

Robert C. Ogden Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2023

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm77035097>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms012139>

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

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Collection Summary

Title: Robert C. Ogden Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1843-1913

Bulk Dates: 1890-1913

ID No.: MSS35097

Creator: Ogden, Robert C. (Robert Curtis), 1836-1913

Extent: 10,000 items

Extent: 30 containers

Extent: 12 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm77035097>

Summary: Businessman and philanthropist. Correspondence, memoranda, notes and drafts of articles and speeches, reports, and printed matter primarily concerned with Ogden's business career, his interests in philanthropy and religion, and his activities on behalf of education in the South.

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

Abbott, Lyman, 1835-1922--Correspondence.

Alderman, Edwin Anderson, 1861-1931--Correspondence.

Armstrong, S. C. (Samuel Chapman), 1839-1893--Correspondence.

Aycock, Charles B. (Charles Brantley), 1859-1912--Correspondence.

Baker, Ray Stannard, 1870-1946--Correspondence.

Baldwin, William Henry, 1863-1905--Correspondence.

Bok, Edward William, 1863-1930--Correspondence.

Butler, Nicholas Murray, 1862-1947--Correspondence.

Buttrick, Wallace, 1853-1926--Correspondence.

Carnegie, Andrew, 1835-1919--Correspondence.

Chambers, Frank R.--Correspondence.

Claxton, P. P. (Philander Priestley), 1862-1957--Correspondence.

Colfax, Schuyler, 1823-1885--Correspondence.

Curry, J. L. M. (Jabez Lamar Monroe), 1825-1903--Correspondence.

Dabney, Charles William, 1855-1945--Correspondence.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963--Correspondence.

Frissell, Hollis Burke, 1851-1917--Correspondence.

Gates, Frederick Taylor, 1853-1929--Correspondence.

Hedges, Job E. (Job Elmer), 1862-1925--Correspondence.

Houston, David Franklin, 1866-1940--Correspondence.

Knapp, Seaman Ashahel, 1833-1911--Correspondence.

Low, Seth, 1850-1916--Correspondence.

McIver, Charles Duncan, 1860-1906 Seaman Ashahel

Mitchell, Samuel Chiles, 1864-1948--Correspondence.

Mitchell, Samuel Chiles, 1864-1948. Unpublished biography of Robert C. Ogden.

Ogden family.

Ogden, Robert C. (Robert Curtis), 1836-1913.

Page, Walter Hines, 1855-1918--Correspondence.

Peabody, George Foster, 1852-1938--Correspondence.

Purves, Alexander, -1905--Correspondence.

Purves, Helen Ogden--Correspondence.

Rockefeller, John D. (John Davison), 1839-1937--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.
Schieffelin, William Jay, 1866- --Correspondence.
Shaw, Albert, 1857-1947--Correspondence.
Taft, William H. (William Howard), 1857-1930--Correspondence.
Villard, Oswald Garrison, 1872-1949--Correspondence.
Wanamaker, John, 1838-1922--Correspondence.
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915--Correspondence.
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924--Correspondence.

Organizations

Conference on Education in the South.
General Education Board (New York, N.Y.)
Hampton Institute.
Southern Improvement Company (1900-1918)
Tuskegee Institute.
Union Theological Seminary (New York, N.Y.)

Subjects

African American universities and colleges.
African Americans--Education.
African Americans--Southern States.
Disaster relief.
Education--Southern States.
Humanitarianism.
Land tenure--Southern States.
Presbyterian Church--New York (State)--New York.
Presbyterian Church--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.
Religion.

Occupations

Businessmen.
Philanthropists.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Robert C. Ogden, businessman and philanthropist, were deposited in the Library of Congress by Ogden's daughter, Helen Ogden Purves, 1923-1924, and converted to a gift in 1946. Additional material was given by John N. Fain in 1983.

Processing History

The Robert C. Ogden Papers were processed in 1977 and an addition was made in 1985. The finding aid was revised in 2012. The finding aid was updated in 2023 by Maria Farmer as part of a division-wide remediation project by the Inclusive Description Working Group.

Additional Guides

An index to the special correspondence in the collection is available in the Manuscript Reading Room and as a [PDF](#) document.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Robert C. Ogden 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, Robert C. Ogden Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1836, June 20	Born, Philadelphia, Pa.
1854	Moved with family to New York; took job with Devlin & Co., clothiers
1859	Met S. C. Armstrong
1860	Married Ellen Elizabeth Lewis
1874	Became trustee of the newly founded Hampton Institute, Hampton, Va.
1879	Resigned from Devlin & Co.; took charge of John Wanamaker firm's "Oak Hall" clothing store in Philadelphia, Pa.
1885	Became general manager and partner in the John Wanamaker firm, Philadelphia, Pa.
1893	President, Board of Trustees of Hampton Institute, Hampton, Va.
1896	Started a New York branch of John Wanamaker firm
1897	Became a director of Union Theological Seminary, New York, N.Y.
1900	President, Conference on Education in the South
1902	Member, General Education Board
1907	Retired from business
1913, Aug. 6	Died, Kennebunkport, Maine

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Robert Curtis Ogden (1836-1913) span the years 1843-1921, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1890-1913. Included is correspondence, memoranda, notes and drafts of speeches and articles, reports, printed matter, and other material relating to his business career in New York and Philadelphia, interests in philanthropy and the church, and especially to his activities in behalf of education in the South. The collection also contains papers gathered by Ogden's daughter, Helen Ogden Purves, in the decade after her father's death. In many cases the letters in the Ogden papers are copies apparently made by Samuel Chiles Mitchell in the course of research for a biography of Ogden. The collection is organized into six series: [Family Papers](#); [General Correspondence](#); [Special Correspondence](#); [Subject File](#); [Speeches, Writings, and Related Materials](#); and [Miscellany](#).

The [Family Papers](#) contain genealogical information, diary fragments, death notices and memorials, and correspondence between Ogden and various family members. Although mainly personal, the family correspondence contains information of general interest. Ogden's son-in-law, Alexander Purves, was associated with Hampton Institute, and both his and Helen Ogden Purves's letters contain many references to the institute and other educational matters. The [Family Papers](#) also include reminiscences about Ogden that were solicited from acquaintances by Helen Purves for the use of Mitchell.

The [General Correspondence](#) indicates the range of Ogden's interests. There is correspondence regarding his business activities, his involvement in the affairs of the Presbyterian church in Philadelphia and in New York, his service on the board of trustees and on the building committee of Union Theological Seminary, and his various philanthropies and disaster relief activities. For the years after 1900, these files are particularly rich on the Southern Improvement Company, an effort to facilitate African American land ownership in the South, in which Ogden was a principal backer. The letterbook for 1890-1896 contains many letters from Ogden to John Wanamaker.

Ogden achieved his greatest renown late in life as a benefactor and promoter of southern education. The [Special Correspondence](#) series, the largest in the collection, is devoted to Ogden's activities in this field. In the series can be traced Ogden's relationship with Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute as well as his involvement in the Conference on Education in the South, the Southern Education Board, the General Education Board, and other activities.

Ogden's interest in education grew out of his longtime acquaintance with S. C. Chapman Armstrong. When Armstrong organized Hampton Institute for the education of southern African Americans, Ogden became a member of the board of trustees. Later, upon Armstrong's death in 1893, he became president of the board of trustees. Approximately 150 letters between Ogden and Armstrong letters, mainly in the [Special Correspondence](#), document the relationship between the two men. An index to the Ogden-Armstrong correspondence is available as a [PDF](#) appendix to this finding aid. After 1893, Ogden maintained a steady correspondence with Armstrong's successor, Hollis Burke Frissell, and others associated with Hampton Institute.

Ogden also served as a trustee and for a time as president of the board of Tuskegee Institute. The [Special Correspondence](#) file includes about 125 letters, also indexed in the appendix to this finding aid, which were exchanged between Ogden and Tuskegee's president, Booker T. Washington.

Ogden's greatest involvement with southern education, however, was through the Conference on Education in the South. In annual meetings beginning in 1898, the conference brought together leading men of both the North and South to discuss the improvement of southern education. After being chosen president of the conference in 1900, Ogden led in organizing the sessions. Each year he invited a large group of prominent Northerners to attend the conferences as his guests and took them on a rail tour of some portion of the South. Ogden felt that progress was most likely to occur when the "best men" of the North and the South became aware of conditions in the South, discussed the situation with each other, and engaged in cooperative efforts to deal with the problems. Out of the conference were developed the Southern Education Board and the General Education Board, important forces in the effort to improve education in the South in the early twentieth century. The [Special Correspondence](#) documents these developments and particularly the tours organized by Ogden.

Among Ogden's correspondents on educational matters are Lyman Abbott, Edwin Anderson Alderman, Charles B. Aycock, Ray Stannard Baker, William Henry Baldwin, Edward William Bok, Nicholas Murray Butler, Wallace Buttrick, Andrew Carnegie, Frank R. Chambers, Philander Priestley Claxton, Schuyler Colfax, J. L. M. Curry, Charles William Dabney, W. E. B. DuBois, Frederick T. Gates, Job E. Hedges, David B. Houston, Seaman A. Knapp, Seth Low, Charles D. McIver, Samuel Chiles Mitchell, Walter Hines Page, George Foster Peabody, John D. Rockefeller, Theodore Roosevelt, William Jay Schlieffelin, Albert Shaw, William H. Taft, Oswald Garrison Villard, and Woodrow Wilson. Ogden's letterbooks provide a partial index to outgoing correspondence between 1903 and 1908.

The [Subject File](#) contains minutes, reports, and printed material on Hampton and Tuskegee institutes, year-by-year activities in behalf of southern education after 1898, and other topics. The materials under the heading, "Education in the South," contain minutes of meetings of the Southern Education Board and the General Board as well as Helen Ogden Purves's notes on the annual Conferences on Education in the South.

The [Speeches, Writing, and Related Materials](#) file includes printed transcripts, notes, and drafts of various addresses and articles by Ogden. He was an active churchman, and there are many undated Sunday School or other religious talks in the file. A number of the other speeches and articles are on business topics, including Ogden's lectures on modern retailing given at Harvard University. Still other speeches and writings deal with southern education.

The final series, [Miscellany](#), includes copies of periodicals referring to Ogden, photographs, and scrapbooks covering the periods 1875-1882 and 1901-1910. There is also a clipping file; copies of the *Proceedings of the First through Tenth Conferences on Education in the South*; Philip W. Wilson's undated *An Unofficial Statesman: Robert C. Ogden* (1924); and other books. Of particular value is the unpublished biography of Ogden by Samuel Chiles Mitchell, along with notes and copies of letters collected by Mitchell.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Family Papers, 1843-1921](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1855-1913](#)
- [Special Correspondence, 1862-1913](#)
- [Subject File](#)
- [Speeches, Writings, and Related Materials, 1888-1912](#)
- [Miscellany](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-2	<p><u>Family Papers, 1843-1921</u></p> <p>Genealogies, diary fragments, death notices and memorials, biographical material, and family members' correspondence.</p> <p>Arranged by type of material and chronologically thereunder.</p>
BOX 3-5	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1855-1913</u></p> <p>Originals and copies of letters received and sent, dealing mainly with personal, business, religious, and philanthropic interests.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically in files and one letterbook.</p>
BOX 6-16	<p><u>Special Correspondence, 1862-1913</u></p> <p>Originals and copies of letters received and sent, dealing with education.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically in files and letterbooks. The letterbooks are partially indexed.</p>
BOX 17-20	<p><u>Subject File</u></p> <p>Memorandums, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, and printed material.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</p>
BOX 21-23	<p><u>Speeches, Writings, and Related Materials, 1888-1912</u></p> <p>Handwritten and typewritten notes and drafts of speeches and articles as well as printed copies of speeches, articles, and a memorial volume to S. C. Armstrong.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 24-30	<p><u>Miscellany</u></p> <p>Periodicals referring to Ogden, photographs, books, clippings, scrapbooks, and the unpublished manuscript of a biography of Ogden by Samuel Chiles Mitchell along with Mitchell's notes and annotated copies of selected Ogden letters.</p> <p>Organized by type of material.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-2	Family Papers, 1843-1921 Genealogies, diary fragments, death notices and memorials, biographical material, and family members' correspondence. Arranged by type of material and chronologically thereunder.
BOX 1	Genealogy
BOX 1	Jonathan and Abigail Ogden (parents), 50th wedding anniversary
BOX 1	Diary fragment, 1877-1878
BOX 1	Notices of Ogden's death
BOX 1	Memorial services and eulogies
BOX 1	Memorial publications
BOX 1	Memorials
BOX 1	Biographical material
BOX 1	Letters to Helen Ogden Purves and Samuel Chiles Mitchell, 1920-1921, undated (5 folders)
BOX 2	Family correspondence, 1843-1913, undated (13 folders)
BOX 3-5	General Correspondence, 1855-1913 Originals and copies of letters received and sent, dealing mainly with personal, business, religious, and philanthropic interests. Arranged chronologically in files and one letterbook.
BOX 3	1855-1905 (17 folders)
BOX 4	1906-1913, undated (19 folders)
BOX 5	Letterbook, 1890-1896
BOX 6-16	Special Correspondence, 1862-1913 Originals and copies of letters received and sent, dealing with education. Arranged chronologically in files and letterbooks. The letterbooks are partially indexed.
BOX 6	1862-Feb. 1904 (21 folders)
BOX 7	1904-1905, Mar. (17 folders)
BOX 8	1905, Apr.-May 12 (12 folders)
BOX 9	1905, May 13-1906, Apr. (13 folders)
BOX 10	1906-1908, May (15 folders)

Special Correspondence, 1862-1913

Container	Contents
BOX 11	1909-1910 (17 folders)
BOX 12	1911-1913, undated (18 folders)
BOX 12	Fragments
BOX 13	Letterbooks
BOX 13	1895, Mar. 19-1904 (3 folders)
BOX 14	1904, Mar. 19-1905, Apr. 5 (2 folders)
BOX 15	1905, Apr. 6-1906, July 11 (2 folders)
BOX 16	1907, Mar. 20-1908, Feb. 13
BOX 17-20	Subject File Memorandums, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, and printed material. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 17	Armenian Relief Committee
BOX 17	Boycott of the <i>New York Evening Post</i> , 1899
BOX 17	Business
BOX 17	Church
BOX 17	Citizens Permanent Relief Committee of Philadelphia, Pa.
BOX 17	Education, general
BOX 17	Education in the South, including Mrs. Purves's notes on the annual Conferences on Education in the South
BOX 17	1898-1907 (19 folders)
BOX 18	1908-1916, undated (15 folders)
BOX 18	Hampton Institute, Hampton, Va., 1873-1924, undated (4 folders)
BOX 19	Holland Memorial Church
BOX 19	Indian famine relief
BOX 19	Johnstown, Pa., flood relief (2 folders)
BOX 19	Mercantile Library Association
BOX 20	Negro Educational Fund
BOX 20	J. Ogden v. J. Devlin and R. C. Ogden
BOX 20	Penrose, Boies
BOX 20	Rockefeller Foundation Fund
BOX 20	Russian relief
BOX 20	Southern Improvement Co.
BOX 20	Sphinx Club
BOX 20	Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Ala
BOX 20	Union Theological Seminary, New York, N.Y.

Subject File

Container	Contents
BOX 20	Wanamaker, John
BOX 21-23	Speeches, Writings, and Related Materials, 1888-1912 Handwritten and typewritten notes and drafts of speeches and articles as well as printed copies of speeches, articles, and a memorial volume to S. C. Armstrong. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 21	1892
BOX 21	“Pew Rents”
BOX 21	“Progressive Presbyterianism”
BOX 21	1893, “Sunday School Teaching”
BOX 21	1894, <i>Samuel Chapman Armstrong</i> (New York, Fleming H. Revell Co.)
BOX 21	1888-1909 (10 folders)
BOX 22	1910-1912 (3 folders)
BOX 22	Undated
BOX 22	Notes and addresses on business (4 folders)
BOX 22	Speeches on education in the South
BOX 23	Notes and addresses on religion and the church (2 folders)
BOX 23	Miscellaneous speeches, undated
BOX 24-30	Miscellany Periodicals referring to Ogden, photographs, books, clippings, scrapbooks, and the unpublished manuscript of a biography of Ogden by Samuel Chiles Mitchell along with Mitchell's notes and annotated copies of selected Ogden letters. Organized by type of material.
BOX 24	Periodicals referring to Ogden and to Southern education
BOX 24	Photographs of Ogden
BOX 24	Anecdotes by educator friends of Ogden
BOX 24	Pamphlet "The Need of an Industrial School in North Carolina," 1885
BOX 25	Books
BOX 25	<i>Education for Life</i> by S. C. Armstrong
BOX 25	<i>Letters from Tuskegee</i> (1905), by Ruperth Fehnstoke
BOX 25	<i>In Memory of Robert Curtis Ogden</i> (1915)
BOX 25	<i>Proceedings of the First through Tenth Conferences on Education in the South</i> (8 vols.)
BOX 25	<i>An Unofficial Statesman: Robert Curtis Ogden</i> (1924), by Philip W. Wilson
BOX 26	Clippings
BOX 27	Unpublished biography of Ogden by Samuel Chiles Mitchell
BOX 27	Samuel Chiles Mitchell's notes and copies of letters
BOX 28	Scrapbooks
BOX 28	1878-1882
BOX 28	1901-1902
BOX 28	1901-1910

Miscellany

Container	Contents
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BOX 29	1902
BOX 29	1907
BOX 30	1901-1904