Abbott Lawrence Rotch Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Connie L. Cartledge

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2010

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

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2010

Finding aid URL: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010028
Collection Summary
Title: Abbott Lawrence Rotch Papers
Span Dates: 1896-1912
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1903-1910)
ID No.: MSS85493
Creator: Rotch, Abbott Lawrence
Extent: 1,050 items; 4 containers plus 1 oversize; 1.4 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English with French and German
Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Abstract: Meteorologist and balloonist. Correspondence, financial papers, photographs, writings, maps, tables, charts, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and other material relating chiefly to Rotch's interest in meteorology and aeronautics.

Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Abbe, Cleveland, 1838-1916--Correspondence.
Allen, James, 1849-1933--Correspondence.
Casella, Louis P.--Correspondence.
Chanute, Octave, 1832-1910--Correspondence.
Curtiss, Glenn Hammond, 1878-1930--Correspondence.
Fassig, Oliver L. (Oliver Lanard), 1860-1936--Correspondence.
Hildebrandt, A. (Alfred), b. 1870--Correspondence.
Langley, S. P. (Samuel Pierpont), 1834-1906--Correspondence.
Lowell, Percival, 1855-1916--Correspondence.
McAdie, Alexander, 1863-1943--Correspondence.
Means, James, 1853-1920--Correspondence.
Moedebeck, Hermann W. L. (Hermann Wilhelm Ludwig), 1857-1910--Correspondence.
Pickering, Edward C. (Edward Charles), 1846-1919--Correspondence.
Rolls, Charles Stewart, 1877-1910--Correspondence.
Rotch, Abbott Lawrence, 1861-1912.
Shaw, Napier, Sir, 1854-1945--Correspondence.
Teisserenc de Bort, Léon Philippe, 1855-1913--Correspondence.
Ward, Robert DeCourcy, 1867-1931--Correspondence.
Wright, Orville, 1871-1948--Correspondence.
Wright, Orville, 1871-1948.
Wright, Wilbur, 1867-1912--Correspondence.
Wright, Wilbur, 1867-1912.

Organizations
International Aeronautical Congress (1904 : St. Louis, Mo.)
Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904 : Saint Louis, Mo.)

Subjects
Aeronautics--Congresses.
Aeronautics.
Atmosphere.
Flight.
Meteorology.
Occupations
Balloonists.
Meteorologists.

Administrative Information

Provenance
The papers of Abbott Lawrence Rotch, meteorologist and balloonist, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 2009.

Additional Guides
An incomplete list of correspondents, received from the dealer from whom the collection was purchased, is available in the Manuscript Division Reading Room.

Other Repositories
Other papers of Abbott Lawrence Rotch can be found in Houghton Library of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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

Access and Restrictions
The papers of Abbott Lawrence Rotch 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, Abbott Lawrence Rotch Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date   Event
1861, Jan. 6  Born, Boston, Mass.
1884  Graduated, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.
1885  Established the Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory, near Boston, Mass.
1886-1912  Editor or associate editor, American Meteorological Journal
1888-1891  Assistant in meteorology (honorary position), Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
1889  Made two balloon ascensions from Paris, France, using modern instruments
1893  Married Margaret Randolph Anderson
1894
Used kites for the first time to record data about the upper atmosphere

1899-1912
Librarian, American Academy of Arts and Sciences

1900

1901
Obtained meteorological data by flying kites from the deck of a moving steamer
Invented a device to determine the true direction and velocity of the wind at sea

1902-1906
Assistant in meteorology (honorary position), Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

1904
Used free balloons to make the first meteorological observations in the United States at heights of five to ten miles

1905
Collaborated with Léon Philippe Teisserenc de Bort in sending an expedition to explore the atmosphere over the tropical and temperate parts of the Atlantic Ocean, which secured data that later assisted in establishing the best routes for transatlantic flying

1906
First professor of meteorology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

1909
Made the first trigonometric measurements of the flight of pilot balloons in the United States

1911
Published with Henry Palmer *Charts of the Atmosphere for Aeronauts and Aviators*. New York: J. Wiley and Sons

1912, Apr. 7
Died, Boston, Mass.

**Scope and Content Note**

The papers of Abbott Lawrence Rotch (1861-1912) span the years 1896-1912 and include correspondence, writings, notes, photographs, maps, drawings, tables, charts, financial papers, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and other material. Rotch developed an early interest in meteorology as a young man that led him to establish in 1885 the Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory, near Boston, Massachusetts. Rotch was the first person in the world to use kites to record data about the upper atmosphere and later used balloons to carry various instruments to record and photograph atmospheric conditions.

The bulk of the collection, 1903-1910, consists of letters to Rotch that are filed in the general correspondence, although the correspondence does contain a few drafts of Rotch’s outgoing letters. The general correspondence, mainly between Rotch and meteorologists, aviators, and aircraft designers, relates chiefly to discussions about aeronautics and atmospheric experiments and observations. The letters include several exchanges with the United States War Department about the air flight trials of the Wright Brothers. Also included are letters relating to Rotch's
writings, speech engagements, and his participation and interest in the International Aeronautical Congress at the Universal Exposition in 1904 in St. Louis, Missouri.


An incomplete list of correspondents, received from the dealer from whom the collection was purchased, is available in the Manuscript Division Reading Room. This list does not include all correspondents and has not been otherwise verified for accuracy by Manuscript Division staff.

**Arrangement of the Papers**

This collection is arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.
## Container List

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