

Richard Olney

A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Clifford L. Muse, Jr.

Revised by Lia Apodaca and Patrick Kerwin



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Manuscript Division, 2008**

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/eadmss.ms008102>

Collection Summary

Title: Richard Olney Papers

Span Dates: 1830-1928

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1893-1917)

ID No.: MSS35139

Creator: Olney, Richard, 1835-1917

Extent: 28,000 items; 159 containers plus 1 oversize; 33 linear feet; 62 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Lawyer, attorney general, and secretary of state. Correspondence, letterbooks, drafts of speeches and articles, subject files, memoranda, reports, legal records, newspaper clippings, and printed material relating primarily to Olney's activities as attorney general and secretary of state, and to his Boston, Massachusetts, law practice.

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.

Personal Names

Adee, Alvey A. (Alvey Augustus), 1842-1924--Correspondence.
Atkins, Edwin Farnsworth, 1850-1926--Correspondence.
Barton, Clara, 1821-1912--Correspondence.
Bayard, Thomas F. (Thomas Francis), 1828-1898--Correspondence.
Chadwick, French Ensor, 1844-1919--Correspondence.
Cleveland, Grover, 1837-1908--Correspondence.
Cleveland, Grover, 1837-1908.
Daniels, Josephus, 1862-1948--Correspondence.
Dupuy de Lôme, Enriquer--Correspondence.
Eliot, Charles William, 1834-1926--Correspondence.
Gompers, Samuel, 1850-1924--Correspondence.
Gresham, Walter Quintin, 1832-1895--Correspondence.
Harrison, Benjamin, 1833-1901--Correspondence.
Hay, John, 1838-1905--Correspondence.
Hoar, George Frisbie, 1826-1904--Correspondence.
Lamont, Daniel Scott, 1851-1905--Correspondence.
Lansing, Robert, 1864-1928--Correspondence.
Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924--Correspondence.
McClure, S. S. (Samuel Sidney), 1857-1949--Correspondence.
McKinley, William, 1843-1901--Correspondence.
Olney, Peter B. (Peter Butler), 1843-1922--Correspondence.
Olney, Richard, 1835-1917.
Page, Walter Hines, 1855-1918--Correspondence.
Pauncefote, Julian Pauncefote, Baron, 1828-1902--Correspondence.
Pinkerton, Robert A. (Robert Allan), 1848-1907--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, James Roosevelt, 1854-1927--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.
Scott, James Brown, 1866-1943--Correspondence.
Smalley, George W. (George Washburn), 1833-1916--Correspondence.
Tarbell, Ida M. (Ida Minerva), 1857-1944--Correspondence.
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915--Correspondence.
White, Henry, 1850-1927--Correspondence.
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924--Correspondence.

Organizations

Boston and Maine Railroad.
Democratic Party (U.S.)
Northern Pacific Railway Company.
Southern Pacific Company.
United States. Dept. of Justice. Office of the Attorney General.
United States. Dept. of State.
United States. Supreme Court.

Subjects

Antitrust law.
Arbitration, International.
Canals--Nicaragua.
Canals--Panama.
Depressions--1893--United States.
Fisheries--Bering Sea.
Fishery law and legislation.
Labor unions.
Practice of law--Massachusetts--Boston.
Pullman Strike, 1894.
Railroads.
Silver.
World War, 1914-1918.

Locations

British Guiana--Boundaries--Venezuela.
Cuba--History--Revolution, 1895-1898.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
Panama Canal (Panama)--History.
Philippines--Foreign relations--United States.
Philippines--History--Philippine American War, 1899-1902.
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--Foreign relations--Philippines.
United States--Foreign relations.
United States--Politics and government--1865-1933.
Venezuela--Boundaries--British Guiana.

Related Names

James, Henry, 1879-1947. Henry James research files.

Occupations

Cabinet officers.
Lawyers.

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of Richard Olney, lawyer, attorney general, and secretary of state, were given to the Library of Congress in 1925 by his daughters, Agnes Minot and Mary O. Abbot, and their children and grandchildren, Francis Minot, Francis P. Abbot, Mary P. Abbot, Charles B. Abbot, and Agnes Abbot. The papers were received in the Library between 1924 and 1932.

Processing History:

The papers of Richard Olney were arranged and described in 1978. The finding aid was revised in 2007.

Copyright Status:

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

Microfilm:

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on sixty-two reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation:

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

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1835, Sept. 15	Born, Oxford, Mass.
1851	Graduated, Leicester Academy, Worcester, Mass.
1856	A.M., Brown University, Providence, R.I.
1858	LL.B., Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass.
1859	Admitted to the bar, Boston, Mass.
1859-1893	Practiced corporate law
1861	Married Agnes P. Thomas
1874	Elected to Massachusetts house of representatives
1893	Appointed attorney general
1894	Ordered the use of federal troops in quelling the Pullman Strike
1895	Defended income tax provisions of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff before the Supreme Court of the United States
1895	Appointed secretary of state
1895-1897	Arbitrated boundary dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain and proposed a general arbitration agreement between the United States and Great Britain
1897	Returned to private law practice, Boston, Mass.
1913	Declined ambassadorship to Great Britain
1914	Declined membership on the Federal Reserve Board
1915	Member, International Commission, under treaty between the United States and France

1917, Apr. 8

Died, Boston, Mass.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Richard Olney (1835-1917) span the years 1830-1928, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1893-1917. The collection is composed of letters sent and received, telegrams, maps, drafts of speeches and articles, memoranda, newspaper items, legal records, official reports, pamphlets, and miscellaneous printed matter. Many of Olney's papers, including some of his significant correspondence, various state papers, and speeches and addresses, were transcribed by his longtime secretary, Antoinette M. Straw, prior to their being given to the Library, and both the originals and the typed transcriptions are in the collection. Straw also retraced fading portions of Olney's letterbooks, expurgated financial matter pertaining to the private business affairs of his law clients, and prepared various indexes to the papers.

The largest portion of the Olney Papers describes events and activities during his tenure as United States attorney general and secretary of state under President Grover Cleveland from 1893 to 1897. Before his appointment to the cabinet, Olney had been a corporation lawyer in Boston specializing in cases involving railroads. While reflecting selected aspects of both this period and a second phase of private law practice after 1897, the papers in this collection are mostly devoted to his work as a public servant. Among the topics covered are the farmers' protest and labor strife following the Depression of 1893, Democratic Party politics from the 1890s to World War I, and antitrust legislation stemming from the passage of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Also prominent in the collection are public and private matters regarding the debt owed the federal government by the Northern Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads, and some additional material concerning the Boston and Maine Railroad.

Olney's actions in the administration of Grover Cleveland roused considerable opposition. Especially controversial was the decision to quell the Pullman Strike of 1894 with federal troops and Cleveland's strong effort to repeal the provision of the Silver Purchase Act of 1890 providing for the Treasury Department's mandatory purchase of 4.5 million ounces of silver monthly. Olney was directly involved in both actions, and his role in the successful effort for repeal is reflected in his draft of Cleveland's message. Also evident in the collection is his participation in some of the landmark court decisions of the 1890s. Among the pivotal cases in which Olney was directly involved were *U.S. v. E. C. Knight*, *Pullock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Co.*, and *In re Debs*.

Following the death of Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham in 1895, President Cleveland nominated Olney to fill the vacancy in that office. For two years, from June 1895 to March 1897, Olney guided the State Department through a series of events including boundary disputes between Britain and Venezuela and the resulting United States British General Arbitration Treaty of 1897. Other foreign policy questions treated in this collection are the revolution in Hawaii, the Bering Sea fisheries dispute with Britain, and the projected building of a canal through Panama or Nicaragua.

Olney's interest in legal, monetary, and foreign affairs continued throughout the two decades after his retirement from public office. He declined two federal posts, including an offer from President Woodrow Wilson to become a member of the newly created Federal Reserve Board, but did consent to serve as an American representative on an international commission resulting from a joint agreement between the United States and France. Although his time was mainly spent in private affairs, Olney kept abreast of diplomatic questions that had occupied him as secretary of state and persisted in importance after his departure. Foreign affairs topics that appear with some frequency in these papers include the Cuban Revolution of 1895 and its repercussions, and the various insurrections in the Philippines after 1898. Other items pertain to American policy toward China, Spain, Turkey, and Germany prior to the American entry into World War I.

Olney's political life spanned numerous presidencies, but the bulk of his presidential correspondence was with Cleveland. These letters, which appear chronologically in the [general correspondence](#) and [letterbook](#) volumes, were subsequently typed by Straw, and the copies appear as a group in the [special correspondence](#) series. Also in the collection are papers compiled for or by Henry James (1879-1947), a lawyer and biographer, as background for an authorized biography of Olney. The few items in the collection that predate Olney's public career have been organized in the bound volumes of the [general correspondence](#) and relate principally to background papers concerning Venezuela and British Guiana. An important item in the general correspondence series is an 1830 letter by William Wirt regarding two court cases held under advisement by Chief Justice John Marshall.

Prominent correspondents in addition to those cited above include Alvey A. Adee, Edwin Farnsworth Atkins, Clara Barton, Thomas F. Bayard, French Ensor Chadwick, Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, Walter Quintin Gresham, Benjamin Harrison, Daniel

Scott Lamont, Robert Lansing, Henry Cabot Lodge, William McKinley, Peter B. Olney, Baron Julian Pauncefote, Robert A. Pinkerton, James Roosevelt Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), James Brown Scott, George W. Smalley, Henry White, and Woodrow Wilson. Other important correspondents include Josephus Daniels, Charles William Eliot, Samuel Gompers, John Hay, George Frisbie Hoar, S. S. McClure, Walter Hines Page, James Ford Rhodes, Ida M. Tarbell, and Booker T. Washington.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series:

- [General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925](#)
- [Letterbooks, 1887-1917](#)
- [Special Correspondence and Indexes, 1892-1922](#)
- [Subject File, 1891-1928](#)
- [Speech and Article File, 1890-1917](#)
- [Miscellany, 1861 \(Oversize\)](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-132
REEL 1-46

Series

General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925

Bound volumes of letters received with some drafts or copies of letters sent, maps, telegrams, drafts or copies of speeches and articles, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes, cards, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and printed material.

Volumes 1-127 are arranged chronologically. Volumes 128-132 are arranged by subject and therein chronologically.

BOX 133-152
REEL 46-58

Letterbooks, 1887-1917

Copies of letters sent.

Arranged chronologically with an index in each volume. The dates of some volumes overlap.

BOX 153
REEL 59

Special Correspondence and Indexes, 1892-1922

Copies of Olney's correspondence with Grover Cleveland and Henry White and early indexes to names and subjects in the correspondence.

Cleveland's correspondence is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically, and White's correspondence is arranged chronologically. The index is organized alphabetically by type of material or topic and therein chronologically.

BOX 154-157
REEL 60-62

Subject File, 1891-1928

Letters sent and received, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes, pamphlets, printed matter, and newspaper clippings.

Arranged alphabetically by subject and therein chronologically.

BOX 158-159
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Speech and Article File, 1890-1917

Drafts and typed and printed copies of Olney's speeches and articles, together with related material including correspondence, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and reports.

Arranged by topic or type of speech and therein chronologically. Most speeches are indexed.

BOX OV 1
REEL 62

Miscellany, 1861 (Oversize)

Pardon of William Edwards signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 17,389

Container

Contents

BOX 1-132
REEL 1-46

General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925

Bound volumes of letters received with some drafts or copies of letters sent, maps, telegrams, drafts or copies of speeches and articles, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes, cards, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and printed material.

Volumes 1-127 are arranged chronologically. Volumes 128-132 are arranged by subject and therein chronologically.

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BOX 2
REEL 1

1893

Feb. 23-24

BOX 3
REEL 1

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REEL 2

Apr. 1-19

BOX 6
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	Latin American policy, draft and printed copies of article by Olney and correspondence, 1915-1918
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General Correspondence and Related Material, 1830-1925

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Draft of Grover Cleveland's message to Congress on Hawaii, 1893
Suggestions for Grover Cleveland's address on Hawaii
Columbian University Law School address, New York, N.Y., 1894
Memorial for Justice Howell Edmunds Jackson, 1895
Draft of Grover Cleveland's message to Congress on "trusts," Dec. 1896
Drafts of memorandum on Sherman Anti-Trust Law, 1902-1903
Drafts of address, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., n.d.

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Letterbooks, 1887-1917

Copies of letters sent.
Arranged chronologically with an index in each volume. The dates of some volumes overlap.

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Special Correspondence and Indexes, 1892-1922

Copies of Olney's correspondence with Grover Cleveland and Henry White and early indexes to names and subjects in the correspondence.

Cleveland's correspondence is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically, and White's correspondence is arranged chronologically. The index is organized alphabetically by type of material or topic and therein chronologically.

BOX 153
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Cleveland, Grover, copies of correspondence

To Olney, 1983, Apr. 3-1906, Mar. 21

From Olney, 1893, Feb. 14-1902, June 20

White, Henry, copies of correspondence to and from Olney, 1896

Indexes

To general correspondence as originally bound,
1892, Sept. 29-1913, May 24, n.d.
(2 folders)

To major subjects in the correspondence

Bering Sea, 1889-1897

Confidential letters, 1894-1896

Cuba, 1895-1897

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Justice Department, 1893-1914, n.d.

State Department, 1893-1913

Venezuela, 1895-1922

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BOX 154-157
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Subject File, 1891-1928

Letters sent and received, memoranda, legal records, official reports, notes, pamphlets, printed matter, and newspaper clippings.

Arranged alphabetically by subject and therein chronologically.

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Arbitration file, 1896-1897

(2 folders)

Bering Sea

Biographical file compiled by Henry James (1879-1947) pertaining to Olney

Material concerning Olney, 1894-1928

(2 folders)

Straw, Antoinette, correspondence with Henry James (1879-1947), 1921-1924

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Subject File, 1891-1928

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	Invitations and calling cards, 1892-1897
BOX 155 REEL 61	Legal miscellany
	Maybreak case, 1892-1897 (2 folders)
	Miscellany, 1891-1896
BOX 156 REEL 61	Mora claim
	Panama Canal, 1903-1914 (2 folders)
	Prussian treaty, 1894
	Union Pacific case, 1891-1897 (2 folders)
BOX 157 REEL 62	(3 folders)
	Venezuela miscellany, 1894-1895
BOX 158-159 REEL 62	Speech and Article File, 1890-1917
	Drafts and typed and printed copies of Olney's speeches and articles, together with related material including correspondence, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and reports. Arranged by topic or type of speech and therein chronologically. Most speeches are indexed.
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	1905-1912, including index
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	"Washington Work" as attorney general and consultant in legal matters, including index, 1893-1916
BOX OV 1 REEL 62	Miscellany, 1861 (Oversize)
	Pardon of William Edwards signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward
BOX OV 1 REEL 62	Pardon of William Edwards signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward, 1861, Mar. 28