

Guide to the John Lawrence Thurston Papers

MS 493



compiled by John Dojka

October 1977

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 493

CREATOR: Thurston, John Lawrence, 1874-1904

TITLE: John Lawrence Thurston papers

DATES: 1894-1956

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The general correspondence of John Lawrence Thurston, missionary in China and active member of the Yale Foreign Missionary Society, makes up the major portion of these papers. The main topics are his work in China, including his interest in the Yale Missionary Band and the organization of the Yale Foreign Missionary Society. Major correspondents are Harlan Page Beach, Henry W. Luce, Edward B. Reed, Warren B. Seabury, Anson Phelps Stokes and Arthur C. Williams. His scanty family correspondence is supplemented by the correspondence among his surviving family members after his death. Also in the collection are photographs and other memorabilia.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0493>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0493>.

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown, though much of the material in this collection is likely in the public domain. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation

John Lawrence Thurston Papers (MS 493). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

John Lawrence Thurston 1874-1904

John Lawrence Thurston, the son of John Rogers and Caroline Storey Thurston, was born in Whitinsville, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1874. After attending Worcester Academy, Thurston entered Yale College as a member of the class of 1898. While an undergraduate he served as Chairman of the Foreign Missions Committee and after graduation helped organize the Yale Missionary Band's 1898-1899 tour of the eastern United States. From 1899 to 1902 Thurston was a student at the Hartford Theological Seminary. He received his B.D. degree in 1902 and during the same year married Matilda Smyrell Calder of Hartford.

While in divinity school Thurston played an active role in the formation of the Yale Foreign Missionary Society and upon completion of his studies was sent to China to select a site for the establishment of the Yale Mission. His efforts resulted in the Hunan Missionary Conference's invitation to the Yale Mission to locate in Changsha, Hunan, and to assume responsibility for Christian higher education in the province.

While in China Thurston contracted tuberculosis and was ordered to return to the United States to convalesce. He established residence in Claremont, California, and died there on May 11, 1904.

For further information see Henry P. Wright's biography of Thurston, *Life With A Purpose* (New York, 1908).

Scope and Contents

The John Lawrence Thurston Papers are arranged in four series:

I Family Correspondence 1894-1904 II General Correspondence 1898-1904 III Correspondence of Others 1903-1956 IV Miscellany 1900-1903

Series I, FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE 1894-1904, is composed of Thurston's letters to his family from the time he entered Yale to his death. The letters are weekly and biweekly reports of his activities as a Yale undergraduate, as a divinity student at the Hartford Theological Seminary, and as a missionary in China. Subjects discussed include the Yale Missionary Band's activities, the organization of the Yale Foreign Missionary Society, and Thurston's role in locating a site for the Yale Foreign Missionary Society in China.

Series II, GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE 1898-1904, contains Thurston's letters to and from members of the Yale Missionary Band, the Yale Foreign Missionary Society, and other missionaries. Subjects discussed include Yale Missionary Band activities, the organization of the Yale Foreign Missionary Society, and Thurston's work in China. Correspondents of note include:

Harlan Page Beach, 1902-1904 Henry W. Luce, 1903-1904 Edward Bliss Reed, 1901-1904 Warren B. Seabury, 1903 Anson Phelps Stokes, 1901-1902 Matilda C. Thurston, 1904 Arthur C. Williams, 1900-1904 Yale Missionary Band, 1898-1903

Series III, CORRESPONDENCE OF OTHERS 1903-1956, contains correspondence between members of the Thurston family and the Yale Foreign Missionary Society staff. Correspondents include Charles S., Isabel S., and John R. Thurston, brother, sister, and father of John Lawrence Thurston, and Thurston's wife, Matilda. The correspondence of Thurston's brother, sister, and father relate to Thurston's illness and death. Matilda Thurston's letters relate to her husband's death and to her subsequent work for the Yale Foreign Missionary Society at Changsha. There is no substantive correspondence relating to Matilda Thurston's later work as founder and president of Ginling College in Nanking.

Series IV, MISCELLANY 1900-1903, includes clippings, obituaries, and memorial notices on John Lawrence Thurston; three photographs of Thurston; miscellaneous notes and memoranda on his activities in China; and a copy of *Ginling College Magazine* (June 1928) devoted to Thurston's wife, Matilda C. Thurston.

The John Lawrence Thurston Papers are arranged in four series:

Arrangement

Arranged in four series: I. Family Correspondence. II. General Correspondence. III. Correspondence of Others. IV. Miscellany.

Collection Contents

Series I: Family Correspondence, 1894-1904

Family correspondence is arranged chronologically.

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1-6 | 1894-1898 | 1894-1898 |
| b. 1, f. 7-13 | 1901-1904, undated | 1901-1904, undated |

Series II: General Correspondence, 1898-1904

General correspondence is arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Letters of a particular correspondent are organized chronologically.

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| b. 1, f. 14 | Ament, W. S. | 1903 |
| | Beach, Harlan Page | |
| b. 1, f. 15 | 1902 English | 1902 |
| b. 1, f. 16-17 | 1903 English | 1903 |
| b. 1, f. 18 | 1904 English | 1904 |
| b. 1, f. 19 | Christian Endeavor Friends | 1903 |
| b. 1, f. 20 | Duncan, Moir | 1903 |
| b. 1, f. 21 | Eddy, Brewer | 1900 |
| b. 1, f. 22 | Gelwicks, George L. | Undated |
| b. 1, f. 23 | Gross, Charles E. | 1902 |
| b. 1, f. 24 | Huyler, Edward | 1902 |
| b. 1, f. 25 | Keller, Frank A. | 1903 |
| b. 1, f. 26 | Lobenstine, Edward C. | 1903 |
| b. 1, f. 27 | Luce, Henry W. | 1903-1904 |
| b. 1, f. 28-31 | Reed, Edward Bliss | 1901-1904 |
| b. 2, f. 32 | Seabury, Warren B. | 1903 |
| b. 2, f. 33 | Smith, A. H. | 1903 |
| b. 2, f. 34 | Stokes, Anson Phelps | 1901-1902 |
| b. 2, f. 35 | Thurston, Matilda C. | 1904 |
| b. 2, f. 36 | Vickrey, Charles | 1900-1908 |
| b. 2, f. 37 | Welch, Pierce N. | 1902-1903 |
| b. 2, f. 38 | Williams, Arthur C. | 1900-1904 |
| b. 2, f. 39 | Yale Missionary Band | 1898-1903 |

Series III: Correspondence of Others, 1903-1956

Correspondence of others is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent. Letters of a particular correspondent are organized chronologically.

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| b. 2, f. 40 | Thurston, Charles S. | 1903-1904 |
| b. 2, f. 41 | Thurston, Isabel S. | 1903-1921 |
| b. 2, f. 42 | Thurston, John R. | 1903-1908 |
| b. 2, f. 43-45 | Thurston, Matilda C. | 1903-1908, 1912-1956 |

Series IV: Miscellany, 1900-1903

| | | |
|-------------|---|-----------|
| b. 2, f. 46 | Clippings, obituaries, and memorials | |
| b. 2, f. 47 | Matilda C. Thurston: biographical data | |
| b. 2, f. 48 | Photographs of John Lawrence Thurston | |
| b. 2, f. 49 | "Outfit suggestions for missionaries in China" memoranda English | 1902-1903 |
| b. 2, f. 50 | Miscellaneous notes and memoranda | 1903 |

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.

Subjects

Clergy
Missionaries
Missions -- China

Geographic Names

Asia

Names

Beach, Harlan P. (Harlan Page), 1854-1933
Luce, Henry Robinson, 1898-1967
Reed, Edward Bliss, 1872-1940
Seabury, Warren Bartlett, 1877-1907
Stokes, Anson Phelps, 1874-1958
Thurston, John Lawrence, 1874-1904
Thurston, Matilda C.
Williams, Arthur Collins, 1876-1917

Corporate Bodies

Yale-China Association
Yale Missionary Band of Student Volunteers
Yale University -- Officials and employees
Yale University -- Students