

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78035139>

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

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Revised by Lia Apodaca and Patrick Kerwin

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Collection Summary

Title: Richard Olney Papers

Span Dates: 1830-1928

Bulk Dates: (bulk 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.

Cleveland, Grover, 1837-1908.

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.

James, Henry, 1879-1947. Henry James research files.

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.

Pauncefote, 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.

Smalley, George W. (George Washburn), 1833-1916--Correspondence.

Tarbell, Ida M. (Ida Minerva), 1857-1944--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 Justice. Office of the Attorney General.
United States. Department of State.
United States. Sherman Act.
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.

Provenance

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.

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

Date	Event
1835, Sept. 15	Born, Oxford, Mass.
1851	Graduated, Leicester Academy, Worcester, Mass.
1856	A.M., Brown University, Providence, R.I.
1858	LL.B., Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass.
1859	Admitted to the bar, Boston, Mass.
1859-1893	Practiced corporate law
1861	Married Agnes P. Thomas
1874	Elected to Massachusetts house of representatives
1893	Appointed attorney general
1894	Ordered the use of federal troops in quelling the Pullman Strike
1895	Defended income tax provisions of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff before the Supreme Court of the United States
1895	Appointed secretary of state
1895-1897	Arbitrated boundary dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain and proposed a general arbitration agreement between the United States and Great Britain
1897	Returned to private law practice, Boston, Mass.
1913	Declined ambassadorship to Great Britain
1914	Declined membership on the Federal Reserve Board
1915	Member, International Commission, under treaty between the United States and France
1917, Apr. 8	Died, Boston, Mass.

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 Ensor 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

White, and Woodrow Wilson. Other important correspondents include Josephus Daniels, Charles William Eliot, Samuel Gompers, John Hay, George Frisbie Hoar, S. S. McClure, Walter Hines Page, James Ford Rhodes, Ida M. Tarbell, and Booker T. Washington.

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
BOX 1-132 REEL 1-46	<p><u>General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Volumes 1-127 are arranged chronologically. Volumes 128-132 are arranged by subject and therein chronologically.</p>
BOX 133-152 REEL 46-58	<p><u>Letterbooks, 1887-1917</u></p> <p>Copies of letters sent.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically with an index in each volume. The dates of some volumes overlap.</p>
BOX 153 REEL 59	<p><u>Special Correspondence and Indexes, 1892-1922</u></p> <p>Copies of Olney's correspondence with Grover Cleveland and Henry White and early indexes to names and subjects in the correspondence.</p> <p>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.</p>
BOX 154-157 REEL 60-62	<p><u>Subject File, 1891-1928</u></p> <p>Letters sent and received, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes, pamphlets, printed matter, and newspaper clippings.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject and therein chronologically.</p>
BOX 158-159 REEL 62	<p><u>Speech and Article File, 1890-1917</u></p> <p>Drafts and typed and printed copies of Olney's speeches and articles, together with related material including correspondence, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and reports.</p> <p>Arranged by topic or type of speech and therein chronologically. Most speeches are indexed.</p>
BOX OV 1 REEL 62	<p><u>Miscellany, 1861 (Oversize)</u></p> <p>Pardon of William Edwards signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward</p>

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 17,389

Container	Contents
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 1 REEL 1	1830, Mar. 20-1893, Feb. 22
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
BOX 23 REEL 8	Jan. 19-Feb. 23
BOX 24 REEL 9	Feb. 24-Apr. 10
BOX 25 REEL 9	Apr. 11-June 2
BOX 26 REEL 9	June 3-8
BOX 27 REEL 10	June 9-25
BOX 28 REEL 10	June 26-July 18
BOX 29 REEL 10	July 19
BOX 30 REEL 11	July 20-31
BOX 31 REEL 11	Aug. 1-10

General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925

Container	Contents
BOX 32 REEL 11	Aug. 11-20
BOX 33 REEL 12	Aug. 21-30
BOX 34 REEL 12	Aug. 31-Sept. 10
BOX 35 REEL 13	Sept. 11-28
BOX 36 REEL 13	Sept. 29-Oct. 22
BOX 37 REEL 13	Oct. 23-Nov. 16
BOX 38 REEL 13	Nov. 18-Dec. 7
BOX 39 REEL 14	Dec. 8-19
BOX 40 REEL 14-15	Dec. 20-31
BOX 41 REEL 15	Undated
BOX 42 REEL 15	1896 Jan. 1-13
BOX 43 REEL 16	Jan. 14-27
BOX 44 REEL 16	Jan. 28-Feb. 11
BOX 45 REEL 17	Feb. 12-24
BOX 46 REEL 17	Feb. 25-Mar. 3
BOX 47 REEL 17	Mar. 4-19
BOX 48 REEL 18	Mar. 20-30
BOX 49 REEL 18	Mar. 31-Apr. 2
BOX 50 REEL 18	Apr. 3-10
BOX 51 REEL 19	Apr. 11-24
BOX 52 REEL 19	Apr. 25-May 12
BOX 53 REEL 19	May 13-25
BOX 54 REEL 20	May 27-June 5
BOX 55 REEL 20	June 6-22
BOX 56 REEL 20	June 23-July 9
BOX 57 REEL 21	July 10-22
BOX 58 REEL 21	July 23-Aug. 5
BOX 59 REEL 21	Aug. 6-18
BOX 60 REEL 22	Aug. 19-Sept. 3
BOX 61 REEL 22	Sept. 5-16
BOX 62 REEL 22	Sept. 17-29
BOX 63 REEL 23	Sept. 30-Oct. 24
BOX 64 REEL 23	Oct. 25-29
BOX 65 REEL 23	Oct. 30-Nov. 10
BOX 66 REEL 24	Nov. 11-24
BOX 67 REEL 24	Nov. 25-Dec. 11
BOX 68 REEL 24	Dec. 12-26
BOX 69 REEL 25	1896, Dec. 27-1897, Jan. 4
BOX 70 REEL 25	1897 Jan. 5-14
BOX 71 REEL 26	Jan. 15-24
BOX 72 REEL 26	Jan. 25-Feb. 1
BOX 73 REEL 26	Feb. 2-15
BOX 74 REEL 27	Feb. 16-Mar. 2
BOX 75 REEL 27	Mar. 3-10

General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925

Container	Contents
BOX 76 REEL 27	Apr. 1-May 6
BOX 77 REEL 28	May 7-June 16
BOX 78 REEL 28	June 17-Sept. 23
BOX 79 REEL 28	Sept. 26-Dec. 4
BOX 80 REEL 29	1897, Dec. 5-1898, Mar. 3
BOX 81 REEL 29	1898 Mar. 4-Apr. 20
BOX 82 REEL 29	Apr. 21-June 25
BOX 83 REEL 30	June 27-Nov. 16
BOX 84 REEL 30	1898, Nov. 17-1899, Jan. 21
BOX 85 REEL 30	1899 Jan. 22-May 25
BOX 86 REEL 31	May 26-Dec. 12
BOX 87 REEL 31	1899, Dec. 13-1900, Apr. 2
BOX 88 REEL 31	1900 Apr. 4-Aug. 15
BOX 89 REEL 32	Aug. 17-Oct. 9
BOX 90 REEL 32	1900, Oct. 11-1901, Jan. 22
BOX 91 REEL 32	1901 Jan. 23-May 20
BOX 92 REEL 33	May 23-Nov. 11
BOX 93 REEL 33	1901, Nov. 12-1902, Feb. 25
BOX 94 REEL 33	1902 Feb. 26-June 4
BOX 95 REEL 34	June 5-Oct. 14
BOX 96 REEL 34	Oct. 15-Dec. 23
BOX 97 REEL 34	1902, Dec. 26-1903, Feb. 15
BOX 98 REEL 35	1903 Feb. 19-Aug. 15
BOX 99 REEL 35	Aug. 17-Nov. 23
BOX 100 REEL 35	1903, Nov. 24-1904, Jan. 11
BOX 101 REEL 36	1904 Jan. 12-Mar. 30
BOX 102 REEL 36	Mar. 31-June 24
BOX 103 REEL 36	June 27-Sept. 27
BOX 104 REEL 37	Sept. 28-Dec. 17
BOX 105 REEL 37	1904, Dec. 19-1905, June 26
BOX 106 REEL 37	1905, June 27-1906, Jan. 12
BOX 107 REEL 38	1906, Jan. 13-Aug. 7
BOX 108 REEL 38	1906, Aug. 17-1907, Mar. 23
BOX 109 REEL 38	1907, Mar. 26-1908, Jan. 27
BOX 110 REEL 39	1908 Jan. 9-May 16
BOX 111 REEL 39	May 20-Oct. 7
BOX 112 REEL 39	1908, Oct. 8-1909, Mar. 4
BOX 113 REEL 40	1909, Mar. 5-Oct. 12

General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925

Container	Contents
BOX 114 REEL 40	1909, Oct. 13-1910, Mar. 14
BOX 115 REEL 40	1910, Mar. 16-Nov. 27
BOX 116 REEL 41	1910, Nov. 28-1911, Apr. 20
BOX 117 REEL 41	1911, Apr. 21-1912, Jan. 31
BOX 118 REEL 41	1912, Feb. 1-Sept. 25
BOX 119 REEL 41-42	1912, Sept. 27-1913, Mar. 9
BOX 120 REEL 42	1913, Mar. 10-June 23
BOX 121 REEL 42	1913, June 28-1914, Feb. 14
BOX 122 REEL 43	1914, Feb. 16-Aug. 28
BOX 123 REEL 43	1914, Aug. 29-1915, May 13
BOX 124 REEL 43	1915, May 14-1916, Mar. 10
BOX 125 REEL 44	1916, Mar. 13-Oct. 6
BOX 126 REEL 44	1916, Oct. 7-1917, Sept. 11, undated
BOX 127 REEL 44	Undated
BOX 128 REEL 45	Wilson, Woodrow, correspondence concerning <i>Boston Herald</i> editorial on Wilson's management of Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., 1912, 1925 <i>Lusitania</i> (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
BOX 129 REEL 45	Panama Canal, correspondence, articles, and notes, 1911-1914
BOX 130 REEL 45	National judiciary and "big business," articles by Olney and correspondence, 1911
BOX 131 REEL 46	Buck's Stove & Range Co. v. American Federation of Labor, correspondence and printed matter, 1907 Citizens' Municipal League, Boston, Mass., correspondence and clippings, 1909-1914
BOX 132 REEL 46	Addresses and messages Memorial for Justice Lucius Q. C. Lamar, 1893 Columbian University Law School, New York, N.Y., address, 1893 Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga., address, 1893 Memorial for Samuel Blatchford, 1893 Draft of Grover Cleveland's message to Congress on Hawaii, 1893 Suggestions for Grover Cleveland's address on Hawaii Columbian University Law School address, New York, N.Y., 1894 Memorial for Justice Howell Edmunds Jackson, 1895 Draft of Grover Cleveland's message to Congress on "trusts," Dec. 1896 Drafts of memorandum on Sherman Anti-Trust Law, 1902-1903 Drafts of address, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., undated
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 133 REEL 46	1887, Sept. 10-Dec. 10
BOX 134 REEL 46	1890, Jan. 22-Dec. 8
BOX 135 REEL 46	1891, Jan. 10-1892, Aug. 27
BOX 136 REEL 47	1892, Sept. 30-1897, May 5

Letterbooks, 1887-1917

Container	Contents
BOX 137 REEL 48	1893, Mar. 7-1895, Mar. 1
BOX 138 REEL 49	1893, Nov. 9-1894, Nov. 16
BOX 139 REEL 50	1894, Nov. 16-1896, Feb. 25
BOX 140 REEL 50	1896, Nov. 25-1897, Mar. 6
BOX 141 REEL 51	1895, Mar. 2-1897, Mar. 6
BOX 142 REEL 51	1896, Feb. 25-Nov. 25
BOX 143 REEL 52	1897, Mar. 5-1899, Jan. 21
BOX 144 REEL 53	1899, Jan. 23-1901, Jan. 4
BOX 145 REEL 53-54	1901, Jan. 7-1902, Oct. 20
BOX 146 REEL 54	1902, Oct. 20-1904, Oct. 1
BOX 147 REEL 55	1904, Oct. 5-1906, Dec. 20
BOX 148 REEL 56	1906, Dec. 25-1908, Nov. 16
BOX 149 REEL 56-57	1908, Nov. 23-1911, May 31
BOX 150 REEL 57-58	1911, June 5-1913, Oct. 14
BOX 151 REEL 58	1913, Oct. 17-1916, Jan. 18
BOX 152 REEL 58	1916, Jan. 29-1917, Apr. 6
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 153 REEL 59	Cleveland, Grover, copies of correspondence To Olney, 1893, 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 Bering Sea, 1889-1897 Confidential letters, 1894-1896 Cuba, 1895-1897 General arbitration, 1896-1897 Justice Department, 1893-1914, undated State Department, 1893-1913 Venezuela, 1895-1922 Miscellaneous
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.

Subject File, 1891-1928

Container	Contents
BOX 154 REEL 60	Arbitration file, 1896-1897 (2 folders) Bering Sea Biographical file compiled by Henry James (1879-1947) pertaining to Olney Material concerning Olney, 1894-1928 (2 folders) Straw, Antoinette, correspondence with Henry James (1879-1947), 1921-1924 Bureau of American Republics, 1896
BOX 155 REEL 60	Consulates, undated Cuba, 1892-1897 Invitations and calling cards, 1892-1897
BOX 155 REEL 61	Legal miscellany Maybreak case, 1892-1897 (2 folders) Miscellany, 1891-1896
BOX 156 REEL 61	Mora claim Panama Canal, 1903-1914 (2 folders) Prussian treaty, 1894 Union Pacific case, 1891-1897 (2 folders)
BOX 157 REEL 62	(3 folders) Venezuela miscellany, 1894-1895
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 158 REEL 62	"Arbitration, Disarmament, and Peace," 1911-1917 "Campaign Letters and Speeches" for the Democratic Party, including index, 1892-1916 "Foreign Relations," including index 1893-1916 "Labor Questions," including index, 1906-1913 "Memorials of Bench and Bar," including index, 1893-1910
BOX 159 REEL 62	"Miscellaneous Speeches and Articles" not delivered or published 1893(?) - 1904, including index 1905-1912, including index "Occasional Addresses" for commencements and dinners, 1890-1916, including index "Washington Work" as attorney general and consultant in legal matters, including index, 1893-1916
BOX OV 1 REEL 62	Miscellany, 1861 (Oversize) Pardon of William Edwards signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward
BOX OV 1 REEL 62	Pardon of William Edwards signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward, 1861, Mar. 28