

S. Weir Mitchell collection

Ms. Coll. 413

Finding aid prepared by Amey A. Hutchins.

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

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Mitchell, S. Weir (Silas Weir), 1829-1914
Title	S. Weir Mitchell collection
Call number	Ms. Coll. 413
Date [inclusive]	1861-1935
Extent	19 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The S. Weir Mitchell Correspondence series (23 folders) includes correspondence with James Lane Allen, Richard Watson Gilder, William Dean Howells, Robert Underwood Johnson, Henry C. Lea, James Russell Lowell, Charles Leonard Moore, and John Greenleaf Whittier. The remaining series comprise S. Weir Mitchell Writings (8 folders), including both medical and other writings; Langdon and Marion Mitchell Correspondence (5 folders); Langdon and Marion Mitchell Clippings (2 folders), primarily consisting of obituaries for Langdon Mitchell; Civil War Scrapbook (1 box); Photographs (2 boxes); S. Weir Mitchell Literary Writings (16 boxes) includes holographs of 5 novels, 2 plays, and a short story or novella.</p>

Cite as:

S. Weir Mitchell collection, 1861-1935, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Silas Weir Mitchell was born in Philadelphia in 1829. In 1844 he entered the University of Pennsylvania, but illness forced him to withdraw in his senior year. He studied medicine at Jefferson Medical College, from which he graduated in 1850, and in Europe. Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1851, he joined his father's medical practice, and in 1853 he was elected a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. In 1858 Mitchell married Mary Middleton Elwyn, and in 1859 she gave birth to their first son, John Kearsley Mitchell.

During the Civil War, Mitchell served as an acting assistant surgeon for the Union army at Turner's Lane Hospital in Philadelphia. As a result of this experience he co-authored two books on neurology and continued to focus on that specialty. Also during the war, in 1862, Mitchell's second son, Langdon Elwyn Mitchell, was born and his wife died of diphtheria.

Following the war, in 1866, Mitchell published his first story anonymously in the *Atlantic Monthly*. William Dean Howells was the new assistant editor there, and he remained an editor through 1881. His correspondence with Mitchell extended beyond his tenure at the *Atlantic* through to Mitchell's death in 1914.

In the 1870s, Mitchell's medical research and writing focused increasingly on rest in the treatment of disease. He also lectured on this topic at the Infirmary for Nervous Diseases of the Orthopedic Hospital in Philadelphia, where he worked for 40 years. He became a Fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.

In 1875, Mitchell married his second wife, Mary Cadwalader, and also became a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania. As a trustee, he worked to raise funds for the medical school, particularly the department of hygiene, and for a library. He also served on the Seybert Commission, convened by the University and active from 1884 to 1887, which investigated spiritualism.

In Mitchell's literary career, the 1880s were the decade in which his novelettes and then historical novels began to appear, in addition to his first volume of poetry. Some of his novels first appeared serially in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Century Magazine*. He had also published poems in magazines since the 1860s, a frequent topic of discussion in his correspondence with Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century Magazine*.

Mitchell's second son Langdon also had a literary career, primarily as a playwright. His first produced play ran in London in 1892. In the same year he married Marion Lea of Philadelphia, who was an actress in London. She had starred in the first English production of *Hedda Gabler* and was the sister of Anna Lea Merritt, a painter who lived in England and was associated with the pre-Raphaelites. His two most popular plays were *Becky Sharp* (1899), a stage adaptation of *Vanity Fair*, and *The New York Idea* (1906), both written for the actress Minnie Madden Fiske. Langdon and Marion Mitchell had three children: a son, Weir, and two daughters, Susanna Valentine (who married William Gammell) and Helena Mary Langdon (who married Kenneth Day and had two sons, Kenneth and Miles). Langdon Mitchell died in 1935.

In addition to the materials in the S. Weir Mitchell Collection, this sketch is based on the entries for S. Weir Mitchell and Langdon Elwyn Mitchell in the on-line version of American National Biography.

Scope and Contents

The S. Weir Mitchell Collection at the University of Pennsylvania brings together materials from diverse sources concerning Mitchell and other members of his family between 1861 and 1935. The collection consists of one box of documents, one scrapbook, an album of almost sixty photographs, three oversize photographs, and the manuscripts of Most of the documents are correspondence or writings of S. Weir Mitchell or correspondence of his son Langdon Mitchell.

The S. Weir Mitchell Correspondence series consists of 23 folders containing letters from 15 correspondents. Most of these correspondents are connected with Mitchell's literary efforts: they include James Lane Allen, Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century Magazine*, William Dean Howells of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Robert Underwood Johnson of the *Century Magazine*, Henry C. Lea, James Russell Lowell, Charles Leonard Moore, and John Greenleaf Whittier. Apart from the letters to Johnson and Moore and one of the letters from Whittier, these literary letters were purchased in a sale of S. Weir Mitchell's library by William D. Morley in 1941. The letters to Lea include much discussion of different fundraising campaigns at the University of Pennsylvania, and there is also a brief letter to Morris Jastrow, librarian at the University. Letters to Bayard Kane and a pair of notes to unidentified recipients, which were purchased from McManus at an unknown date, concern the workings of Mitchell's medical office in Mitchell's absence, and a letter to Mrs. E. S. Farrow shows Mitchell in the acts of diagnosis and prescription. Mitchell also was a doctor to William Dean Howells's daughter, so his letters with Howells are another location of some medical discussion.

The S. Weir Mitchell Writings series is divided into subseries for Medical Writings and Other Writings. The Medical Writings subseries consists of typescripts of two lectures on the rest treatment which were gifts from Margaret McHenry, a biographer of Mitchell. One is from 1875, when the rest treatment was a relatively new concept; the other is a retrospective lecture from 1904 that considers the evolution of the rest treatment. The Other Writings subseries includes manuscript drafts of four stories, *A Dilemma*, "These Ought Ye to Do...", "Thirteen at Table," and "Thou Art the Soul of Thy House..."; galley proofs of "Haroun the Caliph, and Others" for the *Century Magazine*; a holograph of the play *Poll*; an annotated typescript of "Barabbas: A Dramatic Poem"; and a few notes.

Two small series contain papers from S. Weir Mitchell's second son and daughter-in-law. The Langdon and Marion Mitchell Correspondence series consists of five folders containing letters from five correspondents. Three are actors of the day: John Drew, Minnie Maddern Fiske, and Lillian Gish. The other folders are family-related, one containing the baptism certificate for Langdon and Marion Mitchell's daughter Helena Mary Langdon Mitchell and the other containing postcards from Marion Mitchell's sister Anna Lea Merritt. The Langdon and Marion Mitchell Clippings series consists of two folders: one contains obituaries for Langdon Mitchell from several newspapers; the other contains two articles written about Langdon Mitchell in 1935, one before his death and one after, and an article on Anna Lea Merritt. A scrapbook documenting a year of the Civil War is a series unto itself. Mary Cadwalader, S. Weir Mitchell's second wife whom he married in 1875, kept a scrapbook of newspaper articles in 1861. The articles include coverage of events at Harper's Ferry. S. Weir Mitchell gave this scrapbook to the Library of the University of Pennsylvania as a gift with the suggestion that the materials might be "preserved as memorials of the war."

A series of almost 60 photographs spans five generations of S. Weir Mitchell's family, beginning with his father, John Kearsley Mitchell and including only a few photographs of S. Weir Mitchell himself; two photographs of Langdon Mitchell and his wife; many photographs of S. Weir Mitchell's grandchildren, the children of Langdon Mitchell; and one photograph of Langdon Mitchell's grandchild and S. Weir Mitchell's great-grandchild, Kenneth Day. There are also numerous photographs of relatives of Langdon Mitchell's wife Marion, including her sister and brother-in-law Anna Lea and Richard Merritt, a few pictures of acquaintances of the family, and approximately 20 unidentified photographs. The three oversize photographs in this collection are a photograph of S. Weir Mitchell and a friend, possibly John Cadwalader, on a fishing trip in Canada and two photographs of S. Weir Mitchell's granddaughter Helena Mary Langdon Mitchell.

Mitchell's novels are also represented by five holographs. The novels comprise *Adventures of Francois*, *Constance Trescot*, *Dr. North and Friends*, *Hugh Wynne*, and *Westways*.

Administrative Information

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

April 2002

Finding aid prepared by Amey A. Hutchins.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

The S. Weir Mitchell Collection may be examined by researchers in the reading room of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. Permission to quote from and to publish unpublished materials must be requested in writing from a curator at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Source of Acquisition

Donated by S. Weir Mitchell; purchased additions; "Barabbas" donated by Mrs. Kenneth Day.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence
- Galley proofs
- Manuscripts, American--19th century
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Philadelphia (Pa.)--Intellectual life--19th century
- United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

SUBJECT(S)

- Medicine--Practice--19th century
- Periodicals--19th century
- Physicians as authors
- Physicians' writings, American
- Salmon fishing -- Canada

Collection Inventory

I. S. WEIR MITCHELL CORRESPONDENCE, 1875-1913. 23 FOLDERS.

Series Description

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent and then chronologically for each correspondent. For Richard Gilder Watson, William Dean Howells, and Henry C. Lea, there are letters both to and from Mitchell, and these have been interfiled. Includes correspondence with editors, authors, and poets. Also includes one letter written by Howells to Mary Cadwalader Mitchell in 1919, after S. Weir Mitchell's death.

Unidentified correspondence is filed at the end of the series.

	Box	Folder
Allen, James Lane, 1896-1911. 7 items (8 leaves).	1	1
Calhoun, Martha, 1883. 1 item (1 leaf).	1	2
Farrow, E. S., Mrs., 1892. 1 item (2 leaves).	1	3
Frazer, Persifor, 1907. 2 items (6 leaves).	1	4
Gilder, Richard Watson, 1885-1909. 13 items (29 leaves).	1	5-6
Contents		
Also 1 item (1 leaf) from Mitchell to Helena DeKay Gilder, 1911		
Howells, William Dean, 1872-1919. 38 items (41 leaves).	1	7-9
Contents		
Also 1 item (1 leaf) from Howells to Anne K. W. Mitchell (widow of Mitchell's son, John), 1919		
Huxley, Edward H., 1908. 1 item (2 leaves).	1	10

Jastrow, Morris, 1909. 1 item (1 leaf).	1	11
Jenkins, H., 1886.	1	11
Johnson, Robert Underwood, 1910. 1 item (2 leaves).	1	12
Kane, Bayard, 1902. 13 items (19 leaves).	1	13
Lea, Charles M., 1909. 1 item (2 leaves).	1	14
Lea, Henry C., 1879-1904. 45 items (46 leaves).	1	15-17
Lowell, James Russell, 1884-1891. 12 items (13 leaves).	1	18-19

LITERARY WORKS, UNDATED.

	Box	Folder
Moore, Charles Leonard, 1892. 6 items (6 leaves).	1	20
Ward, Samuel G., 1891. 1 item (1 leaf).	1	21
Whittier, John Greenleaf, 1886-1889. 3 items (4 leaves).	1	22
Unidentified, 1902, undated. 4 items (4 leaves).	1	23

II. S. WEIR MITCHELL WRITINGS (SEE ALSO BOXES 5-19), 1875-1904 & UNDATED. 8 FOLDERS.

Series Description

Medical writings on the rest treatment and other writings arranged alphabetically by title. Includes two lectures on the rest treatment and manuscript drafts and notes for various short stories.

A. MEDICAL WRITINGS, 1875-1904.

	Box	Folder
"The Evolution of the Rest Treatment" , 1904.	1	24
"Rest in Nervous Diseases: Its Use and Abuse" , 1875.	1	25-26

B. OTHER WRITINGS (SEE ALSO BOXES 5-19).

	Box	Folder
["Abraham Lincoln"], undated.	1	27
"Barabbas: A Dramatic Poem" , undated.	1	27
<i>Chris Kringle: A Christmas Play</i> , undated.	1	27
"A Dilemma" , undated.	1	28
"Free Quakers" , undated.	1	28
"Haroun the Caliph, and Others" , 1891, undated.	1	28
<i>Poll</i> , undated.	1	29
"These Ought Ye to Do..." , undated.	1	29
"Thirteen at Table" , undated.	1	30
"Thou Art the Soul of Thy House..." , undated.	1	30
List of titles, undated.	1	31

III. LANGDON AND MARION MITCHELL CORRESPONDENCE, 1914-1931. 5 FOLDERS.

Series Description

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent and then chronologically for each correspondent. Includes letters from actors associated with Langdon Mitchell's plays, postcards from Marion Mitchell's sister, and a baptism certificate for one of the Mitchells' daughters.

	Box	Folder
Drew, John, 1921. 1 item (1 leaf).	1	32
Episcopal Church. Diocese of Pennsylvania., 1914. 1 item (3 leaves).	1	33
Fiske, Minnie Maddern, 1928-1931. 4 items (4 leaves + 1 booklet).	1	34
Gish, Lillian, [undated]. 1 item (1 leaf).	1	35
Merritt, Anna Lea, 1928, [undated]. 3 items (3 leaves).	1	36

IV. LANGDON AND MARION MITCHELL CLIPPINGS, 1935, [UNDATED]. 2 FOLDERS.

Series Description

One folder contains obituaries following Langdon Mitchell's death in 1935. The other holds miscellaneous clippings, including two articles about Langdon Mitchell and one article about Marion Mitchell's sister Anna Lea Merritt.

	Box	Folder
Langdon Mitchell obituaries, 1935. 6 items.	1	37
Miscellaneous clippings, 1935, undated. 3 items.	1	38

V. CIVIL WAR MEMORABILIA AND SCRAPBOOK, 1861. 1 BOX.

Series Description

Scrapbook of Civil War newspaper clippings kept in 1861 by Mary Cadwalader, later the second wife of S. Weir Mitchell.

	Box
Piece of the pennant of the U.S.S. Kearsarge, which sunk the Alabama off Cherbourg, France, 19 June 1864, 1864.	2
Mary Cadwalader's scrapbook of newspaper clippings, 1861.	2

VI. PHOTOGRAPHS, [BEFORE 1858 TO AFTER 1935]. 1 BOX (AND 1 BINDER).

Series Description

Approximately 60 photographs of S. Weir Mitchell, his father, his descendants, relatives by marriage, acquaintances of family members, and unidentified individuals.

	Box
Album.	3
Contents	
* Members of several generations of the Mitchell and Lea families	
* Acquaintances of family members	
* Unidentified adults and children	
Oversize photographs.	4
Contents	
* S. Weir Mitchell fishing on the Ristigouche River	
* Two portraits of S. Weir's granddaughter Helena Mary Langdon Mitchell in the 1920s	

VII. S. WEIR MITCHEL NOVELS.

Box

Adventures of Francois. 3 volumes.

5-6

Constance Trescot. 3 volumes.

7-8

Dr. North and His Friends. 3 volumes.

9-11

Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker. 5 volumes.

12-16

Westways. 3 volumes.

17-19

Westways.

19
