

## William J. Grayson Collection

*The Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library  
Compiled by Harlan Greene and Kathleen Gray, June 2008*

Collation: 0.5 ft

Description: The William J. Grayson collection was found among uncatalogued books at the Charleston County Public Library in 1998. The collection consists of the second edition of *The Hireling and the Slave*, an annotated edition of *The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora and Other Poems*, holograph manuscript of the narrative poem "Chicora", holograph manuscript of a portion of *The Hireling and the Slave*, and a bound volume containing poems.

The copy of *The Hireling and the Slave* (Charleston: John Russell, 1855) is the second edition of the volume, the first having been published in 1854. The front page bears the inscription "Maria W. Ogier 1855 from Her Father William J. Grayson."

The copy of *The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora and Other Poems* (Charleston: McCarter & Co., 1856) is heavily revised in Grayson's hand and includes cross-outs, pasted over sections, written over lines, and laying in of at least one new poem. It is possible the text was reworked for a new edition that was never published.

The holograph manuscript of the poem "Chicora" contains forty-nine pages bound in a hand-sewn booklet. The text almost exactly matches the text of the published version.

The holograph manuscript portion from *The Hireling and the Slave* consists of one folded sheet of paper that contains verse comparing and contrasting Florence Nightingale and Harriet Beecher Stowe. This section of *The Hireling...* does not appear in the published second edition of the work from 1855. However, portions of it are included in *The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora and Other Poems* published in 1856 (p. 41–43).

The bound volume is a blank book, the cover of which is embossed with the following inscription: "Orderly Book. Daniel Stevens; Lieu:Col:Commandant. Regiment of Artillery 1801."<sup>1</sup> The first forty pages of the book are filled with handwritten poems, while the rest of the book remains blank. The poems include: "The Vision of Mirza: No. 159 Spectator," "Three Score Years and Seven," "The Lament of Fezzan for her Chief", "The Power and the Province of Poetry," "Poetry Multiplies Enjoyment," "Poetry Endears Solitude," "Poetry Elevates the Soul," "The Round Table Visited: Ladies at Work for Confederate Troops," "The Round Table Revisited: The Ladies Complain of Being Misrepresented," "To My Wife," "To Maria G. Parker" (his daughter), "Three Score Years and Thirteen," and "Life." Versions of several of these poems were published in either *The Hireling...and Other Poems* (1856) or *Selected Poems by William J. Grayson* (1907).

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Stevens was the grandfather of William J. Grayson's wife, Sarah Matilda Somersall.

Historical Note: William J. Grayson was born in Beaufort District, South Carolina on November 12, 1788 to William John and Susannah Greene Grayson. He was educated at a number of private schools before gaining admittance to South Carolina College, from which he graduated in 1809. In 1814, Grayson married Sarah Matilda Somarsall, granddaughter of Colonel Daniel Stevens (1746–1835), hero of the Revolutionary War, Commander of a Regiment of Artillery in Charleston, and former mayor of Charleston.

Grayson's first foray into politics came in 1813, when he was elected to the South Carolina State Legislature as the representative from St. Helena's Parish. His career in politics included positions in the South Carolina House of Representatives (1813–1815, 1822–1825), the South Carolina Senate (1826–1831), Commissioner in Equity for Beaufort District (1831), and two terms in the United States Congress (1833–1835, 1835–1837) as a Nullifier.

In addition to his political life, Grayson was also a teacher, attorney, businessman, public servant, and writer. In the 1850s, he argued against secession and published his best-known work, *The Hireling and the Slave* (1854), to protest Harriet Beecher Stowe's view of slavery as expressed in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Grayson's seminal work contrasts the life of a slave to that of a wage earner, arguing in favor of an agrarian, pro-slavery society. *The Hireling and the Slave* went through two editions and was later (1856) republished as *The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora, and Other Poems*. The latter volume included "Chicora," a long narrative about Native Americans in verse, and other poems. Other works by Grayson include *The Union, Past and Future, How It Works and How to Save It* (1850), *The Letters of Curtius* (1851), *The Country* (1858), *Marion* (1860), *James Louis Petigru, a Biographical Sketch* (1866), and *Witness to Sorrow, the Antebellum Autobiography of William J. Grayson* (1990) (the latter two works published posthumously).

William J. Grayson died at the home of his daughter in Newberry, SC on October 4, 1863. The manuscript diary of William J. Grayson is part of the collections of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC. A nearly complete version of the diary was published by Samuel G. Stoney in the *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* (1947–1950).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Biographical information abstracted from *Witness to Sorrow, the Antebellum Autobiography of William J. Grayson* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990); *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 3: Antebellum Writers in New York and the South* (Gale Group, 1979); *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* (available online at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>).

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## Collection Outline

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|------|---|----------|
| I.   | <i>The Hireling and the Slave</i> , William J. Grayson.<br>Charleston: John Russell, 1855, 2nd edition.             | Folder 1 |
| II.  | <i>The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora and Other Poems</i><br>William J. Grayson. Charleston: McCarter & Co., 1856. | Folder 2 |
| III. | Holograph mss of poem "Chicora", n.d.   | Folder 3 |
| IV.  | Holograph mss of a portion of <i>The Hireling and the Slave</i> , n.d.  | Folder 4 |
| V.   | Bound volume containing holograph versions of various poems, n.d.   | Folder 5 |