



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Lewis M. Rutherford Collection

NMAH.AC.0364

Don Darroch

1989

Archives Center, National Museum of American History
P.O. Box 37012
Suite 1100, MRC 601
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012
archivescenter@si.edu
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Bibliography.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	4

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Lewis M. Rutherford Collection
Date:	1846-1884
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0364
Creator:	Schmidling, David, Dr. (Donor) Rutherford, Lewis Morris, 1816-1892 (Author)
Source:	National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Physical Sciences (Collector)
Extent:	0.3 Cubic feet (1 box, 1 oversized folder)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection documents Lewis M. Rutherford's work related to astronomy.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Dr. David Schmidling, November 13, 1989.

Provenance

The collection was transferred from the Division of Physical Sciences to the Archives Center in December 1989.

Processing Information

Processed by Don Darroch, volunteer, 1989.

Preferred Citation

Lewis M. Rutherford Collection, 1846-1884, Archives Center, National Museum of American History. Gift of Dr. David Schmidling.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

Lewis Morris Rutherford (1816-1892), a native of New York, was a member of a prominent family and financially independent enough to permit his pursuit of scientific interests. After graduation from Williams College he practiced law for 10 years before devoting himself to amateur astronomy. Rutherford designed and made his own instruments for photography and spectroscopy in astronomical observations, often only demonstrating their capabilities before making them available to other scientists. A member of the National Academy of Sciences and numerous professional societies, Rutherford was awarded the Rumford Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1874 for his "improvements in the processes and methods of Astronomical Photography."

Scope and Contents

The collection includes two papers by Rutherford published in the *American Journal of Science*, lecture notes apparently used by Rutherford in teaching, and two letters from Benjamin A. Gould, an astronomer and close friend of Rutherford's, as well as a draft letter of Rutherford to the editors of the *American Journal of Science and Art*. Most of the collection is comprised of notebooks and loose notes in which Rutherford recorded his observations, calculations and designs relating to his professional activities. Two bound notebooks record observations of stars, planets and comets by telescope in 1846-1849 and 1859-1861. Other papers loose and less formally recorded on astronomical observations and the design and calibration of cameras and spectroscopes used by Rutherford, cover the period 1858-1874. A number of photographs of the moon and other subjects related to his work are also included.

Bibliography

Gould, Benjamin A., "Memoir of Lewis Morris Rutherford, 1816-1892," National Academy of Sciences, Biographical Memoirs (Washington, D.C., 1895), 3:417-441.

Mann, Robert J., "Mr. Lewis Rutherford's Photographs of the Sun and Fixed Stars, *Photographic News* 15 (1871), pp. 294-295.

Rutherford, Lewis M., "Astronomical Photography," *American Journal of Science* 39 (1865), pp. 304-309.

Rutherford, Lewis M., "On the Construction of the Spectroscope," *American Journal of Science*, 39 (1865), pp. 129-132.

Warner, Deborah Jean, "Lewis M. Rutherford: Pioneer Astronomical Photographer and Spectroscopist," *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (April 1971), pp. 190-216.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Astronomers
- Astronomy
- Photographers
- Photographs -- Moon -- 19th century
- Telescopes -- 19th century

Types of Materials:

Lecture notes
Notebooks -- 1850-1900
Photographs -- 19th century

Names:

National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Physical Sciences

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Rutherford published papers, circa 1865-1884
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1869 - 1870
Box 1, Folder 2	Letter from Dr. Gould to Rutherford,, 12 January 1869
Box 1, Folder 2	Letter from Dr. B. A. Gould to Rutherford, 1870-05-02 - 1870-05-02
Box 1, Folder 2	Letter in pencil (by Rutherford?) addressed to the editors of the American Journal of Science and Art, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Class lecture notes, 13 folded sheets, circa 1858-1859
Box 1, Folder 4	Notebooks (2) of astronomical observations--stars, planets, comets,, 1846 - 1849, 1859 - 1861
Box 1, Folder 5	Notes on astronomical observations, etc., circa 1858-1873
Box 1, Folder 6	Notes on instrument design, calibration, etc., circa 1858-1874
Box 1, Folder 7	Photographs; astronomical and experimental (27 images, includes 5 stereo images of the moon).
Box 1, Folder 7	Portrait of standing man (carte-de-visite) by Rockwood, New York
Oversize 1, Folder 1	Sonnenspectrum, undated