

Nelson W. Aldrich Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: Nelson W. Aldrich Papers

Span Dates: 1777-1930

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1879-1915)

ID No.: MSS10389

Creator: Aldrich, Nelson W. (Nelson Wilmarth), 1841-1915

Extent: 42,750 items; 140 containers plus 3 oversize; 58 linear feet; 73 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: United States representative and senator from Rhode Island, financier, and philanthropist. Correspondence, journal, appointment books, drafts of speeches, memoranda, financial records, reports, legislative matter, scrapbooks, serial publications, and other printed material relating chiefly to Aldrich's career in Congress.

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

Aldrich, Abby Pearce Chapman, 1845-1917. Abby Pearce Chapman Aldrich diaries. 1904-1912.

Aldrich, Nelson W. (Nelson Wilmarth), 1841-1915.

Aldridge family.

Anthony, Henry B. (Henry Bowen), 1815-1884--Correspondence.

Camden, Johnson Newlon, 1828-1908--Correspondence.

Cannon, Henry White, 1850-1934--Correspondence.

Chace, Jonathan, 1829-1917--Correspondence.

Choate, Charles F. (Charles Francis), 1828-1911.

Crane, Winthrop Murray, 1853-1920--Correspondence.

Hale, Eugene, 1836-1918--Correspondence.

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924--Correspondence.

Nichols, Jeannette Paddock, 1890- --Correspondence.

Nicholson, William Thomas, 1834-1893--Correspondence.

Rockefeller, John D. (John Davison), 1874-1960.

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.

Stephenson, Nathaniel W. (Nathaniel Wright), 1867-1935--Correspondence.

Taft, William H. (William Howard), 1857-1930.

Whitman, William, 1842-1928--Correspondence.

Subjects

Tariff--United States.

Places

Rhode Island--Politics and government--1865-1950.

Titles

Hepburn Act, 1906.

Occupations

Capitalists and financiers.

Philanthropists.

Representatives, U.S. Congress--Rhode Island.

Senators, U.S. Congress--Rhode Island.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Nelson W. Aldrich, United States representative and senator from Rhode Island, financier, and philanthropist, were given to the Library of Congress in four installments. The first was received in 1944 from Aldrich's children, Winthrop W. Aldrich and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., donated additions to the collection in 1955 and 1956 from the papers of his late wife, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. The last installment was given by the Seminary of Our Lady of Providence, Rhode Island, in 1970.

Processing History

The papers of Nelson W. Aldrich were arranged and described in 1955 and microfilmed in 1972. The collection was expanded and revised in 2009.

Additional Guides

A note about the Nelson W. Aldrich papers appeared in the *Library of Congress Information Bulletin* 15 (Nov. 13 1956), and the material was described in the *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 13 (May 1956):152, and 14 (May 1957): 116. In 1973, the Library published *Nelson W. Aldrich, a Register and Index of His Papers in the Library of Congress*. The index is available as a [PDF](#) document.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Nelson W. Aldrich 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.

Microfilm

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Nelson W. Aldrich in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Nelson W. Aldrich Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1841, Nov. 6	Born, Foster, R. I.
1862	Served with tenth Rhode Island Volunteers
1865	Became junior partner in Rhode Island wholesale grocery firm
1866	Married Abby Pearce Chapman (died 1917)
1869-1875	Member, Providence, R.I., common council (president, 1872-1873)

1875-1877	Member, Rhode Island state house of representatives (speaker of the house, 1876-1877)
1876	Delegate, Republican national convention
1879-1881	Member, U.S. House of Representatives
1881-1911	Member, U.S. Senate
1908-1912	Chairman, National Monetary Commission
1915, Apr. 16	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich (1841-1915) span the years 1777-1930, with the bulk of the material concentrated in 1879-1915. The collection is composed primarily of [correspondence](#), [printed matter](#), and material relating to [tariff](#) legislation and the [National Monetary Commission](#), supplemented by [diaries](#), [notebooks](#), [speeches](#), [research notes](#), [serial publications](#), [financial records](#), and [miscellaneous](#) items.

The collection focuses on Aldrich's service as United States Senator from Rhode Island, 1881-1911 and reflects his involvement with national economic and fiscal policy. Tariff legislation is a recurring theme throughout the [Correspondence](#) series, particularly during the years of major tariff revision in 1890, 1897, and 1909. The correspondence, mainly incoming mail from businessmen representing a wide range of economic interests, reveals the depth of feeling generated by the prospect of tariff revision and the importance of the issue during these years. The letters also provide an insight into American business practices and the economic views of a large segment of the American business community during this era of industrial expansion. Aldrich's personal attention to the details of rate revision is revealed in the tariff file, while his speeches help document his attitude toward tariff duties as a source of protection for American industry from foreign competition.

Aldrich gave considerable attention during his last years in office to the problems of United States monetary policy. Following the Panic of 1907, with its accompanying rash of bank failures, he cosponsored the Aldrich-Vreeland Act of 1908, providing for the establishment of a National Monetary Commission to study banking and currency operations at home and abroad and to suggest changes in American practices.

The National Monetary Commission's correspondence for the years 1908-1912 documents its activities and Aldrich's role as chairman. Much of the commission's correspondence was with bankers, public officials, financial experts, and academicians employed to prepare special studies, translate documents, and collect statistics on financial operations and monetary systems in foreign nations as well as in the United States. Aldrich and other members of the commissions visited England, France and Germany to consult with experts and collect data, and specialists representing the commission made similar visits to other nations and reported their findings. Hearings were held in selected American cities to solicit opinions from bankers and other interested parties, while numerous individuals sent unsolicited opinions and plans directly to the commission. Most of the letters were sent and received by Abram Piatt Andrew, special assistant to the commission; Arthur B. Shelton, secretary to the commission; and staff members Charles E. Alden, J. William Sheetz, and William A. Slade.

Aldrich's personal views are reflected in occasional correspondence, speeches delivered to promote monetary reform, and in the final report of the commission soon labeled the "Aldrich Plan."

The commission's correspondence is also a rich source of information regarding American financial institutions in the early twentieth century and the views of members of the financial community at the time. [The National Monetary Commission](#) file contains most of its publications as well as a sampling of the collected data and related material.

After the death of Senator Henry B. Anthony in 1884, Aldrich assumed Anthony's former position as a powerful figure in Rhode Island politics. Letters in the collection from numerous state political figures, particularly Henry B. Gardner and Charles R. Bryaton, kept Aldrich abreast of local affairs and include requests for favors, advice, and patronage.

Aldrich's personal affairs and family relations form a relatively small portion of the collection. A series of letters written to his future wife in 1865-1866 offers a glimpse into his personal relations and plans at this time. Letters written to Mrs. Aldrich during his first trip abroad in 1872-1873 describe family relations and reveal his initial impressions of European society and culture. Scattered letters in the [Correspondence](#) series and the [financial records](#) offer insight into his extensive financial ventures, particularly his investments in the rubber industry.

Principal correspondents include William B. Allison, Henry B. Anthony, Jonathan Bourne (1811-1889), C. R. Brayton, Jonathan Chace, William E. Chandler, Charles A. Conant, Henry Pomeroy Davison, Eugene Hale, Philander C. Knox, Charles Warren Lippitt, Stephen B. Luce, Orville Hitchcock Platt, Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), William H. Taft, Henry Moore Teller, Paul M. Warburg, and George Peabody Wetmore.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in ten series:

- [Diaries and Notebooks, 1863-1927](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1777-1915](#)
- [Tariff, circa 1880-circa 1915](#)
- [National Monetary Commission, 1908-1912](#)
- [Biographer's Papers, circa 1860-circa 1930](#)
- [Financial Records, circa 1880-circa 1915](#)
- [Speech File, 1881-1913](#)
- [Serial Publications, circa 1885-circa 1915](#)
- [Printed Matter, circa 1880-circa 1915](#)
- [Miscellany, circa 1862-circa 1915](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1
REEL 1

Series

Diaries and Notebooks, 1863-1927

Diaries and social engagement books of Abby Pearce Chapman Aldrich, bound and unbound shorthand letters and notes of Nelson W. Aldrich, a Civil War company roll book, a fraternal lodge address book, minutes of the Senate Finance Committee for Dec. 1863 to June 1864, and a journal relating to the Hepburn Act of 1906.

Arranged by type of material.

BOX 2-65
REEL 2-48

General Correspondence, 1777-1915

Mainly letters received and occasional letters sent by Aldrich, and letters sent and received by staff members of the National Monetary Commission.

Arranged chronologically.

BOX 66-74
REEL 49-54

Tariffs, circa 1880-circa 1915

Bills, amendments, schedules, petitions, resolutions, reports, statements, and miscellaneous items relating to tariff rates and tariff legislation.

Arranged by type of material.

BOX 75-84
REEL 55-58

National Monetary Commission, 1908-1912

Publications, miscellaneous draft reports, proceedings, statements, statistics, and papers relating to the National Monetary Commission.

Arranged by type of material.

BOX 85-91
REEL 58-61

Biographer's Papers, circa 1860-circa 1930

Research notes collected by Jeannette Paddock Nichols and Nathaniel W. Stephenson for the latter's biography, *Nelson W. Aldrich, a Leader in American Politics* (1930), supplemented by related correspondence and a few miscellaneous items.

Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically.

BOX 92-100
not filmed

Financial Records, circa 1880-circa 1915

Checkbooks, checks, statements, bills, receipts, vouchers, occasional correspondence, and miscellaneous items relating to Aldrich's personal financial affairs and to the financial transactions of the National Monetary Commission.

Arranged by type of material.

BOX 101-106
REEL 62-64

Speech File, 1881-1913

Holograph, typed and printed speeches by Aldrich, including drafts and related research material.

Arranged chronologically and by type of material.

BOX 107-114
REEL 65

Serial Publications, circa 1885-circa 1915

Issues of serial publications and miscellaneous journals.
Arranged by title and therein chronologically.

BOX 115-129
REEL 65-67

Printed Matter, circa 1880-circa 1915

Government documents and bound and unbound printed matter.
Arranged by type of material.

BOX 130-140
REEL 68-72

Miscellany, circa 1862-circa 1915

Bound facsimile letters, biographical information, material relating to Aldrich's rubber investments, speeches, articles, memoranda, proceedings, legal briefs and cases, contracts, reports, requests for supplies, cards, tickets, scrapbooks of clippings relating primarily to tariff and banking matters, acknowledgments, invitations, loose clippings, photographs, and miscellaneous items.
Arranged by type of material.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 15,443

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1 REEL 1	Diaries and Notebooks, 1863-1927 Diaries and social engagement books of Abby Pearce Chapman Aldrich, bound and unbound shorthand letters and notes of Nelson W. Aldrich, a Civil War company roll book, a fraternal lodge address book, minutes of the Senate Finance Committee for Dec. 1863 to June 1864, and a journal relating to the Hepburn Act of 1906. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 1 REEL 1	Aldrich, Abby Pearce Chapman
BOX 1 REEL 1	Diaries, Jan. 1904; Jan.-May 1912
BOX 1 REEL 1	Engagement books, 1905-1910
BOX 1 REEL 1	Hepburn Act journal, no author, 1927
BOX 1 REEL 1	Civil War roll book, 1863
BOX 1 REEL 1	Fraternal lodge address book, undated
BOX 1 REEL 1	Senate Finance Committee minutes, Dec. 1863-June 1864
BOX 1 REEL 1	Bound shorthand letters, circa Dec. 1882-Jan. 1884
BOX 1 REEL 1	Bound shorthand notes, undated
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General Correspondence, 1777-1915

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BOX 15	26 Apr.-30 June 1884
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BOX 16	July-Oct. 1884
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BOX 18	22 Jan.-28 Feb. 1885
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BOX 22	Mar.-Apr. 1886
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BOX 23	May-June 1886
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BOX 24	July-Dec. 1886 and 1886, no day or month
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BOX 25	July-Dec. 1886 and 1886, no day or month
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General Correspondence, 1777-1915

Container

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BOX 36	Oct. 1905-Dec. 1906 and 1906, no day or month
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BOX 37	Jan. 1907-Jan. 1908
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General Correspondence, 1777-1915

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BOX 85-91	Biographer's Papers, circa 1860-circa 1930
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Biographer's Papers, circa 1860-circa 1930

Container

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Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically.

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BOX 92-100 Financial Records, circa 1880-circa 1915
not filmed

Checkbooks, checks, statements, bills, receipts, vouchers, occasional correspondence, and miscellaneous items relating to Aldrich's personal financial affairs and to the financial transactions of the National Monetary Commission.
Arranged by type of material.

BOX 92 Checkbooks
not filmed

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not filmed

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not filmed

BOX 96-100 Miscellaneous bills, receipts, vouchers, statements, and occasional correspondence relating to Aldrich's personal financial affairs and the financial transactions of the National Monetary Commission
not filmed

BOX 101-106 Speech File, 1881-1913
REEL 62-64

Holograph, typed and printed speeches by Aldrich, including drafts and related research material.
Arranged chronologically and by type of material.

Speech File, 1881-1913

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Miscellany, circa 1862-circa 1915

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