

Herman Hollerith Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1997

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm73049510>

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Collection Summary

Title: Herman Hollerith Papers

Span Dates: 1850-1982

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1910-1927)

ID No.: MSS49510

Creator: Hollerith, Herman, 1860-1929

Extent: 11,700 items

Extent: 34 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 13.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm73049510>

Summary: Inventor and businessman. Correspondence, diary, financial and business papers, patents by Hollerith and others, blueprints, drawings, a Hollerith machine punch plate, writings about Hollerith by Geoffrey Austrian and others, biographical material, and other papers relating to Hollerith tabulating machines and their use in census taking (1890-1910), operation of Tabulating Machine Company and its merger with two other companies forming Computer-Tabulating-Recording Company (1911), and Hollerith's association with this company and its successor, International Business Machines Corporation.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Austrian, Geoffrey. Geoffrey Austrian papers.

Hayes, C. L. (Clarke L.)--Correspondence.

Hollerith, Herman, 1860-1929.

Hollerith, Herman, 1892- --Correspondence.

Merrill, Philip P.--Correspondence.

Metcalf, Samuel G.--Correspondence.

Talcott family--Correspondence.

Talcott, Charles G. (Charles Gratiot) Charles G. Talcott papers.

Talcott, Charles G. (Charles Gratiot), -1867.

Talcott, Theodosia L. Theodosia L. Talcott papers.

Organizations

Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company.

Frisbie Motor Company

International Business Machines Corporation.

Tabulating Machine Company.

United States Naval Academy.

United States. Navy--Foreign service.

United States. Patent Office--Fire, 1877.

Subjects

Agriculture--Virginia--Mathews County.

Boarding schools--Vermont--Brattleboro.

Census.

Earthquakes--California--San Francisco.

Fires--California--San Francisco.

Patents.

Railroads--Mexico.

Tabulating machines.

Places

United States--Census, 1890.
United States--Census, 1900.
United States--Census, 1910.

Occupations

Businessmen.
Inventors.

Provenance

The papers of Herman Hollerith, inventor and businessman, were given to the Library of Congress in four installments. The bulk of the collection was given by Hollerith's heirs in 1972. Additional papers were given by Mrs. Herman Hollerith, Jr., in 1977, by Virginia Hollerith in 1978, and by Richard Hollerith, Jr., in 1995 and 1997.

Processing History

The papers of Herman Hollerith were arranged and described in 1973; additional material received subsequently was incorporated into the collection in 1978 and 1997.

Copyright Status

In 1972 the copyright in the unpublished writings of Herman Hollerith in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress was dedicated to the public except that the exclusive use of such rights was reserved to Lucia B., Herman, Jr., Nannie T., and Virginia Hollerith during their lifetimes.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Herman Hollerith are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Herman Hollerith Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

1860, Feb. 29	Born, Buffalo, N.Y.
1879	Graduated, Columbia University School of Mines, New York, N.Y.
1880	Assistant to former teacher William Petit Trowbridge, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. Worked on 1880 United States census
1882	Instructor, mechanical engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.
1883-1884	Assistant examiner, United States Patent Office, Washington, D.C.
1884-1890	Worked on perfecting mechanical aid in compiling statistical information for the United States census Invented tabulating machine which recorded statistical information through a system of punched holes in nonconducting material
1885-1886	Experimented on electromagnetically operated air brakes and other braking systems for railroads, St. Louis, Mo.

1889, Jan. 8	First patent granted on statistical compilation machines
1890	Awarded Elliot Cresson Medal, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, Pa., for outstanding invention of the year Ph.D., Columbia University, New York, N.Y. Married Lucia Beverly Talcott Tabulating machine used in United States census
1891	Hollerith machines used in recording census returns in Austria, Canada, and Norway
1895	Attended International Statistics Institute, Berne, Switzerland
1896	Founded Tabulating Machine Co.
1911	Tabulating Machine Co. merged with Computing Scale Co. of America and International Time Recording Co. of New York to form Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co. (later International Business Machines Corporation)
1929, Nov. 1	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Herman Hollerith (1860-1929) span the years 1850-1982, with the bulk of the material between 1910 and 1927. The collection focuses on the work of Herman Hollerith, inventor and businessman. It consists of six series: [Personal Correspondence](#), [Business Correspondence](#), [Special Correspondence](#), [Miscellany](#), [Addition I](#), and [Addition II](#). Included in the papers are correspondence, printed matter, scrapbooks with newspaper clippings about the Hollerith tabulating machines and their use in census taking, and other material relating to the tabulating business.

[Personal Correspondence](#) includes letters with family members, friends, and associates relating to matters such as finances and investments, the purchase and repair of items for the Hollerith home, Hollerith's interest in tabulating and tabulating machines, census work, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The [Business Correspondence](#) series, although small, contains information relating to the operation of the Tabulating Machine Company, its merger into the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company in 1911, and Hollerith's later association with this company and its successor, International Business Machines Corporation.

[Special Correspondence](#) consists primarily of Hollerith's papers relating to his farm in Mathews County, Virginia. The file treats the maintenance of farm buildings and equipment and the raising of farm animals, particularly Guernsey cows. There is a small amount of printed matter concerning farm equipment.

The [Miscellany](#) series contains a chronological file of patents by Hollerith and others relating to his inventions. The series includes business papers, newspaper clippings, blueprints and drawings, printed material, and one Hollerith machine punch plate. The use of this plate is illustrated in an article entitled "Counting a Nation by Electricity," reprinted from *Electrical Engineer*, 11 November 1891. Two scrapbooks contain mostly newspaper clippings of the early development and use of tabulating machines, particularly for census taking from the period 1890 to 1910.

[Addition I](#) consists of correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr., relating to family affairs and some of Hollerith's inventions.

[Addition II](#) contains family correspondence, writings about Hollerith, and miscellaneous material. Family correspondence consists primarily of exchanges of letters among members of the Talcott family, into which Hollerith married in 1890, and a small amount of correspondence of members of the Hollerith family. Letters from 1865-1866 chronicle the employment of Charles G. Talcott, Sr., as a civil engineer in the construction of the railway from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, Mexico, under Emperor Maximilian.

The bulk of the family correspondence, numbering over 360 letters, however, is between Theodosia Talcott, Hollerith's mother-in-law, and her eldest son, Charles G. Talcott, Jr. Their exchange spans a twenty-one year period, 1868-1889, covering her son's boarding school days in Brattleboro, Vermont, his years at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and his tours of duty in the United States Navy. Charles Talcott, Jr., served as an assistant engineer on several naval vessels and saw much of the world during his assignments. His letters contain detailed drawings and charts of various ports of call as well as descriptive accounts of inhabitants, customs, architecture, and diplomatic relations in Argentina, Brazil, China, Italy, Japan, Korea, and Uruguay.

Theodosia Talcott's letters contain information regarding family members and friends as well as local and regional events. Letters from other family members were frequently enclosed. With four sons and a daughter to support following the death of her husband, Talcott found employment at the United States Patent Office, where she was one of the first female clerks. In a letter of 3 October 1877 she describes the fire which nearly destroyed the office. Six years later Herman Hollerith met his future mother-in-law while working there as an assistant examiner. Talcott describes the wedding of her daughter Lucia and Hollerith in a letter of 15 September 1890 to her son Harry. Also of interest in the Hollerith family correspondence is a letter from Nellie Keohan to Lucia B. Hollerith recounting the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

A file of writings about Hollerith in [Addition II](#) contains correspondence, drafts, and published material by various authors, including Hollerith's major biographer, Geoffrey D. Austrian, as well as Virginia Hollerith, daughter of the inventor. Biographical material, Hollerith's diary of 1884, and newspaper and magazine clippings are also included among this additional material.

An announcement of Herman Hollerith's death published by International Business Machines in 1929 constitutes the [Oversize](#) material.

Correspondents include C. L. Hayes, Philip P. Merrill, Samuel G. Metcalf, and the Frisbie Motor Company.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in seven series:

- [Personal Correspondence, 1882-1929](#)
- [Business Correspondence, 1894-1929](#)
- [Special Correspondence, 1905-1929](#)
- [Miscellany, 1871-1929](#)
- [Addition I, 1913-1929](#)
- [Addition II, 1850-1984](#)
- [Oversize, 1929](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-9	<p><u>Personal Correspondence, 1882-1929</u></p> <p>Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically therein.</p>
BOX 10-12	<p><u>Business Correspondence, 1894-1929</u></p> <p>Letters sent and received, including a small amount of printed matter. Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning the financial arrangement of the merger of the Tabulating Machine Co. into the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co. is filed separately at the end.</p>
BOX 13-20	<p><u>Special Correspondence, 1905-1929</u></p> <p>Correspondence relating to Hollerith's farm in Mathews County, Va., dated 1911-1928, and his patents, dated 1905-1923. The farm correspondence is organized into letters sent and received and arranged chronologically therein. The patent correspondence is arranged by name of correspondent and therein chronologically.</p>
BOX 21-29	<p><u>Miscellany, 1871-1929</u></p> <p>Patents by Hollerith and others, printed matter, business papers, blueprints and drawings, one Hollerith machine punch plate, newspaper clippings, and two scrapbooks. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. The patents are further arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 30	<p><u>Addition I, 1913-1929</u></p> <p>Correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr., concerning family affairs and Hollerith's inventions. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 31-34	<p><u>Addition II, 1850-1984</u></p> <p>Letters among members of the Talcott and Hollerith families arranged chronologically, drafts and printed versions of writings about Hollerith arranged alphabetically by author, and biographical material, a diary, miscellaneous material, and newspaper and magazine clippings arranged alphabetically by type of material.</p>
BOX OV 1	<p><u>Oversize, 1929</u></p> <p>Poster.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-9	Personal Correspondence, 1882-1929 Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically therein.
BOX 1	Letters received Jan. 1882-Apr. 1906 (6 folders)
BOX 2	May 1906-Dec. 1908 (6 folders)
BOX 3	Jan. 1909-Mar. 1918 (6 folders)
BOX 4	Apr. 1918-May 1920 (6 folders)
BOX 5	June 1920-Dec. 1922 (8 folders)
BOX 6	Jan. 1923-June 1926 (9 folders)
BOX 7	July 1926-Sept. 1929, undated (9 folders)
BOX 8	Letters sent Jan. 1894-Sept. 1920 (9 folders)
BOX 9	Jan. 1921-Nov. 1927 (10 folders)
BOX 10-12	Business Correspondence, 1894-1929 Letters sent and received, including a small amount of printed matter. Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning the financial arrangement of the merger of the Tabulating Machine Co. into the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co. is filed separately at the end.
BOX 10	Feb. 1894-July 1914 (9 folders)
BOX 11	Aug. 1914-Apr. 1929, undated (11 folders)
BOX 12	Correspondence relating to merger, 1911 (4 folders)
BOX 13-20	Special Correspondence, 1905-1929 Correspondence relating to Hollerith's farm in Mathews County, Va., dated 1911-1928, and his patents, dated 1905-1923. The farm correspondence is organized into letters sent and received and arranged chronologically therein. The patent correspondence is arranged by name of correspondent and therein chronologically.

Special Correspondence, 1905-1929

Container

Contents

BOX 13	Re farm, Mathews Co., Va. Letters sent Nov. 1917-June 1921 (9 folders)
BOX 14	July 1921-June 1928 (11 folders) Letters received
BOX 15	Oct. 1911-Sept. 1919 (8 folders)
BOX 16	Oct. 1919-Sept. 1921 (7 folders)
BOX 17	Oct. 1921-Dec. 1924 (9 folders)
BOX 18	Jan. 1925-Sept. 1927 (7 folders)
BOX 19	Oct. 1927-Nov. 1929, undated (4 folders) Re patents J. Nota McGill, 1905-1915 (3 folders)
BOX 20	McGill and Maguire, 1915-1921 (6 folders) McGill and Maguire; Francis S. Maguire; and Cooper, Kerr, and Dunham, 1922-1927 S. G. Metcalf, 1911-1927
BOX 21-29	Miscellany, 1871-1929 Patents by Hollerith and others, printed matter, business papers, blueprints and drawings, one Hollerith machine punch plate, newspaper clippings, and two scrapbooks. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. The patents are further arranged chronologically.
BOX 21	Award, 1905 Blueprints and drawings, 1905-1922, undated (2 folders) Business papers, 1880-1927, undated (4 folders) Card case and cards, 1910-1928, undated Hollerith machine punch plate, 1889, 1895
BOX 22	Patents By Hollerith, 1886-1917 (7 folders)
BOX 23	By others Jan. 1911-Apr. 1924 (8 folders)
BOX 24	June 1914-Mar. 1915 (6 folders)
BOX 25	May 1915-Mar. 1924 (4 folders)

Miscellany, 1871-1929

Container	Contents
	Related material, 1916, undated
BOX 26	Printed matter 1871-1929 (7 folders)
BOX 27	1880-1914, undated (5 folders)
BOX 28	1885-1927, undated (7 folders)
BOX 29	Scrapbooks, 1889-1908 (2 folders) Tabulating machine drawings, undated
BOX 30	Addition I, 1913-1929 Correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr., concerning family affairs and Hollerith's inventions. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 30	Correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr. Oct. 1913-Nov. 1916 Mar. 1917-Dec. 1918 Feb. 1919-Dec. 1921 Jan. 1922-Dec. 1923 Jan. 1924-Sept. 1929, undated
BOX 31-34	Addition II, 1850-1984 Letters among members of the Talcott and Hollerith families arranged chronologically, drafts and printed versions of writings about Hollerith arranged alphabetically by author, and biographical material, a diary, miscellaneous material, and newspaper and magazine clippings arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 31	Family correspondence Talcott family 1865-1880 (10 folders)
BOX 32	1881-1885 (8 folders)
BOX 33	1886-1891, undated (with enclosure from 1850) (5 folders) Hollerith family, 1906-1963 Writings about Hollerith By author Austrian, Geoffrey D., 1964-1984 Blodgett, John H., 1968 Dicksee, Lawrence R., 1916, undated Greene, C. A. Everard, undated Hollerith, Virginia, 1945, 1970, undated (2 folders) Mark, Mary Louise, 1945-1958, undated

Addition II, 1850-1984

Container	Contents
BOX 34	Martin, T. C., 1891 Newcomb, H. T., 1912 Rex, Frederick J., 1960-1963 Miscellaneous correspondence, 1930-1973 Miscellany Bible owned by Flora Ferguson, Hollerith's fiancé, inscribed 5 Feb. 1881 Biographical material, 1929-1930, undated <i>See also Oversize</i> Diary, 1884 Miscellaneous material, 1889-1954 Newspaper and magazine clippings, 1925-1982, undated (2 folders) Photograph of Flora Ferguson, circa 1880 Railroad conductor's punch, used by Hollerith while testing tabulating system, Baltimore, Md., 1886
BOX OV 1	Oversize, 1929 Poster.
BOX OV 1	Addition II Miscellany Biographical material, 1929 (<i>Container 34</i>)