

Collection #  
M 0639  
OM 0297

**VARNEY-PORTER FAMILY PAPERS,  
1756-1939 (BULK 1808-1922)**

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Processed by:  
Paul Brockman  
7 October 1993  
Updated 11 May 2004

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** 9 manuscript boxes, 2 oversize manuscript folders, 2 photograph boxes, 3 OVA photograph folders

**COLLECTION DATES:** Inclusive 1756-1939; Bulk, 1808-1922

**PROVENANCE:** Barbara A. Walters for the estate of Constance Varney Cannon Van Devanter, Burnsville, North Carolina, 26 August 1991

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

**REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:** Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

**ALTERNATE FORMATS:** None

**RELATED HOLDINGS:** Albert Gallatin Porter Collection (M 0396)

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 1991.0692

**NOTES:**

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This collection primarily consists of the papers and photographs of several individuals connected with the Varney and Porter families:

Thomas Randolph (1771-1811) was born in Richmond, Virginia, attended William & Mary College, studied law, and came to the Indiana Territory in 1807. Shortly after his arrival, Randolph was appointed Attorney General for the territory by Governor William Henry Harrison. In 1810 he married Catherine Lawrence, a stepdaughter of General James Dill. Randolph was the Virginia, or pro-slavery, party's choice for Congress in 1809, but he was defeated by Jonathan Jennings in the election for Territorial Representative by thirty-nine votes. Randolph contested the election, but his appeal was denied by the election committee. Randolph joined Governor Harrison's army as a volunteer aid and was killed at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Albert Gallatin Porter (1824-1897) was an Indianapolis politician, attorney, and historian. He was a legal partner at various times with David MacDonald, Benjamin Harrison, William P. Fishback, and Cyrus C. Hines. Porter served as Indianapolis city attorney, 1851-1853, reporter for the Indiana Supreme Court, 1853-1856, and member of the Indianapolis City Council, 1857-1859. From 1859-1863 Porter served as a Republican member of the U.S. House of Representative and was the first comptroller for the U.S. Treasury Department, 1878-1880. Porter served as governor of Indiana, 1881-1885, and was the U.S. minister to Italy, 1889-1891. He was also a collector of Indiana historical research materials which he intended to use in writing a history of the state.

Almon Libby Varney (1839-1922) was born in Windham, Maine, served as a lieutenant in ordnance with the 13th Maine Regiment during the Civil War, and married Hannah Josephine Gibson (1843-19 ) of Medford, Massachusetts in 1866. Varney was a career army officer which included serving as commander of the arsenals in Watertown, Massachusetts (1889-1892), Indianapolis (1892-1899), and San Antonio, Texas (1899-1903). Varney attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel before his retirement from active service in 1903. The Varneys had two children, Gordon Edward (1867-1931), owner of an electrical engineering business in Indianapolis from 1900-1919, and Theodore (1874-19 ) who also was in the electrical engineering business in Indianapolis. In 1898, Gordon Varney married Katharine Porter, the daughter of Edward Porter ( -1909) and granddaughter of Albert Gallatin Porter. They had three children, Gordon Varney, Jr., Porter Varney, and Josephine Varney Cannon.

Sources: McDonald, *A History of Freemasonry in Indiana*, p.44.

Society of Indiana Pioneers, *Yearbook*, 1963, pp. 3-18.

Pumroy & Brockman, *Guide to Manuscript Collections, Indiana Historical Society and Indiana State Library*, pp. 149-150.

Peat/Ruegamer, *Portraits and Painters of the Governors of Indiana*, p. 52.

Information in Collection.

*Indiana Biography Series (ISL)*, v. 3, p. 191.

*Indiana Biography Series (ISL)*, v. 7, p. 14.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers contain the correspondence, legal and legislative documents, historical research, and genealogical information for the Randolph, Porter, and Varney families. Included are the correspondence and legal papers of Thomas Randolph while serving as Attorney General for Indiana Territory. Among the correspondence are three letters to Randolph from Governor William Henry Harrison (1809-1810) regarding legal territorial matters. Also included are legal and legislative documents regarding the Indiana Territory. These contain the court martial proceedings, testimonies, and related materials involving charges against Captain George Floyd by Lieutenant Ambrose Whitlock and by Captain Thornton Posey against Lieutenant Whitlock at Fort Knox II, Knox County, March-May, 1811. There are also letters of General James Dill, a businessman and militia officer from Dearborn County, who adopted Randolph's daughter, Mary, after his death at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Among the Porter family papers are letters to Albert Gallatin Porter from relatives and friends, mostly from 1839-1849, regarding family and personal matters. Among those writing to Porter are his uncle, Omer Tousey, his sister, Anne, his father, Thomas, his brother, A. O., and leading individuals of the period such as Newton Booth and Henry Ward Beecher. There is also correspondence, legal documents, and military appointments regarding Thomas Porter, 1818-1848, correspondence between members of the Porter family, genealogical related research and correspondence regarding Porter and related families. Also included are Columbus, Indiana, land and election records, 1821-1848, and general correspondence and related materials regarding other members of the Porter family.

Varney family papers include personal and military correspondence of Lieutenant Colonel A. L. Varney, 1861-1922. There are also family letters to Mrs. A. L. Varney, 1895-1908, and personal letters to the Varney's children and grandchildren. Most prominent in number of letters are those of Gordon E. Varney and his wife, Katharine Porter Varney. Topics in these letters include general family information and various other subjects of the times. Also included are papers and information related to Katharine Varney's participation in the Indianapolis Woman's Club. There is also numerous letters regarding Varney and Porter family histories. The Varney papers also include Colonel Varney's travel journals abroad, 1905-1906, and his genealogical notebooks and research information. There is also a significant number of photographs from the 1850s to the 1940s representing several photographic processes. Subjects of the images include members of the Porter and Varney families, their residences including A. G. Porter's house in Indianapolis and the George and Katharine Varney home in Woodruff Place, Indianapolis, and their recreational activities such as vacations overseas, Mexico, and the east coast of the United States.

The papers also include historical research collected by General W. H. H., Terrell for a proposed history of Indiana. Materials include mainly clippings and handwritten notes about important individuals, places, and events in Indiana history.

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