

# Edward Williams Morley Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the  
Library of Congress

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Revised by Donna Ellis with the assistance of  
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Manuscript Division, Library of  
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2007

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

Finding aid encoded by Glenn R.  
Gardner, 2009

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009263>

# Collection Summary

Title: Edward Williams Morley Papers

Span Dates: 1833-1923

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1863-1899)

ID No.: MSS33506

Creator: Morley, Edward Williams, 1838-1923

Extent: 1,200 items; 3 containers; 1.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Chemist and physician. Correspondence, certificates, and printed matter, including letters from Myron A. Munson, Morley's college roommate and lifelong friend, written while Munson was serving in the Union Army in 1864, and extensive correspondence with prominent European and American scientists.

## 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

Armstrong, Henry Edward, 1848-1937--Correspondence.

Baker, Herbert Brereton, 1862-1935--Correspondence.

Brush, Charles Francis, 1849-1929--Correspondence.

Börnstein, R. (Richard), 1852-1913--Correspondence.

Böttger, Wilhelm, b. 1871--Correspondence.

Clarke, Frank Wigglesworth, 1847-1931--Correspondence.

Dana, Edward Salisbury, 1849-1935--Correspondence.

Dana, James Dwight, 1813-1895--Correspondence.

Dixon, Harold Baily, 1852-1930--Correspondence.

Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955.

Erdmann, Hugo, 1862-1910--Correspondence.

Guye, Phillippe-Auguste, 1862-1922--Correspondence.

Hart, Edward, 1854- --Correspondence.

Hempel, Walther, 1851-1916--Correspondence.

Herrick, Francis Hobart, 1858-1940--Correspondence.

Hicks, W. M. (William Mitchinson), 1850-1934--Correspondence.

Higgins, William, Sir, 1824-1910--Correspondence.

Jewett, F. F. (Frank Fanning), 1844-1926--Correspondence.

Kelvin, William Thomson, Baron, 1824-1907--Correspondence.

Langley, S. P. (Samuel Pierpont), 1834-1906--Correspondence.

Larmor, Joseph, 1857-1942--Correspondence.

Mendenhall, Thomas C. (Thomas Corwin), 1841-1924--Correspondence.

Michelson, Albert Abraham, 1852-1931--Correspondence.

Miller, Dayton Clarence, 1866-1941--Correspondence.

Morley, Edward Williams, 1838-1923.

Munroe, Charles E. (Charles Edward), 1849-1938--Correspondence.

Munson, Myron A. (Myron Andrews), b. 1835--Correspondence.

Noyes, William A. (William Albert), 1857-1941--Correspondence.

Ostwald, Wilhelm, 1853-1932--Correspondence.

Pritchett, Henry S. (Henry Smith), 1857-1939--Correspondence.

Putnam, F. W. (Frederic Ward), 1839-1915--Correspondence.

Ramsay, William, 1852-1916--Correspondence.

Rayleigh, John William Strutt, Baron, 1842-1919--Correspondence.  
Remsen, Ira, 1846-1927--Correspondence.  
Rogers, William Augustus, 1832-1898--Correspondence.  
Soddy, Frederick, 1877-1956--Correspondence.  
Swann, W. F. G. (William Francis Gray), 1884-1962--Correspondence.

#### Subjects

Atomic weights.  
Automobiles.  
Cable cars (Streetcars).  
Chemistry.  
Hydrogen.  
Oxygen.  
Physics.  
Relativity (Physics).  
Science.  
Typewriters.  
Water.

#### Places

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Personal narratives.

#### Occupations

Chemists.  
Physicists.

## Administrative Information

#### Provenance

The papers of Edward Williams Morley, chemist and physicist, were given to the Library of Congress by Howard R. Williams in 1956.

#### Processing History

The papers of Edward Williams Morley were arranged and described in 1978. The finding aid to the collection was revised in 2007.

#### Transfers

Some photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of these papers.

#### Copyright Status

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

#### Access and Restrictions

The papers of Edward Williams Morley 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, Edward Williams Morley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1838, Jan. 29	Born, Newark, N. J.
1860	Graduated, Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.
1861-1864	Student, Andover Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass.
1864	Licensed as minister in Congregational Church
1864-1865	Served with United States Sanitary Commission, Fortress Monroe, Va.
1865-1868	Taught private school, Marlboro, Mass.
1868	Married Isabella Birdsall
1869-1906	Professor of chemistry, Western Reserve College, Hudson, Ohio (later Adelbert College of Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio)
1873-1888	Professor of chemistry, Cleveland Medical College, Cleveland, Ohio
1895	President, American Association for the Advancement of Science
1899	President, American Chemical Society
1906	Retired and moved to West Hartford, Conn.
1907	Received Sir Humphry Davy Medal, Royal Society of London, London, England
1912	Received Elliot Cresson Medal, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, Pa.
1917	Received Willard Gibbs Medal, Chicago, Ill., Section, American Chemical Society
1923, Feb. 24	Died, West Hartford, Conn. (?)

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Edward Williams Morley (1838-1923) cover the period 1833-1923. They consist primarily of correspondence, with the bulk of the letters concentrated within the years 1863-1899.

The Morley Papers are almost equally divided between family correspondence and letters from scientists and others with scientific interests. Most of the family letters are from Morley to his father, the earliest written in 1851. The letters are mainly concerned with routine family and local news, but a number of them contain comments on the progress of Morley's experiments. A few show his fascination with new ideas outside the laboratory, such as the advent of the typewriter and the introduction of the electric streetcar and the automobile.

Among the personal letters in the collection is a group of letters from Morley's Andover Theological Seminary roommate and lifelong friend, Myron A. Munson. The letters start in 1863 and continue

to 1906 when Morley moved to West Hartford, Connecticut, including 1864 while Munson was serving in the Union Army during the Civil War.

Morley received wide recognition for the Michelson-Morley experiment that became fundamental for its importance to Einstein's theory of relativity and for his work on the densities of oxygen and hydrogen and the ratio in which they combined to form water. His papers include letters from Albert Abraham Michelson, with whom he conducted the celebrated 1887 experiment, and William A. Noyes, who also performed research on the atomic weight of hydrogen. Though he and Morley worked independently, the letters show there was some exchange of ideas and research techniques.

European scientists represented in the collection include Henry Edward Armstrong, Herbert Brereton Baker, R. Börnstein, Wilhelm Böttger, Harold Baily Dixon, Hugo Erdmann, Phillippe-Auguste Guye, Walther Hempel, Sir William Higgins, W. M. Hicks, Baron William Thomson Kelvin, Sir Joseph Larmor, Wilhelm Ostwald, William Ramsay, Baron John William Strutt Rayleigh, and W. F. G. Swann. Among the Americans writing to Morley are Charles Francis Brush, Frank Wigglesworth Clarke, Edward Salisbury Dana, James Dwight Dana, Edward Hart, Francis Hobart Herrick, F. F. Jewett, S. P. Langley, Thomas C. Mendenhall, Dayton Clarence Miller, Charles E. Munroe, Henry S. Pritchett, F. W. Putnam, Ira Remsen, William Augustus Rogers, and Frederick Soddy.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Family
BOX 1	Morley, Anna, 1855-1880
BOX 1	Morley, Elizabeth, 1860-1861, 1868
BOX 1	Morley, Frank, 1861-1906
BOX 1	Morley, Isabella B., 1870, 1893-1911 (2 folders)
BOX 1	Morley, John, 1862-1865, 1872-1915, undated
BOX 1	Morley, Sardis
BOX 1	1851, 1857-1880 (6 folders)
BOX 2	1881-1889, undated (3 folders)
BOX 2	Morley, Sardis and Anna, 1861-1880 (2 folders)
BOX 2	Other family members, 1833-1837, 1858-1859, undated
BOX 2	Personal
BOX 2	“A-M” miscellaneous, 1864-1868, 1886-1890, 1899-1908, 1914, 1922, undated
BOX 2	Munson, Myron A., 1863-1873, 1881-1906, 1923, undated
BOX 2	“O-W” miscellaneous, 1888-1892, 1898-1906, undated
BOX 3	Scientists and scientific organizations
BOX 3	“A-B” miscellaneous, 1879, 1896, 1903-1907, undated (2 folders)
BOX 3	Brush, Charles Francis, 1895-1899, undated
BOX 3	“C” miscellaneous, 1885-1906
BOX 3	Clarke, Frank Wigglesworth, 1891-1902
BOX 3	“D-G” miscellaneous, 1860, 1879-1900, undated (4 folders)
BOX 3	Guye, Phillippe-Auguste, 1901-1903, 1912
BOX 3	“H” miscellaneous, 1885-1907
BOX 3	Hart, Edward, 1893-1905
BOX 3	Hicks, W. M. (William Mitchinson), 1901-1904, undated
BOX 3	“J-M” miscellaneous, 1879, 1887-1907, 1922 (3 folders)
BOX 3	Mendenhall, Thomas C., 1888-1899
BOX 3	Michelson, Albert Abraham, 1885-1891, 1901-1903
BOX 3	Miller, Dayton Clarence, 1990
BOX 3	Munroe, Charles E., 1891, 1899-1902
BOX 3	“N” miscellaneous, 1871, 1893, 1900-1904
BOX 3	Noyes, William A., 1890-1906, undated
BOX 3	Ostwald, Wilhelm, 1895-1896

## Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 3	"P-R" miscellaneous, 1889-1907 (2 folders)
BOX 3	Rayleigh, John William Strutt, 1890-1893, 1907, undated
BOX 3	Remsen, Ira, 1887-1902
BOX 3	Rogers, William Augustus, 1875, 1897-1900, 1906, undated
BOX 3	"S" miscellaneous, 1869, 1879-1880, 1887-1891, 1899-1907, 1912
BOX 3	Soddy, Frederick, 1901-1902
BOX 3	"T-W" miscellaneous, 1877, 1891-1909 (2 folders)
BOX 3	Unidentified, 1901
BOX 3	Special awards, 1892-1918
BOX 3	Miscellaneous certificates and printed matter, 1864-1868, 1897-1912, undated