Collection Summary

Title: William Jones Rhees Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1856-1885

Bulk Dates: 1861-1880

ID no.: MSS86268

Creator: Rhees, William Jones, 1830-1907

Extent: 150 items

Extent: 1 container plus 7 oversize

Extent: 1.8 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2018086268

Summary: Chief clerk of the Smithsonian Institution. Correspondence to Laura O. Clarke Rhees, his first wife, on his
Christian beliefs, their marriage and family, life in Washington, D.C., his work at the Smithsonian Institution, T. S. C. Lowe
and balloon ascensions on the National Mall, and the American Civil War. Seven scrapbooks with newspaper clippings
pertaining to scientific discoveries, the history of the Smithsonian, education in public schools, cultural events, and social
concerns in the United States.

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

Henry, Joseph, 1797-1878.
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865.
Lowe, T. S. C. (Thaddeus Sobieski Coulincourt), 1832-1913.
Rhees family.
Rhees, Laura O. Clarke, (Laura Oliver Clarke), 1835-1864--Correspondence.
Rhees, William Jones, 1830-1907.

Organizations

Smithsonian Institution.
United States. Army--Military life.
United States. Army.
Washington (D.C.). Board of Trustees of Public Schools.

Subjects

Arts--United States.
Ballooning--Washington (D.C.)
Balloons.
Cabinet officers--United States.
Christianity.
Discoveries in science.
Education--United States.
Law--United States.
Museums--United States.
Museums--Washington (D.C.)
Public schools--Washington (D.C.)
Public works--United States.
Science--United States.
Segregation in education--United States.
Slavery.
Soldiers--United States.
Places
Mall, The (Washington, D.C.)
United States--Civilization.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--Intellectual life.
United States--Politics and government.
United States--Social conditions.
United States--Social life and customs.
Washington (D.C.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

Occupations
Clerks, Smithsonian Institution.

Acquisition Information
The papers of William Jones Rhees were given to the Library of Congress by Melinda Berry in 2018. The seven scrapbooks were transferred to the Library from the Smithsonian Institution and housed in the General Collections until they were transferred to the Manuscript Division in 2020.

Processing History
The papers of William Jones Rhees were arranged and described by Elizabeth Livesey in 2020. An addition was processed and the finding aid revised by Rachel McNellis in 2023.

Other Repositories
Other papers of William Jones Rhees can be found in the Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., and the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Related Material
Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the records of the Young Men's Christian Association (Washington, D.C.), 1852-1903 (see https://lccn.loc.gov/mm81047684).

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

Access and Restrictions
The papers of William Jones Rhees are open to research. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

Preferred Citation
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, William Jones Rhees Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Clerk, Census Office of the Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Cofounder, Young Men's Christian Association of Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853-1855</td>
<td>General assistant and personal secretary to Joseph Henry, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855-1891</td>
<td>Chief clerk, Smithsonian Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Married Laura Oliver Clarke (died 1864)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Married Romenia F. Ellis (died 1923)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1907</td>
<td>Keeper of the Archives, Smithsonian Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907, March 17</td>
<td>Died, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scope and Content Note

The papers of William Jones Rhees (1830-1907) span the years 1856-1885, with the bulk of the material dating from 1861 to 1880. The correspondence is comprised of letters sent from Rhees to his first wife Laura O. Clarke Rhees between 1856 and 1874. Rhees's letters detail his personal affairs, family, Christian values, political views, and work as chief clerk of the Smithsonian Institution. Specific topics include his meetings with first Smithsonian secretary, Joseph Henry, as well as events at which he observed President Abraham Lincoln, members of Lincoln's cabinet, and other politicians. Other letters describe his observations of the outbreak of the American Civil War and address troop activities, camps and soldiers' behavior in and around Washington, D.C., Thaddeus S. C. Lowe's balloon ascensions on the National Mall, as well as his support for the Union and the abolition of slavery.

The seven scrapbooks (Volumes 1-7), compiled by Rhees, consist of newspaper clippings dating between circa 1861 and circa 1885. The volumes cover topics pertaining primarily to the United States. Volumes 1 and 2 focus on scientific discoveries and inventions within the fields of geology, geography, biology, astronomy, climatology, archaeology, anthropology, electricity, and natural history. A small amount relates to public school education. Volume 3 documents the early history of the Smithsonian Institution, including its construction, scientific activities, expeditions, acquisitions, exhibitions, and the statue of Joseph Henry. Volumes 4 and 5 encompass over fifty topics related to scientific developments, art, culture, politics, government, legal matters, infrastructure, social concerns, mathematics, and finances. Volumes 6 and 7 are dedicated to education and highlight Rhees's activities with the Board of Trustees of the Washington, D.C., public school system. Examinations, curricula, and school segregation are also documented. These volumes include programs for school concerts and events.

Arrangement of the Collection

The collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material, with correspondence arranged chronologically and scrapbooks arranged numerically by volume thereunder.
# Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Correspondence, 1856-1861 (6 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Envelope addressed to daughter Fannie, 1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td>2023 Addition: Scrapbooks, circa 1861-circa 1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td>Vol. 1: Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 2</td>
<td>Vol. 2: Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 3</td>
<td>Vol. 3: Smithsonian Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 4</td>
<td>Vol. 4: Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 5</td>
<td>Vol. 5: Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 6</td>
<td>Vol. 6: Public School Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 7</td>
<td>Vol. 7: Public School Education</td>
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