Richard Olney Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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

Contact information: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78035139

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms008102

Prepared by Clifford L. Muse, Jr.
Revised by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2008
Revised 2022 October
Collection Summary
Title: Richard Olney Papers
Inclusive Dates: 1830-1928
Bulk Dates: 1893-1917
ID No.: MSS35139
Creator: Olney, Richard, 1835-1917
Extent: 28,000 items
Extent: 159 containers plus 1 oversize
Extent: 33 linear feet
Extent: 62 microfilm reels
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78035139
Summary: Lawyer, attorney general, and secretary of state. Correspondence, letterbooks, drafts of speeches and articles, subject files, memoranda, reports, legal records, newspaper clippings, and printed material relating primarily to Olney's activities as attorney general and secretary of state, and to his Boston, Massachusetts, law practice.

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
Adee, Alvey A. (Alvey Augustus), 1842-1924--Correspondence.
Atkins, Edwin Farnsworth, 1850-1926--Correspondence.
Barton, Clara, 1821-1912--Correspondence.
Bayard, Thomas F. (Thomas Francis), 1828-1898--Correspondence.
Chadwick, French Ensor, 1844-1919--Correspondence.
Cleveland, Grover, 1837-1908--Correspondence.
Daniels, Josephus, 1862-1948--Correspondence.
Eliot, Charles William, 1834-1926--Correspondence.
Gompers, Samuel, 1850-1924--Correspondence.
Gresham, Walter Quintin, 1832-1895--Correspondence.
Harrison, Benjamin, 1833-1901--Correspondence.
Hay, John, 1838-1905--Correspondence.
Hoar, George Frisbie, 1826-1904--Correspondence.
Lamont, Daniel Scott, 1851-1905--Correspondence.
Lansing, Robert, 1864-1928--Correspondence.
Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924--Correspondence.
McClure, S. S. (Samuel Sidney), 1857-1949--Correspondence.
McKinley, William, 1843-1901--Correspondence.
Olney, Peter B. (Peter Butler), 1843-1922--Correspondence.
Olney, Richard, 1835-1917.
Page, Walter Hines, 1855-1918--Correspondence.
Pauncefoote, Julian, 1828-1902--Correspondence.
Pinkerton, Robert A. (Robert Allan), 1848-1907--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, James Roosevelt, 1854-1927--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.
Scott, James Brown, 1866-1943--Correspondence.
Smailey, George W. (George Washburn), 1833-1916--Correspondence.
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915--Correspondence.
White, Henry, 1850-1927--Correspondence.
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924--Correspondence.

Organizations
Boston and Maine Railroad.
Democratic Party (U.S.)
Northern Pacific Railway Company.
Southern Pacific Company.
United States. Department of State.
United States. Supreme Court.

Subjects
Antitrust law--United States.
Arbitration (International law)
Canals--Nicaragua.
Canals--Panama.
Depressions--1893--United States.
Farmers--United States.
Fisheries--Bering Sea.
Fishery law and legislation.
Labor movement--United States.
Labor unions--United States.
Practice of law--Massachusetts--Boston.
Pullman Strike, 1894.
Railroads--United States.
Silver question.
World War, 1914-1918.

Places
British Guiana--Boundaries--Venezuela.
Cuba--History--Revolution, 1895-1898.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
Panama Canal (Panama)--History.
Philippines--Foreign relations--United States.
Philippines--History--Philippine American War, 1899-1902.
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--Foreign relations--Philippines.
United States--Foreign relations.
United States--Politics and government--1865-1933.
United States--Social conditions--1865-1918.
Venezuela--Boundaries--British Guiana.

Occupations
Cabinet officers.
Lawyers.

Acquisition information
The papers of Richard Olney, lawyer, attorney general, and secretary of state, were given to the Library of Congress in 1925 by his daughters, Agnes Minot and Mary O. Abbot, and their children and grandchildren, Francis Minot, Francis P. Abbot, Mary P. Abbot, Charles B. Abbot, and Agnes Abbot. The papers were received in the Library between 1924 and 1932.
Processing History
The papers of Richard Olney were arranged and described in 1978. The finding aid was revised in 2007 by Lia Apodaca and Patrick Kerwin.

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

Access and Restrictions
The papers of Richard Olney 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 these papers is available on sixty-two reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

Preferred Citation
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Richard Olney Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Graduated, Leicester Academy, Worcester, Mass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>A.M., Brown University, Providence, R.I.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Admitted to the bar, Boston, Mass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1859-1893</td>
<td>Practiced corporate law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Married Agnes P. Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Elected to Massachusetts house of representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Appointed attorney general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Ordered the use of federal troops in quelling the Pullman Strike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Defended income tax provisions of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff before the Supreme Court of the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Appointed secretary of state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-1897</td>
<td>Arbitrated boundary dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain and proposed a general arbitration agreement between the United States and Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Returned to private law practice, Boston, Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Declined ambassadorship to Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Declined membership on the Federal Reserve Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Member, International Commission, under treaty between the United States and France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917, Apr. 8</td>
<td>Died, Boston, Mass.</td>
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Scope and Content Note

The papers of Richard Olney (1835-1917) span the years 1830-1928, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1893-1917. The collection is composed of letters sent and received, telegrams, maps, drafts of speeches and articles, memoranda, newspaper items, legal records, official reports, pamphlets, and miscellaneous printed matter. Many of Olney's papers, including some of his significant correspondence, various state papers, and speeches and addresses, were transcribed by his longtime secretary, Antoinette M. Straw, prior to their being given to the Library, and both the originals and the typed transcriptions are in the collection. Straw also retraced fading portions of Olney's letterbooks, expurgated financial matter pertaining to the private business affairs of his law clients, and prepared various indexes to the papers.

The largest portion of the Olney Papers describes events and activities during his tenure as United States attorney general and secretary of state under President Grover Cleveland from 1893 to 1897. Before his appointment to the cabinet, Olney had been a corporation lawyer in Boston specializing in cases involving railroads. While reflecting selected aspects of both this period and a second phase of private law practice after 1897, the papers in this collection are mostly devoted to his work as a public servant. Among the topics covered are the farmers' protest and labor strife following the Depression of 1893, Democratic Party politics from the 1890s to World War I, and antitrust legislation stemming from the passage of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Also prominent in the collection are public and private matters regarding the debt owed the federal government by the Northern Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads, and some additional material concerning the Boston and Maine Railroad.

Olney's actions in the administration of Grover Cleveland roused considerable opposition. Especially controversial was the decision to quell the Pullman Strike of 1894 with federal troops and Cleveland's strong effort to repeal the provision of the Silver Purchase Act of 1890 providing for the Treasury Department's mandatory purchase of 4.5 million ounces of silver monthly. Olney was directly involved in both actions, and his role in the successful effort for repeal is reflected in his draft of Cleveland's message. Also evident in the collection is his participation in some of the landmark court decisions of the 1890s. Among the pivotal cases in which Olney was directly involved were U.S. v. E. C. Knight, Pullock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Co., and In re Debs.

Following the death of Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham in 1895, President Cleveland nominated Olney to fill the vacancy in that office. For two years, from June 1895 to March 1897, Olney guided the State Department through a series of events including boundary disputes between Britain and Venezuela and the resulting United States British General Arbitration Treaty of 1897. Other foreign policy questions treated in this collection are the revolution in Hawaii, the Bering Sea fisheries dispute with Britain, and the projected building of a canal through Panama or Nicaragua.

Olney's interest in legal, monetary, and foreign affairs continued throughout the two decades after his retirement from public office. He declined two federal posts, including an offer from President Woodrow Wilson to become a member of the newly created Federal Reserve Board, but did consent to serve as an American representative on an international commission resulting from a joint agreement between the United States and France. Although his time was mainly spent in private affairs, Olney kept abreast of diplomatic questions that had occupied him as secretary of state and persisted in importance after his departure. Foreign affairs topics that appear with some frequency in these papers include the Cuban Revolution of 1895 and its repercussions, and the various insurrections in the Philippines after 1898. Other items pertain to American policy toward China, Spain, Turkey, and Germany prior to the American entry into World War I.

Olney's political life spanned numerous presidencies, but the bulk of his presidential correspondence was with Cleveland. These letters, which appear chronologically in the general correspondence and letterbook volumes, were subsequently typed by Straw, and the copies appear as a group in the special correspondence series. Also in the collection are papers compiled for or by Henry James (1879-1947), a lawyer and biographer, as background for an authorized biography of Olney. The few items in the collection that predate Olney's public career have been organized in the bound volumes of the general correspondence and relate principally to background papers concerning Venezuela and British Guiana. An important item in the general correspondence series is an 1830 letter by William Wirt regarding two court cases held under advisement by Chief Justice John Marshall.

Prominent correspondents in addition to those cited above include Alvey A. Adee, Edwin Farnsworth Atkins, Clara Barton, Thomas F. Bayard, French Enson Chadwick, Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, Walter Quintin Gresham, Benjamin Harrison, Daniel Scott Lamont, Robert Lansing, Henry Cabot Lodge, William McKinley, Peter B. Olney, Baron Julian Pauncefote, Robert A. Pinkerton, James Roosevelt Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), James Brown Scott, George W. Smalley, Henry

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series:

- General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925
- Letterbooks, 1887-1917
- Special Correspondence and Indexes, 1892-1922
- Subject File, 1891-1928
- Speech and Article File, 1890-1917
- Miscellany, 1861 (Oversize)
Description of Series

**Container**  | **Series**  | **Description**
--- | --- | ---
**BOX 1-132 REEL 1-46** | **General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925** | Bound volumes of letters received with some drafts or copies of letters sent, maps, telegrams, drafts or copies of speeches and articles, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes, cards, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and printed material. Volumes 1-127 are arranged chronologically. Volumes 128-132 are arranged by subject and therein chronologically.

**BOX 133-152 REEL 46-58** | **Letterbooks, 1887-1917** | Copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically with an index in each volume. The dates of some volumes overlap.

**BOX 153 REEL 59** | **Special Correspondence and Indexes, 1892-1922** | Copies of Olney's correspondence with Grover Cleveland and Henry White and early indexes to names and subjects in the correspondence. Cleveland's correspondence is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically, and White's correspondence is arranged chronologically. The index is organized alphabetically by type of material or topic and therein chronologically.

**BOX 154-157 REEL 60-62** | **Subject File, 1891-1928** | Letters sent and received, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes, pamphlets, printed matter, and newspaper clippings. Arranged alphabetically by subject and therein chronologically.

**BOX 158-159 REEL 62** | **Speech and Article File, 1890-1917** | Drafts and typed and printed copies of Olney's speeches and articles, together with related material including correspondence, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and reports. Arranged by topic or type of speech and therein chronologically. Most speeches are indexed.

**BOX OV 1 REEL 62** | **Miscellany, 1861 (Oversize)** | Pardon of William Edwards signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward
## Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 17,389

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<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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| **Box 1-132 Reel 1-46** | General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925  
Bound volumes of letters received with some drafts or copies of letters sent, maps, telegrams,  
drafts or copies of speeches and articles, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes,  
cards, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and printed material.  
Volumes 1-127 are arranged chronologically. Volumes 128-132 are arranged by subject and  
therein chronologically. |
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| **Box 2 Reel 1** | 1893  
Feb. 23-24 |
| **Box 3 Reel 1** | Feb. 25-Mar. 12 |
| **Box 4 Reel 2** | Mar. 13-31 |
| **Box 5 Reel 2** | Apr. 1-19 |
| **Box 6 Reel 2** | Apr. 20-May 24 |
| **Box 7 Reel 3** | May 25-June 30 |
| **Box 8 Reel 3** | July 1-30 |
| **Box 9 Reel 3** | July 31-Aug. 13 |
| **Box 10 Reel 4** | Aug. 16-Oct. 7 |
| **Box 11 Reel 4** | Oct. 9-Nov. 10 |
| **Box 12 Reel 4** | Nov. 11-Dec. 15 |
| **Box 13 Reel 5** | 1893, Dec. 16-1894, Jan. 16 |
| **Box 14 Reel 5** | 1894  
Jan. 17-Mar. 26 |
| **Box 15 Reel 5** | Mar. 27-May 18 |
| **Box 16 Reel 6** | May 19-July 13 |
| **Box 17 Reel 6** | July 14-31 |
| **Box 18 Reel 6** | Aug. 1-Sept. 30 |
| **Box 19 Reel 7** | Oct. 1-Nov. 16 |
| **Box 20 Reel 7** | Nov. 17-Dec. 11 |
| **Box 21 Reel 8** | 1894, Dec. 12-1895, Jan. 1 |
| **Box 22 Reel 8** | 1895  
Jan. 2-18 |
<p>| <strong>Box 23 Reel 8</strong> | Jan. 19-Feb. 23 |
| <strong>Box 24 Reel 9</strong> | Feb. 24-Apr. 10 |
| <strong>Box 25 Reel 9</strong> | Apr. 11-June 2 |
| <strong>Box 26 Reel 9</strong> | June 3-8 |
| <strong>Box 27 Reel 10</strong> | June 9-25 |
| <strong>Box 28 Reel 10</strong> | June 26-July 18 |
| <strong>Box 29 Reel 10</strong> | July 19 |
| <strong>Box 30 Reel 11</strong> | July 20-31 |
| <strong>Box 31 Reel 11</strong> | Aug. 1-10 |</p>
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<td>BOX 128 REEL 45</td>
<td>Wilson, Woodrow, correspondence concerning Boston Herald editorial on Wilson's management of Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., 1912, 1925 Lusitania (ship), correspondence with F. E. Chadwick and Henry White and a draft of a letter to Woodrow Wilson, not sent, concerning explosives on the ship, 1915 Latin American policy, draft and printed copies of article by Olney and correspondence, 1915-1918</td>
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<td>BOX 129 REEL 45</td>
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<td>Buck's Stove &amp; Range Co. v. American Federation of Labor, correspondence and printed matter, 1907 Citizens' Municipal League, Boston, Mass., correspondence and clippings, 1909-1914</td>
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<td>BOX 133-152 REEL 46-58</td>
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Copies of letters sent.
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<p>| BOX 133 REEL 46 | 1887, Sept. 10-Dec. 10 |
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<td>BOX 140 REEL 50</td>
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<td>BOX 141 REEL 51</td>
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<td>BOX 148 REEL 56</td>
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| | Cleveland's correspondence is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically, and White's correspondence is arranged chronologically. The index is organized alphabetically by type of material or topic and therein chronologically. |
| BOX 153 REEL 59 | Cleveland, Grover, copies of correspondence
| | To Olney, 1983, Apr. 3-1906, Mar. 21
| | From Olney, 1893, Feb. 14-1902, June 20
| | White, Henry, copies of correspondence to and from Olney, 1896
| | Indexes
| | To general correspondence as originally bound,
| | 1892, Sept. 29-1913, May 24, undated
| | (2 folders)
| | To major subjects in the correspondence
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| BOX 154-157 REEL 60-62 | **Subject File, 1891-1928**
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