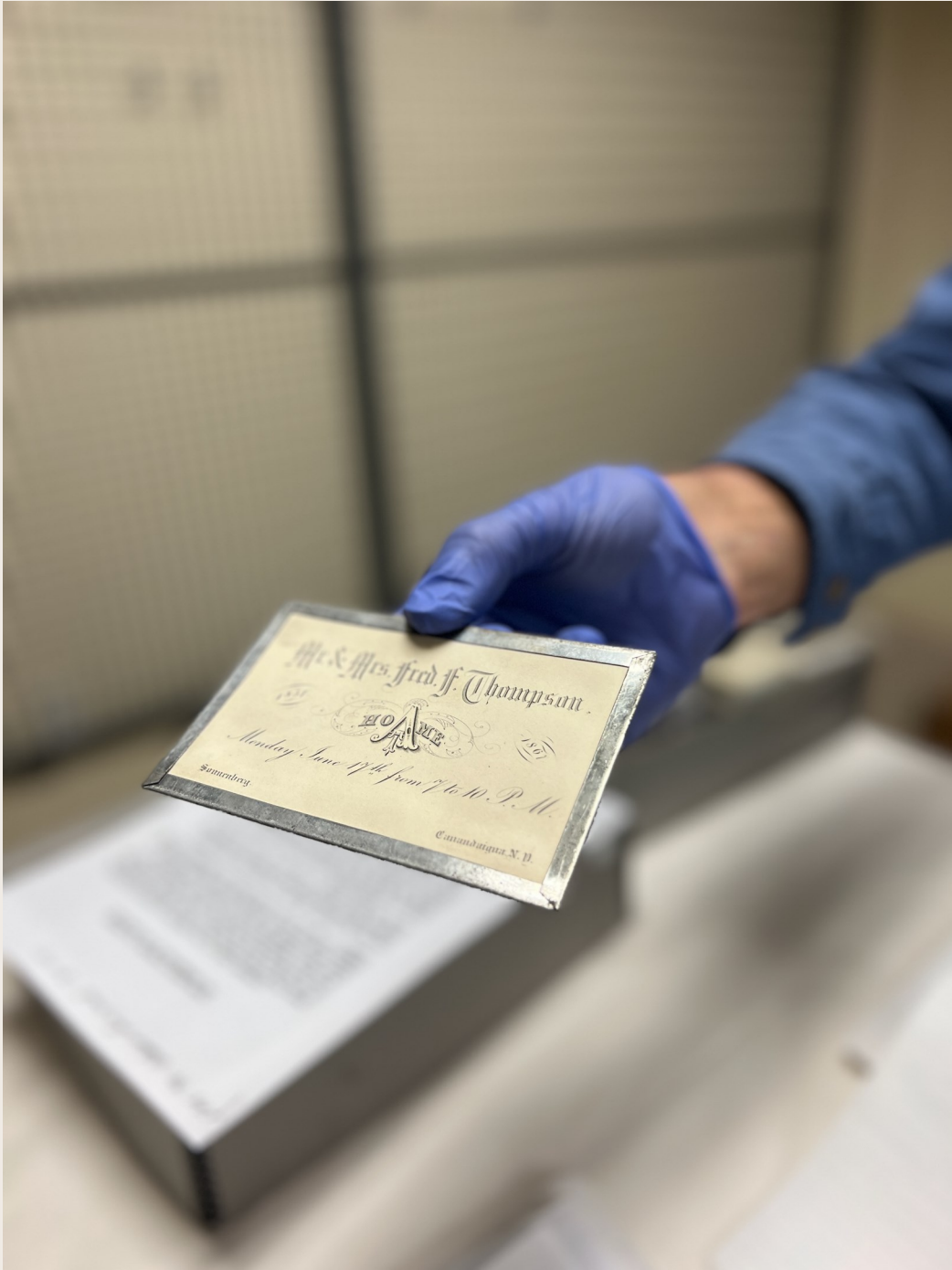


~~ Thompson's 10th Anniversary ~~



Tenth Anniversary Tin Invitation

Frederick Ferris Thompson married Mary Clark Thompson in Canandaigua on June 17, 1857, in her father's home.

The idea of having different themes of anniversary gifts for each year began in the Victorian era (e.g., year # 1=paper, 2=cotton, 25=silver, 50=gold). In America by the latter 19th century, the idea of having a party to celebrate a couple's 10th anniversary was gaining popularity; and the theme for year #10 was tin.

Although such parties were sometimes thrown without the couple's advanced knowledge, the Thompsons decided to throw a tenth-anniversary party in their Canandaigua summer home (before the mansion was built, they lived on the Sonnenberg property in the refurbished farmhouse). This reflected their very successful marriage and their fun-loving natures. On June 17, 1867, exactly 10 years after their wedding, they invited 150 guests to join them to celebrate. In Frederick's diary, he makes note of his mailing out the invitations on June 7. The invitations he sent were framed with tin borders (tin being a soft metal, this is practical to do). We are fortunate to have one of the invitations in the object collection at Sonnenberg, which was sent to the Backus party.

As the Thompsons were known to be of exceptional good humor, and did not need material objects, many of the guests brought fanciful gifts fabricated from tin. Some examples are:

- tin lantern
- miniature tin horse pulling a wagon
- tin hinged stereopticon
- tin top hat
- tin playing cards in a tin case
- tin egg cooker with timer

The couple was in their mid-30s at this time. It should be noted that the timing of the party was not long after the successful conclusion of the Civil War. The Thompsons were staunch abolitionists, people who favored the abolishment of slavery, and contributed in many ways to the Union side, so this backdrop of successful peace was an additional reason for celebration. Such a party was viewed as a jolly occasion, and the guests were likely to use the tin gifts as noisemakers to enliven the celebration. At such a party, the attendees would give short speeches to honor the couple, and the use of puns and humorous wordplay would add to the merriment.

In his diary, Frederick records that about 85 guests were able to attend; and many who were unable to attend sent gifts along with their regrets. As some guests provided more than one fanciful tin-based gift, he records that there were over 200 gifts received.

After the party, Frederick collected and cataloged all the gifts received in what he termed "The Great Tin Museum", which were displayed in the "Lavender and Old Lace" room in the farmhouse.

133 of these gifts survive to the present time and are in the collection of the Ontario County Historical Society which has generously shared their photographs.