

Francis Howard Williams papers

Ms. Coll. 1193

Finding aid prepared by Kelin Baldrige.

Last updated on April 29, 2016.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2016 April 27

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Williams, Francis Howard, 1844-1922
Title	Francis Howard Williams papers
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1193
Date [inclusive]	1880-1909
Extent	0.2 linear foot (1 box and 1 oversized folder)
Language	English
Language Note	Two documents written fully in French and one written partially in French.
Abstract	Francis Howard Williams (1844-1922) was a Philadelphia literary critic and author whose works were featured in publications such as <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Harper's Weekly</i> , <i>Lippincott's Magazine</i> , and <i>The Independent</i> . He was the known friend of several literary greats including Walt Whitman, Louisa May Alcott, and George W. Cable and was part of a large circle of contemporary poets, writers, editors, and publishers of the time period. The collection includes letters to Williams, writings, and ephemera.

Cite as:

Francis Howard Williams papers, 1880-1909, Ms. Coll. 1193, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Francis Howard Williams was born into a Philadelphia Quaker family on September 2, 1844. He was a Philadelphia literary critic and author whose works were featured in publications such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Lippincott's Magazine*, and *The Independent*. He was the author of *The Princess Elizabeth: A Lyric Drama* (1880), *Theodora: a Christmas Pastoral* (1882), *A Reformer in Ruffles: a Comedy in Three Acts* (1883), *The Bride of the White House* (1886), *Master and Man: a Play in a Prologue and Four Acts* (1886), *The Flute Player and Other Poems* (1894), *The Burden Bearer: an Epic of Lincoln* (1908), and several others.

On May 30, 1865, Williams married Mary Bartholomew Houston in Germantown, Pennsylvania and they had four children: Francis Churchill Williams, Mary De Solms Williams, Joseph John Williams, and Aubrey Howard Williams. Their Germantown home appears to have been a frequent meeting place for Williams and his friends, who included Walt Whitman, Louisa May Alcott, George W. Cable, George Riddle, Edmund Clarence Stedman, and many other poets, writers, editors, and publishers. Williams was a member of the Historical Pageant Committee which helped plan the 225th Anniversary of the founding of Philadelphia. For this 1912 event, Williams wrote some of the dialogue for some of the theatrics performed. He also served as treasurer for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, as vice-president of the Franklin Inn Club, and a member of the Welcome Society. Williams died on July 1, 1922.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains letters written to Williams, writings, and ephemera dating between 1880 and 1909. Eighty-five letters, arranged chronologically, relate to literature, personal matters and friendship, and publishing. Williams' correspondents were contemporary poets, writers, editors, and publishers from the time period. Williams's most frequent correspondent was Edmund Clarence Stedman, the editor of *An American Anthology, 1787-1900*, a book of American poetry that included Williams's "Walt Whitman," "Electra," and "Song" (neither of which are included in this collection). Overall, most of the letter writers, if they are not thanking Williams for sending him copies of his works or criticizing them, are making arrangements about getting together either at his house in Germantown or elsewhere, or philosophizing about their thoughts on poetry, or writing in general. There is also talk about the publishing houses or periodicals and magazines where the writers and poets submitted their works, or their efforts to help each other to get published. Correspondents include Henry Abbey, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Lane Allen, Mary Anderson, R.M. Bache, J. Baldwin, Edwin N. Benson, W.F. Boothe, George Washington Cable,

American novelist Winston Churchill, William Jermyn Conlin, Maurice Francis Egan, James T. Fields, Horace Howard Furness, Margaret T. Langston, Charles Godfrey Leland, Samuel Longfellow, Charles H. Luders, S. Weir Mitchell, William Vaughn Moody, Clara Moore, Charles Leonard Moore, Herbert Moreton, Joseph Pennell, Samuel W. Pennypacker, Agnes Repplier, Allen Thorndike Rice, George Riddle, Kate Douglas Riggs, Charles G. D. Roberts, Frank Dempster Sherman, Otis Skinner, Lloyd P. Smith, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Mary Virginia Terhune, Edith Matilda Thomas, Townsend Ward and Owen Wister. Despite Francis Howard Williams's known personal relationship with Walt Whitman, Whitman is not prevalent in this collection. His name is mentioned in a letter from Horace Howard Furness asking Williams where he might find a copy of the ceremonies of Walt Whitman's funeral and in a letter from Agnes Repplier.

The collection also includes writing by Williams such as poems, prose, and notes from talks he gave to various clubs and organizations. Among these are "De Profundis" (a talk given in Atlantic City in 1893), a ten page typed poem titled "Ave America: an ode," and prose pieces such as "The Clock that Struck Thirteen" and "The Tragic Touch." These are also numerous writings that are untitled which have been grouped together in a single folder.

Researchers will find miscellaneous notes and ephemera including several pages of science notes; an invitation to the Informals club and a newspaper clipping concerning the Informals club from 1896; a Crawford Shoe miniature notebook containing notes about Johannes Kelpius and sketches of the Kelpius Cave; a photograph possibly of Louisa May Alcott; a photograph of a tennis match and a photograph of a man walking towards a hedge, both by a photographer named D. Hinkle; and a copy of "Two Friends and the Inn" by Edwin N. Benson.

Administrative Information

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Source of Acquisition

Sold by Michael Brown Rare Books, 2016.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence
- Memorabilia
- Notes
- Poems
- Speeches
- Writings (document genre)

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 1833-1908

SUBJECT(S)

- American literature
- Authors, American--19th century
- Authors, American--20th century
- Criticism, Textual

Collection Inventory

I. LETTERS TO WILLIAMS.

	Box	Folder
From Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Mary Anderson, R.M. Bache, J. Baldwin, George W. Cable, William Jermyn Conlin (as William J. Florence), James T. Field, Charles Godfrey Leland, Clara Moore, Herbert Moreton, Joseph Pennell, Allen Thorndike Rice, George Riddle, Lloyd P. Smith, Edmund C. Stedman, and Townsend Ward, 1880-1885.	1	1
From Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Edwin N. Benson, W.F. Boothe, William Jermyn Conlin (as William J. Florence), Charles H. Luders, Edmund C. Stedman, and Mary Virginia Terhune, 1886-1889.	1	2
From Henry Abbey, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Maurice Francis Egan, Horace Howard Furness, Charles H. Luders, Margaret T. Langston, Charles Godfrey Leland, Charles Leonard Moore, Agnes Repplier, Charles G.D. Roberts, Frank Dempster Sherman, Edmund C. Stedman, and Edith Matilda Thomas, 1890-1895.	1	3
From Henry Abbey, James Lane Allen, Winston Churchill, William Vaughn Moody, Samuel W. Pennypacker, and Kate Douglas Riggs, 1903-1909.	1	4
From Horace Howard Furness, Samuel Longfellow, S. Weir Mitchell, Joseph Pennell, Agnes Repplier, Otis Skinner, Edmund C. Stedman, and Owen Wister, circa 1880-1909.	1	5

II. WRITINGS.

	Box	Folder
20th Anniversary Service and Art Club of Germantown, address by Williams, undated.	1	7
"A Field of Corn," poem, undated.	1	7
"A Midnight Phantasy," poem, undated.	1	7
"And He Never Knew," prose, undated.	1	7
"A Wild Lecture," prose, possibly an address, undated.	1	7
"Art," poem, undated.	1	7
	Box	Folder
"Ave America: An Ode," poem (typescript and published piece), undated.	1	1 7
	Box	Folder
"Biographia Literaria America: Being Extracts from a Cyclopeda published Anno Domini 4000," humorous piece, undated.	1	7
"Christmas Meeting at Yellow Wing Club," address, undated.	1	7
"Clock that Struck Thirteen," prose, undated.	1	7
"De Profundis," address at Atlantic City, 1893 July.	1	7
Johannes Kelpius, prose pieces, undated.	1	7
"Quote Hymn I," prose, undated.	1	7
"To Beauty: An Ode," poem, undated.	1	7

"The Tragic Touch," prose, undated.	1	7
"Two Roses," poem, undated.	1	7
"Wanderers," poem, undated.	1	7
"Willie," poem, undated.	1	7
Manuscripts, untitled, circa 1880-1909.	1	8

III. NOTES AND EPHEMERA.

	Box	Folder
Family signatures and a photograph of an unknown woman (possibly Louisa May Alcott), undated.	1	6
The Informals Club, invitation and newspaper clipping, undated.	1	6
Invitation to the funeral of Edmund Milne, 1822 February 5.	1	6
Johannes Kelpius, notes and drawings of his cave in notebook, undated.	1	6
John Burroughs, naturalist, calling card, undated.	1	6
Photographs of a tennis match by D. Hinkle, photographer, undated.	1	6
Science notes, undated.	1	6
Writings by others, including Edwin N. Benson and Harrison S. Morris, undated.	1	6