

# SLAWSON-TARKINGTON PAPERS 1804-1911

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**Collection #**

**M 0370**

**OM 0121**

**F 1191**

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Processed by  
Dotty Jobe  
February 1982

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

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| VOLUME               | 1 manuscript box and 2 oversize folders, 1 reel microfilm (.33 cubic feet)   |
| OF COLLECTION:       |  |
| COLLECTION DATES:    | 1804-1911  |
| PROVENANCE:          | Gift of Mrs. Barbara Haines Werbe, Indianapolis, IN, 15 January 1982   |
| RESTRICTIONS:        | none   |
| REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: | Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society   |
| ALTERNATE FORMATS:   | Microfilm  |
| OTHER FINDING AIDS:  | none   |
| RELATED HOLDINGS:    | M 0273/OM 156/BV 1740-1743 John S. Tarkington; M 0274/OMB 0018 Tarkington-Jameson Papers; M 0411 Susanah Tarkington Papers; OMB 0024 Susanah Jameson Papers; F 0357-0358/BV 1553 Newton Booth Tarkington Collection; SC 1437 Joseph Tarkington. See also <i>The Hermit of Capri</i> by John S. Tarkington, 1910 [I 813 T188h]; <i>Posthumous Address to Alumni</i> |

*of De Pauw University* by John S. Tarkington, 1912 [I 378 D419t]; and the *Autobiography of Rev. Joseph Tarkington*, 1899 [BX 8495 .T27 A3 1899]. See also entries in the card catalogue under Tarkington.

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1982.0104

NOTES: This collection originally included a Social Register/Gift Record volume which has been processed separately as BV 1989: Mrs. John N. Carey

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Papers of the Slawson-Tarkington Families document the lives of two Indiana families. Both families came to Indiana in the early part of the nineteenth century. The Slawsons came west from New York state and settled in Switzerland County, Indiana on a small farm in 1819. The Tarkingtons came from Tennessee and settled near Greensburg in 1815. The Slawsons and Tarkingtons are related through marriage.

The Slawson family consisted of Simeon Slawson (1777-1858) and his wife Martha Wood Slawson (1786-1866). They were married in 1805 and bore several children: Maria (1806-1889), Malissa (1807-1831), Delanson (1810-1845), Mahala (1815-1831), Simeon Jr. (1818-1858), and Matilda (1820-n.d.)

Four of the Slawson children married. The oldest, Maria or Martha as she sometimes went by, married Joseph Tarkington in 1831. Delanson married Melinda Clarke in 1832. Matilda married Augustus Welch in 1841 and Simeon Slawson Jr. married in 1846.

The Tarkington family history in Indiana began with Joseph Tarkington (1800-1891) becoming a circuit preacher in 1821. He served as a preacher and minister until his retirement in 1862. In 1831 he married Maria Slawson (1806-1889). While Joseph preached and moved from Brookville to Vincennes they maintained a small farm near Greensburg as a permanent residence. For a short time he served as an agent for Indiana Asbury University as well. Their oldest child, John S., graduated from Indiana Asbury University in 1852, became a lawyer and moved to Indianapolis. John S. was the father of Booth Tarkington. Mary (1834-n.d.) in 1860 married a Dr. John H. Alexander and moved to Milford, Indiana where they became socially prominent in Greensburg and Milford society. Martha (1836-n.d.) married in 1858 a young and ambitious man by the name of Daniel Stewart and moved to Indianapolis. They became prominent in Indianapolis business and social affairs. The next son, Joseph (1837-1902) became a physician in Washington, D.C. after serving in the Seventh Indiana Regiment during the Civil War. He graduated from both Georgetown and Columbian Medical Institutes. In 1900, due to his health, he moved back to Greensburg to the family farm. [Indianapolis Journal, May 2, 1902.] William S. Tarkington (1841-n.d.) moved to Indianapolis and worked for the United States Revenue Service. Ellen, a daughter (1843-1861), died suddenly at the age of 17. Lastly there was Matthew (1848-1911), who had moved west and settled in Tulared, California in 1889. In the papers, Matthew is also known as "Sim."

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## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of 1 box and 2 oversize folders, the bulk of which covers the period from the 1830's to the early 1850's. This seemed to be when the children were growing up, getting married, and leaving home for the first time. The collection largely consist of family papers.

The first two folders contain letters, 1804-1864, of the Slawson Family members other than Delanson and his wife Melinda. The first five letters were written from New York before their move to Indiana. Most of the letters were

written by relatives and concern family health, family businesses, food prices and the whereabouts of other family members. A letter dated September 24, 1847, from a nephew who ran a business in New Orleans, had some clever remarks on the Mexican War and Polk.

The next three folders consist of letters to Martha and Simeon Slawson from their son and daughter-in-law, Delanson and Melinda who moved to Indianapolis in 1838. Delanson was a farmer who owned 160 acres of land just north of Indianapolis.

Delanson died in 1845, forcing Melinda to sell the farm in order to pay their debts. Much of the correspondence is from Melinda, who still kept in touch with the Slawsons after Delanson's death, concerning the needs of their children and her fears. In 1851 Melinda married for a second time, one Isaac Pugh. In 1852 Melinda died in childbirth and Isaac Pugh kept in touch with the Slawsons for about a year relating his grief and his concern over Melinda and Delanson's children.

Folder Six consists of papers of the Slawson family. Most of the material is undated and is composed of poetry and miscellaneous writings attributed to Slawson daughters. Of special interest in this folder is an Indiana Asbury University Perpetual Scholarship purchased by Simeon Slawson in 1852. Also included are drawings done of the layouts of a log cabin and a brick home built by Simeon Slawson in Indiana.

Folder Seven and Eight consist of Tarkington family correspondence and papers. Much of folder 7 consists of correspondence relating to Martha or Joseph Tarkington from the period 1835-1889. Several letters written to Joseph by his wife are signed Moravia. Included are letters from their children as well as memorials written about Joseph and Martha upon their deaths.

Folder 8 includes letters between the Tarkington children as well as some miscellaneous papers that include several of the children's obituaries. Three of the Tarkington boys enlisted during the Civil War. John S., served as a Captain in the 132nd Indiana Regiment, Joseph served in the Seventh Indiana Regiment and William served as a Captain in the Regular Army for two years and then resigned. Several of their letters to each other are enclosed. Joseph served in Springfield and then in Cumberland, Maryland. A letter of interest is one from Martha to William (Will) from Paris, France dated August 24, 1889 in which she discourses on the French-German problem and France's fear of Bismark. Folder 9 contains three land grant deeds signed by James Monroe for Simon Slawson dated 1822, 1823.

All of the above materials were microfilmed by the Indiana Historical Society in August, 1994.

Photographs comprising 94 pictures covering 60 years (1850-1910), are stored in visual collections.

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## FOLDER INVENTORY

| FOLDER | CONTENTS  |
|--------|---|
| 1      | Correspondence, 1804-1844 of the Slawson family. 20 items.  |
| 2      | Correspondence, 1845-1864 of the Slawson family. 19 items.  |
| 3      | Correspondence, 1822-1845, written by Delanson Slawson and his wife Melinda to his parents-Simeon and Martha Slawson. 17 items. |
| 4      | Correspondence, 1845-1848, written by Delanson Slawson and his wife Melinda to his parents-Simeon and Martha Slawson. 12 items. |
| 5      | Correspondence, 1848-1853, written by Melinda Slawson and commencing in 1851 by her second husband-Isaac Pugh. 13 items.        |
| 6      | Obituary of Martha Wood Slawson, Perpetual Scholarship for Indiana Asbury   |

University dated June 16, 1852, manuscript poems attributed to Martha and Melinda Slawson and miscellaneous papers and clippings. 21 items. (See also OM 0121, Folder 1)

- 7 Correspondence to or from Joseph and Martha Tarkington, 1835-1889. Included are memorials to both Joseph and Martha Tarkington. 11 items.
- 8 Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers, 1831-1911 of various Tarkington family members. Also included are photocopies of newspaper clippings. 25 Items.
- 9 (OM 0121) Two land grant deeds signed by James Monroe and one signed by J. Q. Adams for Simeon Slawson, dated 1822, 1823, 1825. 3 items.

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## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's [online catalog](#)
2. Click on the "Local Catalog" icon.
3. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and **four** digits (e.g., M 0715, SC 2234).
4. When you find the collection, go to the "Holdings" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

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