

# 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>

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# 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

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
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, <i>American Meteorological Journal</i>
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	Published <i>Sounding the Ocean of Air: Being Six Lectures Delivered to the Lowell Institute of Boston in December 1898</i> . London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: E. & J. B. Young & Co.
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 Published <i>The Conquest of the Air: The Advent of Aerial Navigation</i> . New York: Moffat, Yard and Co.
1911	Published with Henry Palmer <i>Charts of the Atmosphere for Aeronauts and Aviators</i> . 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.

A writings file in the collection contains notes and drafts of writings by Rotch, reflecting his interests in meteorology and aeronautics. Tables and charts document atmospheric measurements recorded by Rotch. Correspondents include Cleveland Abbe, James Allen, Louis P. Casella, Octave Chanute, Glenn Hammond Curtiss, Oliver L. Fassig, A. Hildebrandt, S. P. Langley, Percival Lowell, Alexander McAdie, James Means, Hermann W. L. Moedebeck, Edward C. Pickering, Charles Stewart Rolls, Sir Napier Shaw, Léon Philippe Teisserenc de Bort, and Robert DeCourcy Ward.

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

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Commissions and congresses, proceedings and related papers, 1904-1909 <u><i>See Oversize</i></u> (2 folders)
BOX 1	Financial papers, 1904
BOX 1	General correspondence
BOX 1	1902-1905 (32 folders)
BOX 2	1906-1908 (32 folders)
BOX 2	1909
BOX 2	Jan.-July (6 folders)
BOX 3	Aug.-Dec. (4 folders)
BOX 3	1910-1912, undated (13 folders)
BOX 3	Map and drawing, Undated <u><i>See Oversize</i></u>
BOX 3	Miscellany, 1904-1910, undated
BOX 3	Newspaper clippings and other printed matter, 1901-1910, undated (5 folders)
BOX 3	Notes, 1901-1906, undated
BOX 3	Photographs, 1896, 1902-1909, undated (3 folders)
BOX 4	Tables and charts, 1900-1909
BOX 4	Writings
BOX 4	By others, 1899, undated
BOX 4	By Rotch, 1903-1910, undated (8 folders)
BOX OV 1	Oversize
BOX OV 1	Congresses and commissions, proceedings and related papers, 1909 (Box 1)
BOX OV 1	Map and drawing, undated (Box 3)