

Newell Sill Jenkins papers

Ms. Coll. 1202

Finding aid prepared by Rive Cadwallader.

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

2016 April 25

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Jenkins, Newell Sill, 1840-1919
Title	Newell Sill Jenkins papers
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1202
Date	1905-1915, undated
Extent	0.4 linear foot (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>This collection contains some papers of the esteemed American dentist Newell Sill Jenkins (1840-1919) who practiced for most of his career in Dresden, Germany and popularized the use of porcelain tooth enamel. A small booklet with notes on Jenkins' experiments with dental cement is included in the collection, along with a large album presented to him on his seventieth birthday by a cohort of American dentists. There are also a few miscellaneous photographs and pages of notes in this collection, as well as a menu from a dinner held in Jenkins' honor.</p>

Cite as:

Newell Sill Jenkins papers, 1905-1915, undated, Ms. Coll. 1202, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Newell Sill Jenkins (1840-1919) was an influential dentist who practiced for most of his career in Dresden, Germany and popularized the use of porcelain tooth enamel. Jenkins was born into a shipping family in Falmouth, Massachusetts and spent his young life throughout New England. The harsh climate of this region did not agree with Jenkins, and from an early age, he hoped to travel or ultimately resettle elsewhere. Jenkins heard that American dentists could be very successful in Europe, so he resolved to pursue a career in dentistry and began an apprenticeship in this field at age eighteen. During the Civil War, Jenkins studied in Philadelphia at the Jefferson Medical College and the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery (now the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine) before enrolling at, and earning his degree from, the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery.

In 1865, at the close of the Civil War, Jenkins returned to Maine and married Clara Elizabeth Upton. Still intent on leaving the United States, Jenkins corresponded with Dr. Frank Abbot, a successful American dentist then practicing in Berlin. Abbot suggested that Jenkins move to Dresden, where there was a growing community of American expatriates, and provided him with information and support in this endeavor. Consequently, in 1866, Clara and Newell Jenkins sailed to Europe and established themselves in Germany.

Jenkins' practice did extremely well in Dresden, and his clientele grew to include some of the most high profile German aristocrats of the late nineteenth century (as well as the composer Richard Wagner who became a close friend of Jenkins). Jenkins developed new types of tooth drills and porcelain enamel which gave rise to the practice of aesthetic (or cosmetic) dentistry. Mark Twain, another friend of Jenkins', bought the rights to manufacture and distribute his enamel in the United States. In 1893, Jenkins purchased the Villa Thorwald, an architecturally significant mansion in Dresden, and lived there with his family until he moved to Paris in 1910.

However, as political tensions rose in Europe before and during World War I, Jenkins began to feel increasingly ideologically alienated from even his close friends. Jenkins returned to the United States in 1916. After the war, Jenkins decided to sail to France with his wife for the winter, but suffered a fatal heart attack upon his arrival at the port of Le Havre on September 25, 1919.

Source: Jenkins, Newell Sill. *Reminiscences of Newell Sill Jenkins*. Princeton: Privately printed, 1924.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains some papers of the esteemed dentist Newell Sill Jenkins (1840-1919). The first file in the collection consists of small notebook with "Cement. 1905." handwritten on its cover. The sparse notes in this volume relate the methodology and results of a series of experiments Jenkins carried out on the "contraction," "setting," "breaking strain" and "crushing strength" of dental cements as well as "adhesive tests." A subsequent folder contains two pieces of paper with data from experiments involving lactic acid and "astral," a type of enamel. These notes were originally tucked into "Cement" but are

written in a less organized fashion and dated to 1906.

The third file in this collection is a large, ornate album, which was presented to Jenkins in Paris, France, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday in 1910. As the introductory page of the album explains, "between the covers of this book will be found the portraits of many American dentists who have chosen this manner of showing their admiration and affection for another American dentist, Dr. N. S. Jenkins." Each of the following fifty pages contains a black and white portrait photograph of a prominent American dentist with a short handwritten (or, in a few cases, typewritten) message of congratulations to Jenkins pasted underneath. Many of these notes make mention of Jenkins' skill and contributions to the field or quote a few complementary lines of verse. On the final page of the album there are three messages unaccompanied by photographs.

The final file in this collection contains some material that was previously enclosed in the photo album (including another portrait mounted on a loose piece of cardstock which was likely meant to be included in the presentation book). A printed menu for a "Complementary Dinner tendered to Newell Sill Jenkins... by his Friends" in 1915 is included, and lists the men on a committee for the dinner, several of whom were closely involved with the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. Finally, there are two photographs in this file each showing a woman in front of the same low veranda. "Thorwald," the name of Jenkins' villa in Dresden, Germany is written on the back of one of the images.

Administrative Information

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

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Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

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Source of Acquisition

Transferred from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine, 2015.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- University of Pennsylvania. School of Dental Medicine.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Notes
- Photograph albums
- Photographs

SUBJECT(S)

- Dental cements
- Dentistry--History
- Dentistry--Study and teaching
- Dentists

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
"Cement", 1905 October.	1	1
Papers previously enclosed in "Cement", 1906 March.	1	2
Presentation book on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, 1910 December 29.	1	3
Materials previously enclosed in presentation book, 1915 May 15, undated.	1	4