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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Creator: Saxton, Joseph, 1799-1873
Title: Joseph Saxton Papers
Dates: 1821-1856
Quantity: 0.1 linear meter.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7056, Saxton, Joseph, 1799-1873, Joseph Saxton Papers

Historical Note

Joseph Saxton (1799-1873), a self-educated inventor and machinist, developed his skills in mechanics, etching, and watchmaking while working as a watchmaker in Philadelphia for eleven years. In 1828, Saxton left for Great Britain in order to further his education. While in Great Britain, Saxton was employed by the Adelaide Gallery of Practical Science in London. There, Saxton became well known for building and exhibiting scientific novelties and machines. In 1837 he returned to the United States to work for the United States Mint in Philadelphia as Constructor and Curator of the standard weighing apparatus of the Mint. From 1843 until his death, Saxton was Superintendent of Weights and Measures at the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey in Washington, D.C.

Descriptive Entry

These papers consist of notebooks and diaries in which Saxton wrote detailed information on his experiments and social life in London; an appointment book for 1838; a scientific sketchbook with notes, which include drawings and descriptions of some of Saxton’s inventions; and a textbook. Other Joseph Saxton material may be found in the Joseph Henry Papers, Record Unit 7001.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:
Subjects:
   History of science and technology

Types of Materials:
   Field notes
   Illustrations

Names:
   Saxton, Joseph, 1799-1873
Container Listing

Box 1

Folders 1-2 Notebooks, 1832-1835
Folder 3 Appointment book, 1838
Folder 4 Sketchbooks with Notes, 1821-1856
Folder 5 Treatise on the Teeth of Wheels, by M. Camus, 1837