

Thomas Davenport Correspondence
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1998

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm97084210>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms007039>

Prepared by T. Michael Womack

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Collection Summary

Title: Thomas Davenport correspondence

Span Dates: 1836-1837

ID No.: MSS84210

Creator: Davenport, Thomas, 1802-1851

Extent: 48 items

Extent: 1 container

Extent: 0.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm97084210>

Summary: Inventor. Letters related to the sale, distribution, patenting, and uses of the electric motor invented by Thomas Davenport

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

Ayres, W. W.--Correspondence.

Bartlett, W. H. C. (William Holms Chambers), 1804-1893--Correspondence.

Cook, Marcus--Correspondence.

Cook, Nelson--Correspondence.

Cook, Ransom. Ransom Cook papers.

Davenport, Thomas, 1802-1851.

Organizations

United States Military Academy--Students.

Subjects

Electric motors--Design and construction--New York (State)

Electric motors--Design and construction--Vermont.

Electromagnetism

Titles

Thomas Davenport papers

Occupations

Inventors.

Provenance

The papers of Thomas Davenport, inventor of the electric motor, were given to the Library of Congress in 1995 by the Linda Hall Library of Kansas City, Missouri, which had acquired the material upon the dissolution of the Engineering Societies Library of New York. The material was transferred from the Geography and Map Division to the Manuscript Division in 1997.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Thomas Davenport is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Thomas Davenport 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, Thomas Davenport Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Thomas Davenport (1802-1851) consist of letters written between 1836 and 1837 and one undated item. After experimenting with electromagnets for several years, Davenport, a blacksmith in Brandon, Vermont, constructed an electric motor in 1834. Three years later he received a patent for "improvements in propelling machinery by magnetism and electromagnetism." Davenport eventually established a workshop in New York City. Ransom Cook, Davenport's business partner, received most of the letters. Four are from Nelson Cook, Cook's brother and company agent, in Toronto, Canada, and four are from W. W. Ayres, Cook's nephew and company clerk, in Saratoga Springs, New York. Marcus Cook, another brother, writes from Michigan requesting rights of distributorship. Six of the letters to Cook are from Davenport. Cook appears to have been in charge of the workshop in New York while Davenport spent much of his time in Brandon.

A number of the letters pertain to business matters, such as the formation of the company, issuing stock and other stockholder concerns, title searches, patents, distributorship rights, sales development, and exhibition rights. Most of the letters relate to the use and purpose of the new electromagnetic machine. Some inquire about specific applications, such as printing, plowing, sugar grinding, bark milling, lumber milling and lathing, grain harvesting, carpet and silk weaving, and railroad locomotion. Two letters dated 19 August 1837 and 20 October 1837 contain sketches with detailed technical discussions regarding changes and improvements in design.

The majority of the letters were written from the early centers of American industry in New York and New England, but there are also inquiries from Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, and Alabama. One writer from Ohio was particularly interested in obtaining a new source of power for manufacturing purposes because his state was predominantly flat and lacked the abundant water power of the New England states. Of interest also are two letters from William H. C. Bartlett, professor at the United States Military Academy at West Point, who requested a machine for use in teaching engine mechanics to his students.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged chronologically.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Letters, Dec. 1836-Dec. 1837, undated (11 folders)