

# Herbert Thoms collection

Ms Coll 14



Toby A. Appel

2007

Yale University  
333 Cedar St.  
New Haven, CT 06520-8014  
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203-785-5636  
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<http://historical.medicine.yale.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Medical Historical Library, Cushing/Whitney Medical Library  
Yale University  
333 Cedar St.  
New Haven, CT 06520-8014  
203-737-1192  
203-785-5636  
historical.library@yale.edu  
<http://historical.medicine.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** Ms Coll 14

**CREATOR:** Thoms, Herbert, 1885-1972

**TITLE:** Herbert Thoms collection

**DATES:** 1906-1971

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 11 boxes (4 archival letter boxes, 3 tall legal boxes, and 4 flat boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** Materials are in English.

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists of correspondence, particularly a set of letters from Grantly Dick-Read; a nearly full set of articles by Thoms; and 11 scrapbooks and photograph albums concerning his years as a Yale medical student and early faculty member, his work on natural childbirth and rooming-in, and his interest in the history of Connecticut medicine.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/med.ms.0014>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/med.ms.0014>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Custodial History

The collection was donated at various times by Herbert Thoms.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

Yale does not own copyright to these materials.

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## Biographical / Historical

Herbert King Thoms, M.D. was a Yale obstetrician, historian of medicine, and artist/engraver. Born in 1885 in Waterbury, Connecticut, his early education was acquired at the Vermont Academy and the Waterbury High School. He received his M.D. from Yale in 1910. Following internships at the Backus Hospital in Norwich and Memorial Hospital in New London, he served as an assistant resident at the Sloane Hospital for Women in New York City. Then, having decided to specialize in obstetrics, he spent a year at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. In 1915, he returned to New Haven where he began an active practice in obstetrics. He was appointed an associate clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Yale, and in 1927 he became a member of the full-time faculty. He became chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 1947, a position he held until his retirement in 1953. During his academic career, he made many important contributions in his field including studies in pelvimetry, the plan for infant "rooming-in" after delivery in conjunction with Dr. Edith Jackson and members of the Department of Pediatrics, the "natural child birth" program, and studies in the Yale infertility clinic which he established. As a teacher, he was influential in bringing to the attention of his students the importance of a humanistic approach to medicine. Throughout his career he was a prolific author of books and articles on the history of medicine. His special interest was the early history of Connecticut medicine. In addition to his clinical and historical activities, he found the time to become an accomplished artist and engraver.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of correspondence, particularly a set of letters from Grantly Dick-Read; a nearly full set of articles by Thoms; and 11 scrapbooks and photograph albums concerning his years as a Yale medical student and early faculty member, his work on natural childbirth and rooming-in, and his interest in the history of Connecticut medicine.

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence

The correspondence represents materials that Thoms selected for the Library. Former Librarian of the Historical Collection, Madeline Stanton, wrote on one envelope of letters, "Letters that Dr. Thoms thought of some interest & importance & had therefore saved. Brought to H. L. [Historical Library] Nov. 1964."

b. 1, f. 1	<p>Letters from Grantly Dick-Read</p> <p>Correspondence on natural childbirth and training for childbirth. There is one letter from Thoms to Dick-Read. Includes carbon copy of G. Dick-Read, "Reply to the critique by the editors of the Obstetrical and Gynecological Survey...upon a contribution by Herbert Thoms and Robert H. Wyatt,...to American Journal of Public Health, 1950, 40: 797," January 1952.</p> <p>One letter dated March 27, 1950, was added to this folder in 2014.</p>	1947-1957
b. 1, f. 2	<p>Letters from John S. Fairbairn</p> <p>Correspondence from Fairbairn, an obstetrician at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, on obstetrics and the relationships among midwives, obstetricians, and gynecologists in England. Thoms met Fairbairn on his 1923 trip to England.</p>	1923-1939
b. 1, f. 3	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>Correspondence folders contain both letters received and carbons of Thoms's replies. Correspondence has been arranged by date and consists mainly of letters from obstetricians regarding pelvimetry and natural childbirth.</p>	1935-1946
b. 1, f. 4	Correspondence	1947-1949
b. 1, f. 5	Correspondence	1950
b. 1, f. 6	Correspondence	1951-1955
b. 1, f. 7	Correspondence	1956-1959
b. 1, f. 8	Correspondence	1960
b. 1, f. 9	Correspondence	1961-1963 and no date

**Series II: Typescripts and miscellany**

b. 1, f. 10	Typescript: Recollections of travel to England	1923
b. 1, f. 11	Typescript: "Professor Stromberg's Visit to New Haven" Professor Gustave Stromberg of the University of Upsala, Sweden, was invited to speak before the New Haven Medical Association on December 15, 1923. The typescript tells an amusing story that Madeline Stanton, Librarian of the Historical Library, declared to be "a fine old hoax perpetrated by Dr. Thoms."	1923
b. 1, f. 12	Typescript of "Pioneers in Medicine at Yale: A Profile Study"	no date
b. 1, f. 13	Typescript of "Expectant Parenthood"	ca. 1964-1972
b. 1, f. 14	Typescripts of articles: "Our Taller Girls and Childbirth" and "Understanding the Adolescent Girl"	no date
b. 1, f. 15	Typescripts of historical articles Includes: "The Redemption of Ezra Budlong" (poem); "Anton Chekhov--Writer and Physician"; "Emerson, Prophet of Atomic Warfare"; "The Thomas Ruggles' of Guilford"; "Yale Places Memorial in Guilford Cemetery"; and "The Versatile Doctors of Yale College, 1701-1815."	no date
b. 1, f. 16	<i>Almanac for Academics by T.G.B. with Illustrations by Herbert Thoms</i> Given by Lucia Fulton to Madeline Stanton, July 1960.	
b. 1, f. 17	Small engravings by Herbert Thoms Eleven original engravings and two cards with photographic copies of engravings. Several engravings were Christmas cards.	
b. 1, f. 18	Additional small engravings by Herbert Thoms These five small engravings were donated by Dr. Michael Kashgarian in 2015. They were removed from frames.	
b. 1, f. 19	Service award from Connecticut Medical Services, Inc. Connecticut Medical Services was a progressive health insurance organization begun in 1949. CMS celebrated its 20th anniversary in part by sending plaques to long-term physicians in the system. The letter with the plaque was dated August 27, 1969 and was signed by John M. C. Betts.	1969

## Series III: Natural childbirth and rooming-in: Minutes, articles, and clippings

b. 2, f. 1	Natural Childbirth Study Committee minutes Minutes of three meetings at Grace-New Haven Community Hospital and a copy of a letter from Kate Hyder, Associate Professor of Gynecologic and Obstetric Nursing, Yale School of Nursing.	1948
b. 2, f. 2	Review of Thoms's books Folder contains mostly clippings from professional journals reviewing Thom's books, especially his <i>Training for Childbirth: A Program of Natural Childbirth with Rooming-In</i> (1950) and <i>Understanding Natural Childbirth: A Book for the Expectant Mother</i> (1950).	1934-1962
b. 2, f. 3	Newspaper clippings on natural childbirth and rooming-in	ca. 1947-1951
b. 2, f. 4	Newspaper clippings on natural childbirth and rooming-in	ca. 1952-1957
b. 2, f. 5	Articles on natural childbirth collected by Herbert Thoms See also Herbert Thoms's own articles in Box 4.	1939-1953 and undated
b. 2, f. 6	Articles on rooming-in collected by Herbert Thoms Contains professional and popular articles. See also Herbert Thoms's own articles on these subjects in Box 4.	1950-1966
b. 2, f. 7	Articles on natural childbirth and rooming-in from the Medical Library's pamphlet files The Yale libraries, including the Medical Library, collected pamphlets on various subjects up to the mid-1960s.	1938-1952

**Series IV: Published articles, 1910-1971**

These were donated by Thoms to the Library and numbered by Madeline Stanton, Librarian of the Historical Collections. "Bibliography of Herbert Thoms" was published in the "Herbert Thoms Number," Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine, 25(6) (June 1953): 461-467. With the articles is a folder of Thoms and Stanton's notes on his bibliography. With Thoms's help, Stanton drafted a bibliography through 1960. Folders contain professional articles on obstetrics, articles on history of medicine, and popular articles.

b. 3, f. 1	Madeline Stanton and Herbert Thoms's notes on his bibliography	1964-1971
b. 3, f. 2	Articles	1910-1914
b. 3, f. 3	Articles	1915-1919
b. 3, f. 4	Articles	1920-1924
b. 3, f. 5	Articles	1925-1927
b. 3, f. 6	Articles	1928-1929
b. 3, f. 7	Articles	1930-1932
b. 3, f. 8	Articles	1933-1934
b. 3, f. 9	Articles	1935-1937
b. 3, f. 10	Articles	1938-1939
b. 4, f. 1	Articles	1940-1942
b. 4, f. 2	Articles	1943-1944
b. 4, f. 3	Articles	1945-1946
b. 4, f. 4	Articles	1947-1949
b. 4, f. 5	Articles	1950-1951
b. 4, f. 6	Articles	1952-1953
b. 4, f. 7	Articles	1954-1955
b. 4, f. 8	Articles	1956
b. 4, f. 9	Articles	1957-1958
b. 4, f. 10	Articles	1959-1960
b. 4, f. 11	Articles	1969-1971



**Series V: Scrapbooks**

b. 5	Yale scrapbook	1906-1910
	Scrapbook created when Thoms was a medical student at Yale. Like many other medical students in this period, Thoms had not attended a college. The medical school experience became like a college experience. The scrapbook has clippings and memorabilia on Yale sports, music, and other campus activities, as well as medical school materials. Thoms graduated from Yale School of Medicine in 1910.	
b. 6	Yale and professional scrapbook	1910-1932
	Includes reprints, invitations and announcements, and clippings related mostly to his professional activities. Of note is his opening of an office in New Haven in 1914 and a brochure, <i>Some Rules for Pregnant Women</i> , by Herbert Thoms, M.D. Organizations represented include the Connecticut State Medical Society, the New York Obstetrical Society, the American Gynecological Society, Nu Sigma Nu, and the Beaumont Medical Club.	
b. 7	Scrapbook of clippings about natural childbirth	1947-1950
	Scrapbook of newspaper clippings related to Thoms's pioneering program at Grace-New Haven Hospital to train women for "natural childbirth" (i.e., without anesthetics).	
b. 8	Scrapbook of magazine articles on natural childbirth and rooming-in	1947-1950
	At the same time as Thoms was training women for natural childbirth, Edith Jackson, M.D., and members of the Yale School of Nursing were pioneering the practice of "rooming-in" whereby the newborn remained in the hospital room with the mother.	
b. 9	Scrapbook: "Medical Landmarks in Connecticut, Vol. I"	
	Thoms was interested in the history of medicine from the beginning of his career. This scrapbook contains photographs by Thoms of homes and memorials related to early Connecticut physicians, along with Thoms's lengthy labels on the physicians. Names include William Henry Welch, Reuben Smith, Samuel Seabury, Erasmus Darwin Hudson, Elisha North, Simeon Smith, Oliver Wolcott, Seth Bird, Elihu Hubbard Smith, Samuel W. Gold, and Daniel Sheldon. Thoms's scrapbooks on the history of medicine appear to date from the 1950s.	
b. 9	Scrapbook: "Medical Landmarks in Connecticut, Vol. II"	
	Scrapbook contains more photographs, mostly taken by Thoms, of monuments, homes, and buildings related to early Connecticut physicians. These are accompanied by typed labels. Among the homes and memorials covered are the Stafford Springs House, Laboratory of Applied Physiology (Yale), Elisha Perkins House, Governor Peters House, William Tully House, Alcott Schoolhouse, John Winthrop Memorial, Alexander Wolcott House, Horace Wells Memorial, The Parsonage (Canterbury), William Beaumont Homestead, Noah Webster House, Benjamin Silliman House, Gaylord Farm Sanatorium, Timothy Dwight College and memorial to Eli Ives, 150 York Street (former home of the Yale School of Medicine), Blue Hills Hospital, Joseph A. Barratt Memorial, William Beaumont Memorial, Thomas Miner birthplace, Horace H. Hayden Memorial, and the Elnathan Chauncey House.	

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| b. 10 | <p>Scrapbook: "Medical Landmarks in Connecticut, Vol. III"</p> <p>Scrapbook contains more of Thoms's annotated photographs on landmarks related to Connecticut medicine. Photos include the Philip Turner House; home of Eli Todd; Chester Hunt medical office; birthplace of James Gates Percival; Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, 1958; the Institute of Living; Lyman Hall Memorial; Blue Hills Hospital; Shaw Mansion (Nathaniel Shaw Perkins); Meigs-Bishop House, Stokes House (Faculty Club, where Clifford Beers and others founded the Connecticut Society for Mental Hygiene); Joseph W. Alsop House; Daniel Lathrop House; David Bushnell Memorial; Rufus Blakeman House; and home of Benjamin Silliman (Fairfield).</p> |
| b. 10 | <p>Scrapbook: "William Beaumont Memorial, Lebanon, Connecticut"</p> <p>Scrapbook containing articles, letters, and photographs concerning physician and physiologist William Beaumont (1785-1853), and the dedication of a memorial in his birthplace of Lebanon, Connecticut on June 29, 1926. The Beaumont Medical Club at Yale played a major role in establishing the memorial. The scrapbook also contains memorabilia on other memorials to Beaumont.</p>  |
| b. 11 | <p>Jared Eliot Scrapbook, Volume I</p> <p>Scrapbook containing labeled photographs, copies of letters, and newspaper clippings concerning the eighteenth-century Connecticut minister/physician and agricultural improver, Jared Eliot (1685-1763), an early graduate of Yale College.</p>   |
| b. 11 | <p>Jared Eliot Scrapbook, Volume II</p> <p>Scrapbook containing the labelled photographs that Herbert Thoms took of Jared Eliot's home in Guilford, the restoration of his tombstone, and tombstones of members of Eliot's family.</p>   |
| b. 11 | <p>Scrapbook of newspaper articles on Thoms's engravings</p> <p>Thoms was an accomplished engraver who exhibited his works locally. He especially created etchings and charcoal drawings of Yale buildings, Connecticut buildings and landscapes (among them early physician's homes), and sailboats. The Historical Library holds several examples of Thoms's artwork.</p>  |

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## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Infertility  
Medicine -- Connecticut -- History  
Natural childbirth  
Newborn infants -- Care  
Obstetrics  
Obstetrics -- History  
Pelvimetry

### Genres / Formats

Correspondence  
Photographs  
Scrapbooks

### Occupations

Medical historians -- Connecticut  
Obstetricians -- Connecticut  
Physicians -- Connecticut

### Names

Beaumont, William, 1785-1853  
Dick-Read, Grantly, 1890-1959  
Eliot, Jared, 1685-1763  
Fairbairn, John Shields, 1865-1944

### Corporate Bodies

Beaumont Medical Club  
Grace-New Haven Community Hospital  
Yale University. School of Medicine  
Yale University. School of Medicine. Class of 1910