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## William McMurtrie Speer papers4079809

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This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on January 13, 2025.

Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

### Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Butler Library, 6th Floor  
Columbia University, Mail Code 1127  
535 W. 114th St.  
New York, NY 10027  
Business Number: (212) 854-5153  
Fax Number: (212) 854-1365  
[rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu](mailto:rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu)  
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## Table of Contents

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Summary Information .....	3
Biographical / Historical .....	3
Summary .....	3
Arrangement .....	5
Administrative Information .....	6
Controlled Access Headings .....	7
Collection Inventory .....	11
Series I: Cataloged Correspondence and Uncataloged Miscellaneous Materials .....	11
Series II: Journalist and Publisher .....	12
Series III: Public Official and Political Appointee .....	14
Series IV: Attorney in Private Practice .....	16
Series V: Inventor, Promoter, and Businessman .....	17

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
<b>Creator:</b>	Speer, William McMurtrie, 1865-1923
<b>Title:</b>	William McMurtrie Speer papers
<b>ID:</b>	4079809
<b>ID:</b>	MS#1183
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1880-1936
<b>Physical Description:</b>	17 linear feet 34 boxes 3 oversize volumes 1 oversize folder
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .

### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); William McMurtrie Speer papers; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Biographical / Historical

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William M. Speer was born in Huntingdon PA in 1865 and died in Piermont NY in 1923. He graduated from Yale University in 1880 and from the Albany Law School in 1887. He was a journalist, public official, lawyer, inventor, businessman, publisher, and author.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Summary

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Correspondence, manuscripts, typescripts, contracts, legal briefs, patents, and other documents, music scores, cartoons, technical drawings, account books, blueprints, photographs, clippings,

printed legal briefs & transcripts, proofs, scrapbooks, and other printed materials of William M. Speer.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Summary

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There are 14 manuscript boxes & 3 oversize volumes concerning his work as a journalist & publisher. Speer was the Albany correspondent for "The Sun" from 1884 until 1893. From 1893 to 1896 he was editor and part owner of "The Argus" in Albany and there are business records from this period. There is a scrapbook of his articles for "The Buffalo Express" for the period from 1896 until 1903. In 1896 he founded The Law Press as a commercial printer for lawyers, and The Cornucopia Company to publish music and a literary periodical. From 1904 to 1909, he was editorial and legislative writer for the "Evening World" in New York City and there are files of his correspondence, editorial writing, and his investigations of the insurance industry and the Panama Canal libel suit. From 1903 until 1922, he contributed to periodicals and wrote books and pamphlets on many subjects. Starting in 1919, he worked on a scenario and publicity for the Fox Film Corporation's film on wounded veterans of the war. In 1922, he became an editorial writer for "The Evening Mail".

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Summary

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There are 10 boxes of material covering his activities as a public official and political appointee. In 1889, he was Secretary of the Johnstown Flood Committee; in 1889 and 1890, Secretary to The Committee for The International Exposition of 1892; in 1890, Secretary to Mayor of New York City Hugh J. Grant; in 1894, Delegate to the New York State Constitutional Convention. In 1910, he was appointed Special Counsel to New York City for the Ashokan Reservoir Compensation Claims, advising the city on landowners' claims in Ulster County. In 1912 and 1913, he was Special Counsel for the Aldermanic Police Investigation in New York City during the anticorruption drive of Mayor William J. Gaynor. In 1920, he became a Special Assistant to the Attorney General of the United States to investigate profiteering in the coal industry.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Summary

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There are 5 boxes of case files from his private legal practice for the period 1890 to 1923.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Summary

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And there are 4 boxes of papers and an oversize folder of drawings concerning his interests as an inventor, promoter, and businessman. These are files about the Snow Melter (his device to clear city streets), his New York & Brooklyn Economic Power & Construction Company (for the transmission of electricity), The Pneumatic Co. (to manufacture stencil cutting machines), The Philippines Company (a shipping business), hinge making machines (patents and contracts for manufacturing), rack cutting apparatus, an old age pension plan (for the sale of annuities), the Food Committee (a planned co-operative purchasing company), Fabricated Concrete Corporation (which built, rented, and sold houses made of cinder block), Sunlight Gas Machine Co. (which sold equipment for gas lighting), timber mill and timber land sales (acting as an agent for selling land in the southern states), and public transit reorganization (his plan for improving the transportation system in New York City).

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Summary

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Among the cataloged correspondents are: Maxwell Anderson, Charles A. Dana, David B. Hill, Walter Hines Page, S.S. McClure, and Elihu Root.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Arrangement

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Selected materials cataloged; remainder arranged chronologically within professional categories. Box 1-2: 1888-1936, Cataloged correspondence & Misc.; Box 3-14: 1884-1923, Journalist & Publisher; Box 15-24: 1889-1921, Public Official & Political Appointee; Box

25-29: 1890-1923, Attorney in Private Practice; Box 30-34: 1891-1923, Inventor, Promoter & Businessman.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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Columbia University, Mail Code 1127

535 W. 114th St.

New York, NY 10027

Business Number: (212) 854-5153

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URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/rbml/index.html>

### Revision Description

EAD document created by CCR. 2020-10-16

### Restrictions on Access

The following boxes are located off-site: Boxes 2-34. You will need to request this material at least three business days in advance to use the collection in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library reading room.

### Restrictions on Access

This collection has no restrictions.

### Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Reproductions may be made for research purposes. The RBML maintains ownership of the physical material only. Copyright remains with the creator and his/her heirs. The responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Papers: Source of acquisition--Satterthwaite, Ann. Method of acquisition--Gift; Date of acquisition--03/22/1991. Accession number--M-91-03-22.

## Ownership and Custodial History

Gift of Mrs Ann Satterthwaite, 1991.

## Processing Information

Papers Processed HR 05/19/1992.

## Accruals

Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared.  
Contact [rbml@columbia.edu](mailto:rbml@columbia.edu) for more information.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Argus (Albany, N.Y. : 1883 : Daily)
- Brooklyn citizen
- Buffalo morning express (Buffalo, N.Y. : 1878)
- City record (New York, N.Y.)
- Evening mail (New York, N.Y. : 1904)
- Evening world (New York, N.Y.)
- New York law journal. New York, New York Law Pub. Co
- Sun (New York, N.Y. : 1833)
- World (New York, N.Y. : 1883)
- Actions and defenses
- Agriculture
- Annuities
- Bankruptcy
- Cinder blocks
- Coal -- Transportation -- Law and legislation
- Coal trade
- Concrete houses
- Consumer cooperatives
- Cooperation
- Eminent domain -- New York (State)
- Floods -- Pennsylvania -- Johnstown (Cambria County)
- Food supply
- Gas-lighting
- Government litigation
- Hinges -- Manufacture
- Insurance

- Insurance companies -- Investigation
- Inventions
- Journalism
- Libel and slander
- Local transit -- New York (State) -- New York -- Reorganization
- Lumber trade -- Southern States
- Machinery
- Dairy laws -- New York (State)
- Music publishing
- Newspaper publishing
- Old age pensions
- Patents
- Police corruption -- New York (State) -- New York
- Precast concrete construction
- Printing -- Technological innovations
- Publishers and publishing
- Real property
- Representation in administrative proceedings
- Sawmills -- Southern States
- Shipping
- Ships, Concrete
- Snow removal -- Technological innovations
- Stencils and stencil cutting -- Technological innovations
- Transportation -- New York (State) -- New York -- Reorganization
- Trials (Libel)
- World War, 1914-1918 -- Veterans
- Ashokan Reservoir (N.Y.)
- Kingston (N.Y.)
- Panama Canal (Panama)
- Ulster County (N.Y.)
- Abstracts (summaries)
- Account books
- Accounts
- Agreements
- Announcements
- architectural drawings (visual works)
- Articles
- Articles of incorporation
- Artifacts (object genre)
- Bankruptcy proceedings
- Bills (financial)
- Bills (legislative records)
- Biographies (literary works)
- blueprints (reprographic copies)
- Briefs
- Brochures
- Bylaws (administrative records)



- Cartoons (working drawings)
- Case files
- Certificates
- Charts (graphic documents)
- Claims
- Clippings (Information Artifacts)
- Commissions
- Contour maps
- Contracts
- Decisions (judicial records)
- Deeds
- Depositions
- Diagrams
- Drafts (documents)
- Essays
- Fiction (general genre)
- Galley proofs
- Geological maps
- Illustrations
- Indictments (legal documents)
- Insurance policies
- Inventories
- Lists (document genres)
- Maps (documents)
- Mechanical drawings
- Patent drawings
- Photoengravings (prints)
- Photographs
- Printing blocks (printing surfaces)
- Proceedings (reports)
- Proofs (printed matter)
- Receipts (financial records)
- Reports
- Scores (documents for music)
- Scrapbooks
- Scripts (documents)
- Sheet music
- Specifications
- Statistics
- Stock certificates
- Surveys (documents)
- Tables
- Testimonials
- Testimonies
- Topographic maps
- Writs
- Businessmen

- Editors
- Government attorneys
- Inventors
- Journalists
- Lawyers
- Music publishers
- Promoters
- Public officers
- Anderson, Maxwell, 1888-1959
- Comstock, Anthony, 1844-1915
- Dana, Charles A (Charles Anderson), 1819-1897
- Dana, Paul, 1852-1930
- Gaynor, William Jay, 1849-1913
- Glynn, Martin Henry, 1871-1924
- Grant, Hugh John, 1855-
- Hearst, William Randolph, 1863-1951
- Hill, David B (David Bennett), 1843-1910
- Laffan, William M.
- Lord, Chester Sanders, 1850-1933
- McClure, S. S (Samuel Sidney), 1857-1949
- O'Connor, Joseph, 1841-1908
- Page, Walter Hines, 1855-1918
- Pulitzer, Joseph, 1847-1911
- Ralph, Julian, 1853-1903
- Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919
- Root, Elihu, 1845-1937
- Sulzer, William, 1863-1941
- Untermyer, Samuel, 1858-1940
- Brooklyn Edison Company, Inc
- Cornucopia Company
- Delaware and Eastern Railway Company
- Dixie Transportation Co., Inc
- Douglass Barnes Corporation
- Equitable Life Insurance Company
- Fabricated Concrete Corporation
- Food Committee
- Fox Film Corporation
- International Exposition of 1892
- Johnstown Flood Committee
- Law Press
- New York and Brooklyn Economic Power and Construction Company
- New York Mail and Newspaper Transportation Company
- New York (N.Y.). Board of Aldermen
- New York (N.Y.). Board of City Record
- New York (N.Y.). Department of Water Resources
- New York (N.Y.). Law Department
- New York (N.Y.). Office of the Mayor

- New York (N.Y.). Police Department -- : Investigation
- New York (State). Constitutional Convention (1894)
- Philippines Company
- Pneumatic Co
- Sunlight Gas Machine Co., Inc
- United States. Attorney-General

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## Collection Inventory

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### Series I: Cataloged Correspondence and Uncataloged Miscellaneous Materials

#### Scope and Contents

Includes cataloged correspondence, as well as miscellaneous clippings, correspondence, documents, pamphlets. Also includes photographs of Speer.

Title/Description	Instances
Cataloged Correspondence	
Maxwell Anderson	box 1
Anthony Comstock	box 1
Charles A. Dana	box 1
Paul Dana	box 1
Martin H. Glynn	box 1
David Bennett Hill	box 1
William M. Laffan	box 1
Chester Lord	box 1
S.S. McClure	box 1
Walter Hines Page	box 1
Julian Ralph	box 1
Elihu Root	box 1
William Sulzer	box 1
Samuel Untermyer	box 1
Uncataloged Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1888-1936	box 1
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Including folders for Farming and Banking.	
Uncataloged Miscellaneous Documents, 1889-1923	box 1
Photographs of W.M. Speer	

box 2

Miscellaneous Printed Pamphlets and Clippings

box 2

**Scope and Contents**

Including folders for Farming, Kingston NY, and William Sulzer

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series II: Journalist and Publisher, 1884-1923

Title/Description	Instances
<i>The Sun</i> (New York, NY), 1884-1915	
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Speer was the Albany correspondent for <i>The Sun</i> , 1884-1893.	
<i>The Sun</i> (New York, NY)--Scrapbook, 1884-1915	flatbox 601
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Scrapbook of clippings of his articles (1884-1893) and some later freelance work (1889-1915).	
Miscellaneous Correspondence and Printed Materials, 1884-1893	box 3
<i>The Argus</i> (Albany, NY), 1888-1898	
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Speer was editor and part owner of <i>The Argus</i> , 1893-1896.	
Correspondence, 1893-1898	box 3
Manuscripts and documents, 1893-1897	box 4
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Editorial drafts; contracts and documents re: typographic and syndication arrangements, job printing, and New York State government affairs	
The New York Mail and Newspaper Transportation Company, 1893	box 4
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Documents and printed materials	
Printed materials and clippings, 1888-1896	box 4

The Law Press - Legal and Other Printing, 1896-1897	box 5
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Correspondence and documents	
The Cornucopia Company - Periodicals and music publishing, 1896-1901	box 5
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Correspondence, music scores, documents, and printed items.	
<i>The Buffalo Express</i> (Buffalo, NY), 1896-1903	
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Speer was a correspondent.	
Scrapbook of his articles, 1896	box 5
Scrapbook of his articles, 1897	box 5
Scrapbook of his articles, 1898-1899	box 6
Scrapbook of his articles, 1902-1903	box 6
Scrapbook of his articles from various newspapers, 1896-1923	flatbox 602
<i>The World</i> , 1904-1913	
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Speer was an editorial and legislative writer for <i>The World</i> from 1904-1909.	
Correspondence and editorial matter, 1904-1912	box 7
Cartoons of Speer, undated	box 7
Clippings and other printed material, 1904-1905	box 7
Scrapbook of clippings, 1905	flatbox 601
Printed editorials by Speer, clippings, and other printed materials, 1906-1908	box 8
Printed editorials by Speer, clippings, and other printed materials, 1908-1913	box 9
Insurance investigation, 1905-1909	box 10
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Correspondence, drafts and memoranda, clippings, and other printed materials	
Panama libel suit, 1907-1910	box 11

**Scope and Contents**

Correspondence, drafts and proofs, memoranda and documents, clippings and other printed materials

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Panama libel suit, 1907-1910	box 12
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**Scope and Contents**

Printed briefs, transcripts, and other legal documents

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Periodical articles and books by Speer, 1903-1910	
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Correspondence, drafts, proofs, and printed copies of his articles, including many on insurance	box 13
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Correspondence, the typescript, and a reader's report of his novel, <i>John Van Buren, Politician</i>	box 13
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Periodical articles and books by Speer, 1906-1922	box 14
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**Scope and Contents**

Drafts and printed materials for his writings on several subjects including W.R. Hearst, Theodore Roosevelt, real estate, and legal subjects

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Scenario and publicity for the Fox Film Corporation, 1919-1922	box 14
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**Scope and Contents**

Correspondence, drafts, and printed materials for his work on a film on wounded veterans of World War I

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<i>The Evening Mail</i> (New York, NY), 1922-1923	box 14
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**Scope and Contents**

Speer was an editorial writer for *The Evening Mail* from 1922-1923. File includes correspondence and typescript drafts.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

**Series III: Public Official and Political Appointee, 1889-1921**

Title/Description	Instances
Johnstown Flood Committee, 1889	box 15
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Speer was secretary. Includes lists and accounts.	
The Committee for The International Exposition of 1892, 1889-1890	box 15

**Scope and Contents**

Speer was secretary. Includes correspondence, account books, lists, and printed materials.

Secretary to Mayor of New York Hugh J. Grant, 1890-1891      box 15

**Scope and Contents**

Speer was secretary in 1890. Includes correspondence, documents, and printed materials.

New York State Constitutional Convention, 1894      box 15

**Scope and Contents**

Speer was a delegate. Includes correspondence, documents, typescripts of articles, and printed materials.

Special Counsel to New York City for the Ashokan Reservoir Compensation Claims, 1904-1923

**Scope and Contents**

Speer was appointed Special Counsel to New York City for the Ashokan Reservoir Compensation Claims in 1910. Includes Aqueduct Commissioners; Board of Water Supply; Commissioners of Appraisal; Corporation Counsel, etc.

Correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, and printed materials, 1904-1911      box 16

Correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, and printed materials, 1912-1915      box 17

Correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, and printed materials, 1916-1917      box 18

Correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, and printed materials, 1918      box 19

Correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, and printed materials, 1918-1923      box 20

Special Counsel in New York City for the Aldermanic Police Investigation, 1912-1913      box 21

**Scope and Contents**

Correspondence, documents, and printed materials (including very many clippings on police corruption, on Mayor Gaynor, and about his death and funeral).

Special Assistant to the [U.S.] Attorney General re: Profiteering in Coal, 1920-1921

**Scope and Contents**

Speer became Special Assistant in 1920. Files include correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, etc.

General, 1920-1921	box 22
Brooklyn Edison Company, Inc., 1917-1920	box 23
Complaints from the public, 1920	box 24
Dixie Transportation Co., Inc., 1920	box 24
Douglass Barnes Corporation, 1920-1922	box 24
Printed materials	box 24

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

**Series IV: Attorney in Private Practice, 1890-1923**

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>
General correspondence, documents, and printed materials	box 25
Case Files	
<b>Arrangement</b>	
Arranged chronologically	
Injunction re: <i>City Record</i> , 1891	box 25
New York Real Estate Improvement Co., 1896	box 25
John Robinson and Mary Gray, 1897-1898	box 25
Rubinfeld vs. Rabiner, 1897-1899	box 25
Towns & McCrossin, Attorneys, 1897-1899	box 26
Sexton vs. Ives, 1900-1903	box 26
Brown vs. Proctor, 1903-1905	box 26
Keystone Farm Machine Co. vs. N.Y. Agricultural Co., 1903-1909	box 26
Platt vs. Inovation Trunk Co., 1903-1904	box 26
Cowles bankruptcy, 1909	box 26
The Bordon Company--Bordon's Milk, 1910	box 26
Masten & Nichols--Food legislation, 1911-1916	box 26
S.S. Kaplan to F.W. Brooks--Mortgages, 1912	box 26
Stamford Water Company, 1916-1919	box 26



Sylvia Perlson--Custody suit, 1917	box 26
Delaware and Eastern Railway Company, 1918-1921	box 27
Delaware and Eastern Railway Company, 1918-1923	box 28
Dunlap vs. Star Company, 1918-1923	box 28
Burke vs. Freundlich, 1920-1922	box 28
Prohibition permits, 1920-1921	box 28
Richardson vs. <i>The Brooklyn Citizen</i> , 1920-1922	box 28
Jergens vs. Woodbury, 1921	box 28
Pennsylvania Railroad Company, 1921	box 28
Converse D. Marsh, 1921-1922	box 29
Stern Miller Co., Inc bankruptcy, 1921-1922	box 29
Vogue Shirt Co., Inc. bankruptcy, 1921-1922	box 29
Drake patent, 1922	box 29
<i>New York Law Journal</i> , 1922	box 29
618 West 148th Street, 1922	box 29

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

### Series V: Inventor, Promoter, and Businessman, 1891-1923

Title/Description	Instances
The Snow Melter - A Street Cleaning Machine, 1891-1911	
Correspondence, 1895-1911	box 30
Documents and manuscripts	box 30
Drawings and blueprints	box 30
Photographs and photoengraving block	box 30
Printed materials	box 30
Drawings and blueprints	mapcase 14-M-6
New York & Brooklyn Economic Power and Construction Company, 1893-1901	
Correspondence	box 31
Contracts & documents	box 31
The Pneumatic Co.--Stencil cutting machines, etc., 1893-1904	box 31

**Scope and Contents**

Correspondence, contracts, patents, and other documents, and printed materials

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The Philippines Company--Shipping, 1899 box 31

**Scope and Contents**

Documents and printed materials

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Hinge making machines, 1902-1912

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Correspondence box 32

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Contracts and documents box 32

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Patent documents box 32

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Patent drawings box 32

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Printed materials box 32

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Rack cutting apparatus, 1903-1905 box 32

**Scope and Contents**

Correspondence, contracts, and patents

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Old age pension plan--Sale of annuities (Iron & Steel Board of Trade), 1911-1917

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Correspondence box 33

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Manuscripts and documents box 33

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Printed materials box 33

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Food Committee - A planned co-operative purchasing company, 1912-1913

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Correspondence, 1912-1921 box 33

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Documents, manuscripts, and printed materials box 33

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Fabricated Concrete Corporation--Cinderblock houses, 1918-1923

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Correspondence, 1920-19123 box 33

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Concrete boat hulls box 33

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Manuscripts and documents, 1918-1923 box 33

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Printed materials box 33

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Technical drawings and blueprints box 33

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Sunlight Gas Machine Co., Inc.--Gas lighting, 1918-1923

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Correspondence, 1920-1923 box 34

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Manuscripts and documents, 1918-1922	box 34
Printed materials	box 34
Timber mill and timber land sales--Land in the southern states, 1919-1920	box 34
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Correspondence and documents	
Public transit reorganization--New York City, 1921	box 34
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Correspondence, manuscripts, and documents	

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[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)