

# **Dr. William Gibson Arlington Bonwill poems**

**Ms. Codex 1818**

**Finding aid prepared by Kelin Baldrige.**

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2017 March 31

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Bonwill, William Gibson Arlington, 1833-1899
<b>Title</b>	Dr. William Gibson Arlington Bonwill poems
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Codex 1818
<b>Date</b>	1899
<b>Extent</b>	0.2 linear feet (1 box)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	Dr. William Gibson Arlington Bonwill (1833-1899) was a dental surgeon, an inventor, a teacher, an artist, and a writer. This collection consists of two volumes compiled in 1899 of Bonwill's poems written between 1889 and 1899. These poems are annotated and cover a wide range of subjects, including dentistry, the seasons, religion, love and women, time and age, and emotion.

**Cite as:**

Dr. William Gibson Arlington Bonwill poems, 1899, Ms. Codex 1818, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

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## Biography/History

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Dr. William Gibson Arlington Bonwill was born in Camden, Delaware, on October 4, 1833, and died in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on September 2, 1899. Bonwill, a dentist and inventor, began working at the age of 14 as "carpenter, cabinet maker, clerk in store and school teacher until finally, the dental laboratory of Dr. Samuel W. Neall, of Camden, N.J." ( *Proceedings*, page 206). His dental experience was enhanced by apprenticing with Dr. Chapin A. Harris and Dr. A.A. Blandy, both prominent dentists in Baltimore, Maryland. In October 1854, Bonwill began the practice of dentistry in Dover, Delaware and in 1863, he organized the Delaware Dental Association. He received the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery from the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery in 1866 and went on to receive a degree of Doctor of Medicine from Jefferson Medical College. In 1871, he opened a dental office in Philadelphia, PA.

Bonwill is known as being one of the most eccentric and remarkable figures in the profession of dentistry. He was a surgeon, an inventor of dental tools and practices and machines unrelated to dentistry, a teacher, an artist, and a writer. Burton Lee Thorpe lists his inventions in *Biography of Pioneer American Dentists and their Successors*, which include the Bonwill electro-magnetic mallet (patented 1873), anesthesia by rapid respiration (announced in 1875), the automatic engine mallet (patented in 1879), and the Bonwill tooth-crown (patented in 1881). He also "invented improvements in grain reapers, the ... Welsbach burner for kerosene lamps, shoe fasteners, the safety pin, and was at work on an aerial car run upon the trolley principle" at the time of his death (Koch, page 439).

He was a member of the American Dental Association, the American Medical Association, the Academy of Stomatology of Philadelphia, the Odontological Society of Pennsylvania of which he was librarian for years, the Pennsylvania State Dental Society, the Pennsylvania Association of Dental Surgeons, and an honorary member of the New Jersey State Dental Society. He was also an honorary member of the Russian, Dutch, German, Spanish and French dental societies.

He married Abigail E. Warren on June 13, 1861. Together they had three children. According to *The Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, "Dr. Bonwill was a genius ... with the temperament of an artist and the talent of a mechanic, he had a lively imagination and a love of the beautiful. These qualities, added to his intense activity, made him fertile in his inventions which are connected with his name, and which have made him, in dentistry, well known throughout the world." ( *Proceedings*, pages 208-209).

**Works cited:**

American Philosophical Society. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Memorial Volume I*, Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1900.

Koch, Charles R.E., editor. *History of Dental Surgery in Three Volumes; Volume III: Biographies of Pioneer American Dentists and Their Successors*, by Burton Lee Thorpe, Fort Wayne, Indiana: National Art Publishing Company, 1910.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection consists of two volumes compiled in 1899 of poems by Dr. William Gibson Arlington Bonwill written between 1889 and 1899. Many of the poems re-appear in both volumes and are not listed in chronological order. The first volume contains heavy annotation with pencil, likely done by Dr. Bonwill, a menu for the "Bonwill-Schelling Banquet" of 1897, several printed copies of the poems, and a poem written on a ribbon by someone with the initials "A.V.C." The second volume consists of the poems with sparse annotations in pencil. These poems cover subjects ranging from dentistry; including a poem entitled "The human teeth, God's architecture;" to the seasons; voyages, particularly to Russia, Yosemite,

Alaska and Boston; religion; love and women; time and age; and emotion. Both volumes contain an index (located at the front of the volumes).

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## **Administrative Information**

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

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Finding aid prepared by Kelin Baldrige.

### **Access Restrictions**

This collection is open for research use.

### **Use Restrictions**

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### **Source of Acquisition**

Bequeathed by Dr. W.G.A. Bonwill to the University of Pennsylvania Dental School, circa 1899.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Poems

### **SUBJECT(S)**

- American poetry--19th century

- Dentistry
- Dentists
- Poetry
- Poets
- Poets, American--19th century

## Collection Inventory

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	Box	Volume
Volume 1, 1899.	1	1

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Volume 2, 1899.	1	2
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