. Please contact the Brooklyn Historical Society to learn of any additional conditions of access and use. For permission to publish, contact the Archivist.

Preferred Citation

William Patton Griffith Papers, ArMs 2006.030, Brooklyn Historical Society.

Language of Materials

All materials are in English.

Related Materials

The Brooklyn Historical Society has numerous collections pertaining to Civil War veterans. Some of the collections we have available are listed below:

- Albert Harnickell Papers, ArMS 1977.160, Brooklyn Historical Society: Contains materials related to Harnickell's activity in military and veterans' affairs, including correspondence and memorabilia from veterans' events.
- 5th New York Independent Battery Records, ArMs 1978.008, Brooklyn Historical Society: Contains veterans' records, including records of the George C. Strong Post of the Grand Army of the Republic
- Henry Lee Post of the G. A.R. Records, ArMs 1977.078, Brooklyn Historical Society: Collection includes records of the Henry R. Lee Post of the Grand Army of the Republic.

Access Points

Document Types:

Artifacts
Clippings
Correspondence
Photographs
Poems
Programs
Speeches

Subject Topics:

Freemasons --Brooklyn
War Memorials --United States

Subject Places:

Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) -- Social life and customs
Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) --Politics and government
United States, Army, Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, 102nd (1861-1865)
United States --History --Civil War --Veterans

Corporate Names:

Big Brothers of America
General Slocum (Steamboat)
Grand Army of the Republic
Society of Old Brooklynites (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
Union Veteran Legion of the United States

Personal Names:

Griffith, William Patton, 1843-1936
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1	Correspondence – Bath Soldiers’ Home	1929
1	2	Correspondence – Brooklyn Big Brother	1931
1	3	Correspondence – General	1892-1928
1	4	Correspondence – Grand Army of the Republic	1905-1933
1	5	Correspondence – William Patton Griffith’s 87 th Birthday	1930
1	6	Correspondence – Masons of Brooklyn	1932
1	7	Correspondence – Slocum Statue renovation	1928-1930; undated
1	8	Correspondence – Society of Old Brooklynites’ Dedication of the Fulton Statue	1930
1	9	Correspondence – Union Veteran Legion	1911; 1929-1932
1	10	Writings	1925-1929; undated
1	11	Personal Papers	1861-1930; undated
1	12	Professional Papers	1865-1930; undated
1	13	Clippings	1893-1937; undated
1	14	Photographs	1913-1929; undated
1	15	Swatch of flag bunting	1897