

Oliver Wendell Holmes Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2007

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm75026377>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms007047>

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Revised by Patrick Kerwin

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Collection Summary

Title: Oliver Wendell Holmes Papers

Span Dates: 1837-1931

ID No.: MSS26377

Creator: Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894

Extent: 700 items

Extent: 11 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 2.5 linear feet

Extent: 3 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm75026377>

Summary: Poet, essayist, physician, and educator. Correspondence and literary manuscripts in bound volumes.

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

Agassiz, Louis, 1807-1873--Correspondence.

Aldrich, Thomas Bailey, 1836-1907--Correspondence.

Browning, Robert, 1812-1889--Correspondence.

Collins, Wilkie, 1824-1889--Correspondence.

Curtis, George William, 1824-1892--Correspondence.

Dana, Richard Henry, Jr., 1815-1882--Correspondence.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 1803-1882.

Gosse, Edmund, 1849-1928--Correspondence.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894. John Lothrop Motley: A memoir. 1879.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894. Moral antipathy. 1885.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894. Over the teacups. 1891.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894. Poet at the breakfast-table: His talks with his fellow-boarders and the reader. 1874.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894. Ralph Waldo Emerson. 1885.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell. 1809-1894. Our hundred days in Europe. 1887.

Howe, Julia Ward, 1819-1910--Correspondence.

Howells, William Dean, 1837-1920--Correspondence.

Lowell, James Russell, 1819-1891--Correspondence.

Motley, John Lothrop, 1814-1877.

O'Reilly, John Boyle, 1844-1890--Correspondence.

Phillips, Wendell, 1811-1884--Correspondence.

Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 1833-1908--Correspondence.

Whittier, John Greenleaf, 1807-1892--Correspondence.

Subjects

American literature.

Occupations

Authors.

Educators.

Physicians.

Provenance

The papers of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), poet, essayist, physician, educator, and dean of the Harvard Medical School, were given to the Library of Congress in 1921 by his son, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. The Library has supplemented the collection with periodic gifts and purchases, 1915-1974.

Processing History

The papers of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) were arranged and described in 1975. The collection was revised in 1994 and the finding aid updated in 2007.

Related Material

The main group of papers of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) is in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Additional collections are in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, the Boston Medical Library, and the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Oliver Wendell Holmes 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.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on three reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1809, Aug. 29	Born, Cambridge, Mass.
1829	Graduated, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
1830	Wrote poem "Old Ironsides," generating interest in the preservation of the <i>Constitution</i> (Ship)
1836	M.D. degree, Harvard Medical School, Cambridge, Mass. Published first volume of verse, <i>Poems</i> (Boston: Otis, Broaders and Co.)
1839-1840	Professor of anatomy and physiology, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.
1840	Married Amelia Lee Jackson

1843	Read and published medical paper, <i>Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever</i> (republished in 1936, [Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins])
1847-1853	Dean, Harvard Medical School, Cambridge, Mass.
1847-1882	Professor of anatomy and physiology, Harvard Medical School, Cambridge, Mass.; professor emeritus, 1882-1894
1857	Helped establish the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>
1858	Published <i>The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table</i> (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Co.)
1894, Oct. 7	Died, Boston, Mass.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), 1837-1931, consist largely of bound volumes of correspondence and literary manuscripts. Much of the correspondence contained in the bound volumes consists of incoming letters alphabetically arranged with an incomplete index provided at the beginning of volume one. Approximately six hundred letters, largely written between 1869 to 1894, are contained in these volumes, and, although the letters are occasional, they provide insight into Holmes's interests. Correspondents include Louis Agassiz, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Robert Browning, Wilkie Collins, George William Curtis, Richard Henry Dana, Edmund Gosse, Julia Ward Howe, William Dean Howells, James Russell Lowell, John Boyle O'Reilly, Wendell Phillips, Edmund Clarence Stedman, and John Greenleaf Whittier. A folder of unbound correspondence includes letters written by Holmes, some expressing his views on the topics of the day such as capital punishment (6 Feb. 1868).

Six bound volumes contain manuscripts and published works, and one volume includes notes related to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Several short poems are among the Miscellany, including autographed manuscripts of "My Aunt" and "Corinna."

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 15,671

Container	Contents
BOX 1 REEL 1	General correspondence, 1837-1894
BOX 1 REEL 1	A-G
BOX 2 REEL 2	H-O
BOX 3 REEL 3	P-Y
BOX 4 not filmed	Literary manuscripts
BOX 4	"The Chambered Nautilus," 1892
BOX 5	<i>Ralph Waldo Emerson</i> , 1885
BOX 6	"Emerson Notes," undated
BOX 7	<i>A Moral Antipathy</i> , 1885
BOX 7	<i>Our Hundred Days in Europe</i> , 1887
BOX 8	<i>John Lothrop Motley</i> , 1879
BOX 8	Poems, 1861-1893
BOX 9	<i>The Poet at the Breakfast Table</i> , 1872
BOX 10	<i>Over the Teacups</i> , 1891
BOX 11	Two mounted poems, "A Birthday Tribute," and "The Darkened Skies Alas..." <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 11	Addition
BOX 11	Correspondence, 1852-1891, undated
BOX 11	Miscellany
BOX 11	Articles on the great international walking match, 29 Feb. 1868 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 11	Autograph, undated
BOX 11	Engravings, undated
BOX 11	Envelopes, 1888, undated
BOX 11	Invitations, 1879
BOX 11	Poems, 1862-1886, 1931, undated
BOX 11	Subscribers list for charity fund of Edward W. Kinsley, 1892
BOX OV 1	Oversize
BOX OV 1	Literary manuscripts
BOX OV 1	Two mounted poems, "A Birthday Tribute," and "The Darkened Skies Alas..."
BOX OV 1	Addition
BOX OV 1	Miscellany
BOX OV 1	Articles on the great international walking match, 29 Feb. 1868