

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION  
ACCESSION SHEET

Accession # \*87 M 52 Location D6-g-4  
D4-a-3 - clay tablets, etc.  
Title Draper, Henry, and Mary Anna Palmer. Papers.  
Approximate inclusive dates 1859-1914. (1869-1914, bulk).  
Date of receipt 1909; 1915. Received from Mary Anna Palmer Draper, Gift.  
Volume on arrival 5 boxes, 3 volumes (1.5 linear feet).  
Number of boxes (after reboxing) 6 flat boxes, 1 small artifact box, folder in charter case  
(1.5 linear ft. ). Tablets, etc., take up 1.5 linear ft.  
Condition Good. Page proofs of John William Draper's book are brown and crumbling.

Restrictions

Description

Henry Draper, 1837-1882, was an astronomer and a pioneer in astronomical photography. He was a professor at New York University from 1860 until his death in 1882 - earlier that year he had taken over the chair in chemistry held by his father, chemist and historian John William Draper, 1811-1882. In 1874 Draper won a gold medal for his work supervising photographic operations for the government's Transit of Venus Commission. He spent winters at his house on Madison Avenue, and summers at Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., near his observatory at Hastings-on-Hudson.

In 1867 Draper married Mary Anna Palmer, 1839-1914. Mrs. Draper assisted Draper with his work, and after his death donated his telescope to the Harvard College Observatory, financed the Draper Catalogue of Stellar Spectra produced there, and supported other scientific and astronomical work. She was also a collector of ancient objects - some of which she donated to the New York Public Library - from Greece, Egypt, Babylon, China, and other civilizations.

(cont'd.)

Special Formats  Photographs  Maps  Audio Tapes  Films  Graphics  
 Artifacts  Machine-readable records  
 Other (list) \_\_\_\_\_

Temporary catalog card added entries

See attached.

Accessioned by Julie Miller.

Date August 28, 1987

Henry Draper and Mary Anna Palmer Draper Papers.

Henry Draper's correspondence, 1869-1882 (one letter is dated 1859) consists of letters addressed to him, with a few drafts of his replies. Letters are primarily from colleagues in the United States, Germany, England, Scotland, Italy, France, and the Netherlands (a few letters are in German, French, and Italian). Also included are letters from dealers of optical and scientific instruments; scientific organizations and journals; others. Included among the letters are photographs (including a carte de visite photograph of the transit of Venus taken December 6, 1882 by Maximilian [Tech]), sketches, diagrams, charts, clippings, and printed material. Letters contain discussions of astronomy, astronomical photography, spectroscopy, and other scientific work being carried out by Draper and his colleagues; descriptions and evaluations of telescopes and other scientific instruments; Draper's work with the Transit of Venus Commission; mentions of the "Lick telescope," 1870's (the Lick Observatory was founded around that time); Dobbs Ferry political and other local matters; personal matters. Also, acceptances and regrets for the dinner held November 16, 1882 at the Draper's Madison Avenue house for the members of the National Academy of Sciences, which was meeting in New York - a list of members present at the meeting is included. Chief correspondents are Edward S. Holden, at the United States Naval Observatory in Washington D.C., and Simon Newcomb, Secretary of the Transit of Venus Commission. Other correspondents include: Robert Amory, George F. Barker, F.A.P. Barnard, John Browning, Alvan G. Clark, J.H.G. Coffin, John William Draper (relating to both personal and scientific matters), William Francis, David Gill, J. Norman Lockyer, E.H.F. Peters, C. Piazzzi-Smyth, Lyon Playfair, Giovanni Tacchini, Thomas Edison, others.

The certificate and medal Draper received for his work on the Transit of Venus Commission, 1874, and three other certificates awarded to Draper are included.

Also included are page proofs of John William Draper's book, History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science. Three letters, 1881, from Sygurd Wisniowski and John Karlowicz to John William Draper describe the difficulties of translating Draper's book into Polish and publishing it in Poland. One of Wisniowski's letters describes these problems in detail, as well as his own efforts to restore censored passages.

Henry Draper and Mary Anna Palmer Draper Papers.

More than half of the collection consists of letters received by Mary Anna Palmer Draper, 1879-1914, with only a few dating from before her husband's death in 1882. Many of these are from dealers, scholars, and others, and relate to the purchase and authentication of her collection of ancient amulets, tablets, jewelry, coins, and other objects. Photographs, sketches, and rubbings of these objects; translations of their writings; wax impressions of seals; a typescript of a prayer to be used with an amulet ("The witchcraft of saints and evangelists"); bills and invoices listing Mrs. Draper's purchases; clippings and printed material, are included.

Also included are condolences following her husband's death; letters relating to her editing and publication of her husband's writings, letters from photographer Edward Bierstadt relating to negatives of her husband's astronomical photographs ("nebula", "corona", and "oxygen in the sun"), and other evidence of her efforts to further Draper's work after his death; letters from her husband's colleagues relating to personal matters, and to Draper's and their own work, including mentions of experiments with electricity, telephones, and sound magnification (Edison's name is mentioned in a few letters); letters from friends relating to personal matters and social engagements; a few letters relating to Palmer family genealogy. Two letters, 1874 and 1878, of her father, Courtlandt Palmer, are included. Frequent correspondents are John Bigelow, Ogden N. Rood, George Barker, and New York antiquities dealers Azeez Khayat and Daniel Z. Noorian. Other correspondents include: John S. Billings, James Dewar, Wolcott Gibbs, Herbert H. Gilchrist, Reginald Harrison Lyon Playfair, Arthur Schuster, William T. Sherman. Two brief letters (in French) from artist Benjamin Constant, 1892; an invitation to his laboratory (also in French) at the Faculté des Sciences, Paris, signed P. Curie, 1903; and an autograph from Samuel L. Clemens, are included.

A small scrapbook contains letters, clippings, manuscripts of poems and other writings, ca. 1890's. These largely contain humorous anecdotes, many of which have to do with mispronunciation of English by foreign speakers.

Fragments of a vase with inscriptions in cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphics, sixteen small (with some fragments) and six large clay Babylonian tablets donated by Mrs. Draper are included. Other artifacts donated by Mrs. Draper can be found in various divisions of the library.

Henry Draper and Mary Anna Palmer Draper Papers

Box List

Box

Henry Draper, letters

- 1 1859-1875
- 2 1876-1882, n.d. (including Transit of Venus carte de visite, 1882;  
John William Draper letters, 1881)

Mary Anna Palmer Draper, letters

- 3 1879-1897 (including Courtlandt Palmer letters, 1874, 1878)
- 4 1898-1907
- 5 1908-1911
- 6 1912-1913 (including scrapbook)
- 7 1914, n.d. (including undated letters from John Bigelow, Wolcott  
Gibbs, Daniel Z. Noorian, William T. Sherman; photographs)
- 8 Wax impressions of seals, removed from box 4

Charter Case, Annex - medal and certificate awarded to Draper for his work on the  
Transit of Venus Commission; page proofs of John William Draper's History of  
the Conflict Between Religion and Science,

Charter Case, Central Building, Room 226 - Three certificates awarded to Henry Draper.