

Robert R. Hitt 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/mm79026104>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms013097>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

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Collection Summary

Title: Robert R. Hitt Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1830-1906

ID No.: MSS26104

Creator: Hitt, Robert R. (Robert Roberts), 1834-1906

Extent: 2,200 items

Extent: 40 containers

Extent: 16 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm79026104>

Summary: U.S. Representative from Illinois. Personal, political, diplomatic, and business correspondence and other papers, including shorthand notes and material relating to Abraham Lincoln, the Lincoln Douglas Debates, and Civil War courts-martial. Other topics include his congressional service and the annexation of Hawaii.

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

Allen, William, 1827-1881.

Davis, David, 1815-1886.

Douglas, Stephen A. (Stephen Arnold), 1813-1861.

Ficklin, Orlando B. (Orlando Bell), 1808-1886.

Frémont, John Charles, 1813-1890.

Hitt family.

Hitt, Robert R. (Robert Roberts), 1834-1906.

Holt, Joseph, 1807-1894.

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865.

Seward, William H. (William Henry), 1801-1872.

Stanton, Edwin M. (Edwin McMasters), 1814-1869.

Trumbull, Lyman, 1813-1896.

Williams, George, active 1882-1894--Correspondence.

Organizations

Democratic Party (U.S.)

Louisville, New Albany & Chicago Railway.

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)

United States. Congress. House.

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs.

United States. Department of State.

United States. Legation (France)

United States. War Department.

Subjects

Banks and banking--United States.

Business enterprises--Indiana--Lafayette.

Campaign debates--Illinois.

Courts--Illinois--Chicago.

Courts-martial and courts of inquiry--United States.

Diplomatic and consular service, American--France.

Indians of North America--Government relations.

Indians of North America--Treaties.

Law reporting--Illinois--Chicago.
Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Ill., 1858.
Political conventions--United States.
Political parties--United States.
Railroads--Illinois.
Railroads--Indiana.
Railroads--Kentucky.
Real estate investment--United States.
Tariff--United States.

Places

Chicago (Ill.)--History.
Cuba--History--Revolution, 1895-1898.
France--Foreign relations--United States.
Hawaii--Annexation to the United States.
Hawaii--History--1893-1900.
Illinois--Politics and government--19th century.
Missouri--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--Foreign relations--1865-1921.
United States--Foreign relations--France.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--Politics and government--1865-1933.

Occupations

Representatives, U.S. Congress--Illinois.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Robert R. Hitt, U.S. Representative from Illinois, were given to the Library of Congress by Mrs. William F. Hitt in 1962. Items relating to Hitt had been given previously by Seymour Robb, director of Carol M. Newman Library, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, in 1961, and additional material was donated by Emery Hertelény in 1965.

Processing History

The papers of Robert R. Hitt were arranged and described in 1966. The finding aid was revised in 2012. The finding aid was updated in 2023 by Rachel Telford as part of a division-wide remediation project by the Inclusive Description Working Group.

Transfers

Photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the Robert R. Hitt Papers.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Robert R. Hitt in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

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

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1834, Jan. 16	Born, Urbana, Ohio
1837	Family moved to Mt. Morris, Ill.
1855	Graduated from Asbury University, Indiana
1857	Shorthand reporter for lawyers, Chicago, Ill.
1858	Reporter for <i>Chicago Tribune</i> : reports Lincoln-Douglas Debates Official reporter for state of Illinois
1863	Reporter for War Department courts-martial
1865	Reporter for Board of Treaty Commissioners to the Indians
1867-1868	Toured Europe
1871	Secretary to Santo Domingo Commission
1872	Personal secretary for Senator Oliver P. Morton
1874	Married Sallie Reynolds
1874	Appointed secretary to United States Legation, Paris, France
1881	Assistant secretary of state
1882	Elected to Congress
1890	Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs
1898	Appointed to committee for Hawaiian Islands government
1902	Regent, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
1906	Died, Narragansett Pier, R.I.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Robert Roberts Hitt (1834-1906) treat his life and activities as court reporter, secretary to various government agencies and commissions, secretary to the United States Legation in Paris, assistant secretary of state, congressman from Illinois, and chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The collection spans the years 1830-1906 and includes diaries, correspondence, business files, shorthand notes of speeches, newspaper clippings, and family histories. The papers are organized into ten series: [Biographical and Genealogical](#), [General Correspondence](#), [Special Correspondence](#), [Business Correspondence](#), [Official Correspondence](#), [Subject File](#), [Newspaper Clippings](#), [Shorthand Notes](#), [Devotional Books and Memorial Volume](#), and [Miscellany](#).

Of special importance are the [shorthand notes](#) of political events in Illinois from 1856 to 1860, particularly the speeches of Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, Edwin McMasters Stanton, William Henry Seward, and those given at party conventions. Also featured are debates between Lyman Trumbull and William Allen and between Trumbull and Orlando B. Ficklin. Hitt, one of the few shorthand reporters in the Midwest, at that time, was employed by the *Chicago Press and Tribune* and the state of Illinois, and was a friend of Lincoln. His notes also cover his reporting of the Holt-Davis Commission in 1861 and of courts-martial for the War Department from 1863 to 1868. He also acted as secretary to the Board of Treaty Commissioners to the Indians in 1865. He kept a diary in shorthand from 1857 to 1864, transcribed by

Frederic L. Davis in 1906, that describes life in Chicago, its law courts, and the appearances of lawyer Lincoln at that time. Hitt reported the speeches of Lincoln and Douglas in their famous debates of 1858, but these are not in the collection.

For his twenty-four years in Congress there are extensive [Newspaper Clippings](#) and [Official Correspondence](#) that reflect Hitt's interest in the tariff, the annexation of Hawaii, and intervention in Cuba. He received an offer from President William McKinley to be minister to Spain. The [General Correspondence](#), covers the years 1865 to his death, and there is some correspondence and clippings regarding the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. Also in the collection is [business correspondence](#) with his business agent, George Williams, and regarding his interest in the Louisville, New Albany & Chicago Railway, in banks, real estate, and other enterprises.

The personal material includes several records of his family history, material about his relatives, his interest in Rock River (Mt. Morris) Seminary and Asbury University (now DePauw University), and devotional books of Allie Reynolds, his wife's aunt. Newspaper clippings during his life, and his obituaries, reveal the regard in which he was held by men of all political parties.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in ten series:

- [Biographical and Genealogical](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1865-1906](#)
- [Special Correspondence, 1892-1905](#)
- [Business Correspondence, 1882-1904](#)
- [Official Correspondence, 1874-1901](#)
- [Subject File](#)
- [Newspaper Clippings, 1884-1906](#)
- [Shorthand Notes, 1856-1904](#)
- [Devotional Books and Memorial Volume](#)
- [Miscellany, 1830-1906](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1	<p><u>Biographical and Genealogical</u></p> <p>Biographies taken from magazines, eulogies, an interview with Hitt, genealogical table, other family information, obituary of his mother, and correspondence about relatives.</p> <p>Arranged by type of material.</p>
BOX 2	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1865-1906</u></p> <p>Letters exchanged with family during Hitt's European trip, 1867-1868, and other correspondence with relatives and friends.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 2	<p><u>Special Correspondence, 1892-1905</u></p> <p>Special correspondence concerning Hitt's reporting of Lincoln's debate with Douglas in 1858, the accuracy of same, and Hitt's discovery that Douglas was guilty of misquotation.</p> <p>Includes a copy of Lincoln's presentation in the Rock Island Bridge case, 1857.</p> <p>Organized chronologically.</p>
BOX 3-5	<p><u>Business Correspondence, 1882-1904</u></p> <p>Letters regarding Hitt's business interests, including his investment in the Louisville, New Albany, & Chicago Railway and appeals to use his influence during his congressional tour.</p> <p>Arranged according to correspondent or type of material.</p>
BOX 6-8	<p><u>Official Correspondence, 1874-1901</u></p> <p>Correspondence and letterbooks relating to Hitt's activities at the American legation in Paris, 1874-1881, duties in Congress, 1882-1906, and on the Hawaiian Commission.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 9	<p><u>Subject File</u></p> <p>Printed matter on the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, material relating to the Rock Island Bridge case, condolences and correspondence, a map, speeches, and miscellaneous items.</p> <p>Arranged by topic or type of material.</p>
BOX 10-30	<p><u>Newspaper Clippings, 1884-1906</u></p> <p>Scrapbooks of newspaper clippings begun after Hitt's election to Congress and miscellaneous clippings.</p> <p>The scrapbooks are arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 31-37	<p><u>Shorthand Notes, 1856-1904</u></p> <p>Mostly notebooks of shorthand notes, including notes taken prior to Lincoln's election and notes of courts-martial.</p> <p>Arranged by subject, occasion, name of person, or type of material.</p>
BOX 38	<p><u>Devotional Books and Memorial Volume</u></p> <p>Episcopal and Catholic devotional books. The memorial volume contains congressional eulogies of Hitt.</p> <p>Unarranged.</p>

BOX 39-40

Miscellany, 1830-1906

Financial books of Hitt's father and sister. Includes journal of Hitt from 1857-1864 transcribed from his shorthand notes by Frederic L. Davis in 1906.
Arranged by type of material.

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BOX 2	Special Correspondence, 1892-1905 Special correspondence concerning Hitt's reporting of Lincoln's debate with Douglas in 1858, the accuracy of same, and Hitt's discovery that Douglas was guilty of misquotation. Includes a copy of Lincoln's presentation in the Rock Island Bridge case, 1857. Organized chronologically.
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Business Correspondence, 1882-1904

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Miscellany, 1830-1906

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