



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Elmer Gates Papers

NMAH.AC.1123

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Elmer Gates Papers
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1123
Date:	1894-1988 (bulk 1894-1910)
Extent:	1.5 Cubic Feet (5 boxes)
Creator:	Gates, Elmer, 1859-1923
Language:	English
Summary:	Papers document the life of Elmer Gates (1859-1923), an independent American inventor and psychologist. Gates developed ideas related to experimental psychology and inventions in fields such as metallurgy, electricity, microscopy, X-rays, and pedagogy. Papers include correspondence, photographs, patents, articles and clippings, writings, and estate documents.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was donated by Mary P. Gardner and C. Lee Humphries in 2008.

Processing Information

Processed by Christopher Ruggiero (intern), June 2008; supervised by Alison Oswald, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Elmer Gates Papers, 1894-1988 (bulk 1894-1910), Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Unrestricted research access on site by appointment. Unprotected photographs must be handled with gloves.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use

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

Biographical / Historical

Elmer Gates (1859-1923) was an experimental psychologist and inventor active at the turn of the twentieth century. Having worked independently from a personal laboratory, Gates remains a largely obscure figure in the history of science. In his day, however, Gates was known for his original ideas linked to experimental psychology, as well as his numerous and eclectic inventions for which he received more than forty patents. A sampling of Gates's inventions and innovations include a foam fire-extinguisher, an improved electric iron, methods for magnetic separation, and educational toys. In the field of psychology, Gates promoted a concept that he termed psychurgy, or the "art of more efficiently using the mind."¹

Elmer Gates was born near Dayton, Ohio, in 1859, to Jacob and Phebe Gates. At an early age, Elmer displayed a marked curiosity for the sciences. While in school, he was also taught by private tutors and his parents (his father was a teacher). By the late 1870s, Elmer had begun to develop ideas about experimental psychology. He believed that scientific experiments should be applied to the processes of the mind. The purpose of "psychurgy" would be to use the mind more effectively and efficiently. By training the mind through intense introspection and concentration and by attempting to observe corresponding physiological phenomena in the brain, Gates sought to demonstrate that the mind is in effect the body, and vice-versa. The ultimate aim—philosophical and moral—was to harness the mind's potential in order to advance new ideas and to improve emotional well-being and personal character.

1 Gates, Elmer. "Can Will Power Be Trained?" *Success* (March 1900): 93.

Scope and Contents

The Elmer Gates Papers contain documents about Gates's scientific pursuits and his personal life. Included are six series: Personal Papers (1879, 1922, 1981-1988), Correspondence (1894-1924, 1970s), Photographs (1890s-1910), Patents (1896-1928), Articles and Clippings (1894-1910, 1923, undated), and Writings, 1893-1916, 1971, undated. The majority of papers date from Elmer Gates's most active period, 1894-1910. The papers are arranged into six series.

Arrangement

This collection is divided into six series.

Series 1, Personal Papers, 1879, 1922, 1981-1988

Series 2, Correspondence, 1894-1924, 1970s

Series 3, Photographs, 1890s-1910

Series 4, Patents, 1896-1928

Subseries 1, United States Patents (issued), 1896-1928

Subseries 2, United States Patent Applications, 1896

Subseries 3, British Patent, 1901

Series 5, Articles and Clippings, 1894-1910, 1923, undated

Series 6, Writings, 1893-1916, 1971, undated

Subseries 1, Articles by Elmer Gates, 1895-1906, undated

Subseries 2, Notes, 1911

Subseries 3, Diary, 1911

Subseries 4, The Concept of Omnicosm (notes), 1893

Subseries 5, "Originality and Invention Applied to Livelihood and Business," 1981

Subseries 6, Periodicals, 1896, 1903

Subseries 7, Books, 1905-1916, 1971, undated

Names and Subject Terms

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

Cultures:

- Inventions
- Inventors
- Psychologists
- Psychology

Types of Materials:

- Articles
- Correspondence -- 19th-20th century
- Diaries -- 20th century
- Patents
- Personal papers -- 19th century
- Personal papers -- 20th century
- Photographs -- 1890-1900
- Photographs -- 1900-1910
- Writings

Container Listing

Series 1: Personal Papers, 1922, 1879, 1981-1988

Box 1, Folder 1

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1970s, 1894-1924

Box 1, Folder 2	From Elmer Gates, 1894
Box 1, Folder 3	From Phebe Edson Gates, 1895, 1894
Box 1, Folder 4	From Mary and Milan Edson, 1895, 1894
Box 1, Folder 5	From Notable People , 1901-1924
Box 1, Folder 6	May Penelope Gardner and Donald Edson Gates, 1970
Box 1, Folder 7	From Anne Pryor Gardocki, 1970s
Box 1, Folder 8	Miscellaneous, 1907

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Series 3: Photographs, 1890s-1910

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Personal, 1890s-1910
Image(s) |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Germantown, Pennsylvania Laboratory, 1894-1896 |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Chevy Chase, Maryland Lab, 1896-1908
Image(s) |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Chevy Chase, Maryland, Laboratory, 1896-1908 |
| Box 1, Folder 13 | Inventions, undated
Image(s) |

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Series 4: Patents, 1896-1928

Subseries 4.1: United States Patents (issued), 1896-1928

- Box 2, Folder 1 U.S. Patent 565,446, August 11, 1896
Electrically operated shedding mechanism for looms. U.S. Patent 565,446, filed August 5, 1895, issued August 11, 1896.
- Box 2, Folder 1 U.S. Patent 565,447, August 11, 1896
Electrically operated jacquard mechanism for looms. U.S. Patent 565,447, filed August 5, 1895, issued August 11, 1896.
- Box 2, Folder 1 U.S. Patent 565,448, August 11, 1896
Electrically operated reed for looms. U.S. Patent 565,448 filed August 5, 1895, and issued August 11, 1896.
- Box 2, Folder 1 U.S. Patent 565,449, August 11, 1896
Magnetic shuttle motion for looms. U.S. Patent 565,449, filed August 5, 1895, issued August 11, 1896.
- Box 2, Folder 1 Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54240, November 10, 1896
Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54240, filed [?], issued November 10, 1896.
- Box 2, Folder 2 U.S. Patent 636,255, November 7, 1899
Process of simultaneously cooling air and purifying and regulating its moisture and apparatus thereof. U.S. Patent 636,255, filed July 31, 1897, issued November 7, 1899
- Box 2, Folder 2 U.S. Patent 636,256, November 7, 1899
Apparatus for simultaneously purifying cooling, and regulating moisture of air. U.S. Patent 636,256, filed June 29, 1898, and issued November 7, 1899.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 653,256, July 10, 1900
Diamagnetic separation. U.S. Patent 653,256, filed September 26, 1899, issued July 10, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 653,343
Electrostatic separation. U.S. Patent 653,343, filed December 2, 1899, issued July 10, 1900
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 653,344, July 10, 1900
Diamagnetic separation. U.S. Patent 653, 344, filed December 2, 1899, issued July 10, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 653,345, July 10, 1900
Diamagnetic separation. U.S. Patent 653,345, filed December 2, 1899, issued July 10, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 653,346, July 10, 1900

- Magnetic separation. U.S. Patent 653,346, filed December 2, 1900, issued July 10, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 653,383, July 10, 1900
Apparatus for making radiographs. U.S. Patent 653,383, filed September 26, 1898, issued July 10, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 662,409, November 27, 1900
Apparatus for separating gold from magnetic sands. U.S. Patent 662,409, filed March 19, 1900, issued November 27, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 662,410, November 27, 1900
Magnetic separation. U.S. Patent 662,410, filed April 14, 1900, issued November 27, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 662,411, November 27, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Magnetic separator. U.S. Patent 662,411, filed April 14, 1900, issued November 27, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 U.S. Patent 662,412, November 27, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Magnetic separator. U.S. Patent 662,412, filed April 14, 1900, issued November 27, 1900.
- U.S. Patent 662,413, November 27, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Magnetic separator. U.S. Patent 662,413, filed April 14, 1900, issued November 27, 1900.
- U.S. Patent 662,414, November 27, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Magnetic separator. U.S. Patent 662,414, filed July 12, 1900, and issued November 27, 1900.
- Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 68576, August 30, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Diamagnetic separation. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 68576, filed [?], issued August 30, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 3 Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 67365, May 16, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Rulers. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 67365, filed [?], and issued May 16, 1900.
- Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 68577, August 30, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Electrostatic and combined electrostatic and diamagnetic separation. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 68577, filed [?], issued August 30, 1900.
- Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 69036, October 16, 1900
Gates, Elmer. 1900. Separating particles of conducting material from mixtures containing them. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 69036, filed [?], issued October 16, 1900.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 729,752, June 2, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Production of alloys. U.S. Patent 729,752, filed June 26, 1899, issued June 2, 1903.

- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 729,753, November 5, 1902
Gates, Elmer 1903. Subaqueous magnetic separator. U.S. Patent 729,753, filed January 10, 1901, and issued November 5, 1902.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 729,754, June 2, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Method of casting alloys. U.S. Patent 729,754, filed January 13, 1903, issued June 2, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 729,755, June 2, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Apparatus for casting alloys. U.S. Patent 729,755, filed January 13, 1903, issued June 2, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 729,756, June 2, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Alloy casting. U.S. Patent 729,756, filed January 13, 1903, issued June 2, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,035, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separator. U.S. Patent 731,035, filed March 1, 1900, issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,036, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separation. U.S. Patent 731,036, filed March 1, 1900, issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,037, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separator. U.S. Patent 731,037, filed January 13, 1903, issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,038, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separator. U.S. Patent 731,038, filed March 1, 1900, issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,039, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separator. U.S. Patent 731,039, filed March 1, 1900, renewed January 13, 1903, issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,040, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separation. U.S. Patent 731,040, filed March 19, 1900, renewed January 13, 1903, and issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,041, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separator. U.S. Patent 731,041, filed March 19, 1900, renewed January 13, 1903, issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,042, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separation. U.S. Patent 731,042, filed March 19, 1900, renewed January 13, 1903, issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,043, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Separating diamagnetic metal from sands. U.S. Patent 731,043, filed April 14, 1900, renewed January 13, 1903, issued June 16, 1903.

- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,044, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separation. U.S. Patent 731,044, filed April 14, 1900, renewed January 13, 1903, and issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 731,045, June 16, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Diamagnetic separator. U.S. Patent 731,045, filed April 14, 1900, renewed January 13, 1903, and issued June 16, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 741,903, October 20, 1903
[Image\(s\)](#)
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Educational toy or game apparatus. U.S. Patent 741,903, filed January 16, 1903, issued October 20, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 4 U.S. Patent 743,710, November 10, 1903
Gates, Elmer. 1903. Means for electric separation. U.S. Patent 743,710, filed March 25, 1903, issued November 10, 1903.
- Box 2, Folder 5 U.S. Patent 749,374, January 12, 1904
Gates, Elmer. 1904. Method of extinguishing fires. U.S. Patent 749,374, filed March 13, 1903, issued January 12, 1904.
- Box 2, Folder 6 U.S. Patent 780,716, January 24, 1905
Gates, Elmer. 1905. Method of agglomerating magnetic ore. U.S. Patent 780,716, filed January 14, 1901, renewed November 5, 1902, issued January 24, 1905.
- Box 2, Folder 7 U.S. Patent 854,997, May 28, 1907
Gates, Elmer. 1907. Apparatus for separating gold from magnetic sands. U.S. Patent 854,997, filed March 19, 1900, issued May 28, 1907.
- Box 2, Folder 7 U.S. Patent 1,045,830, December 3, 1912
Gates, Elmer. 1912. Method of purifying liquids. U.S. Patent 1,045,830, filed March 6, 1906, renewed May 28, 1908, issued December 3, 1912.
- Box 2, Folder 8 U.S. Patent 1,560,076, November 3, 1925
Gates, Elmer. 1925. Method and apparatus for complete combustion. U.S. Patent 1,560,076, filed April 8, 1922, issued November 3, 1925.
- Box 2, Folder 9 U.S. Patent 1,636,359, December 15, 1921
Gates, Elmer. 1927. Flatiron. U.S. Patent 1,636,359, filed December 15, 1921, issued July 19, 1927
- Bin 2, Folder 10 U.S. Patent 1,664,072, March 27, 1928
Gates, Elmer. 1928. Method for combustion under pressure. U.S. Patent 1,664,072, filed April 8, 1922, issued March 27, 1928.

Subseries 4.2: United States Patent Applications, 1896

- Box 2, Folder 1 Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54240, November 10, 1896
Gates, Elmer. 1896. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54240, filed [?], issued November 10, 1896.

- Box 2, Folder 1 Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54241, November 10, 1896
Gates, Elmer. 1896. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54241, filed [?],
issued November 10, 1896.
- Box 2, Folder 1 Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54242, November 10, 1896
Gates, Elmer. 1896. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54242, filed [?],
issued November 10, 1896.
- Box 2, Folder 1 Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54243, November 10, 1896
Gates, Elmer. 1896. Department of Agriculture Patent Branch 54243, filed [?],
issued November 10, 1896.

Subseries 4.3: British Patent, 1901

- Box 2, Folder 11 British Patent 20,544, March 16, 1901
Gates, Elmer. 1901. A method of and apparatus for the separation of
paramagnetic and diamagnetic materials. British Patent 20,544, filed
November 14, 1900, issued March 16, 1901.

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Series 5: Articles and Clippings, 1894-1910, 1923, undated

Box 2, Folder 12	1894-1901, 1894 - 1901
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Series 6: Writings, 1893-1916, 1971, undated

Subseries 6.1: Articles by Elmer Gates, 1895-1906, undated

Box 2, Folder 16

Subseries 6.2: Notes, 1911

Box 2, Folder 17

Subseries 6.3: Diary, 1911

*Box 2, Folder 18*Subseries 6.4: *The Concept of Omnicosm* (notes) , 1893*Box 2, Folder 19*

Subseries 6.5: "Originality and Invention Applied to Livelihood and Business" , 1981

Box 2, Folder 20

Subseries 6.6: Periodicals , 1903, 1896

*Box 3, Folder 1 Metaphysical Magazine, 1896**Box 3, Folder 2 National Magazine, 1903*

Subseries 6.7: Books, 1971, 1905-1916, undated

- Box 3, Folder 3 The Relations and Development of the Mind and Brain, 1904*
Gates, Elmer. *The Relations and Development of the Mind and Brain*. New York: Theosophical Society, 1904. Includes articles originally published in *Metaphysical Magazine*. Included are "The Art of Mind Building," "Old and New Phrenology," and "Psychology and Psychurgy."
- Box 3, Folder 4 Right and Wrong Thinking and Their Results, 1905*
Crane, Aaron Martin. *Right and Wrong Thinking and Their Results*. Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1905. Mentions Elmer Gates's work related to thoughts, emotions and brain activity. He is quoted. Pages mentioning Elmer Gates are marked.
- Box 4, Folder 1 "Immortality from New Standpoints", 1908*
Gates, Elmer. "Immortality from New Standpoints," Pages 319-355 in *Proofs of Life After Death*. Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1908.
- Box 4, Folder 2 The Riddell Lectures On Applied Psychology and Vital Christianity, 1916*
Riddell, Newton N. 1916. *The Riddell Lectures On Applied Psychology and Vital Christianity*. Chicago: The Riddell Publishers, 1916. Elmer Gates is mentioned in relation to his psychological experiments and ideas.
- Box 4, Folder 3 Elmer Gates and the Art of Mind-Using, 1971*
Gates, Donald. 1971. *Elmer Gates and the Art of Mind-Using*. New York: Exposition Press, Inc., 1971. A biography written by Elmer Gates's son, Donald Gates, focusing on Elmer Gates's ideas about psychurgy. After many

proposals to publishers were rejected, Donald Gates decided to publish this book himself.

Box 5

The Concept of O, undated

Gates, Elmer. *The Concept of O*, undated.

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