



Smithsonian Institution Archives

J. Elfreth Watkins Collection, 1869, 1881-1903, 1953, 1966 and undated

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	J. Elfreth Watkins Collection
Identifier:	Record Unit 7268
Date:	1869, 1881-1903, 1953, 1966 and undated
Extent:	1.25 cu. ft. (2 document boxes) (1 half document box)
Creator::	Watkins, J. Elfreth (John Elfreth), 1852-1903
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7268, J. Elfreth Watkins Collection

Historical Note

J. Elfreth Watkins (1852-1903), a railroad employee and museum curator, was employed by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Company as a mining engineer from 1871 to 1872. He then joined the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in 1872 as an Assistant Engineer of Construction. After a disabling accident in 1873, Watkins was employed as a Chief Clerk from 1874 to 1886 for the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Camden and Atlantic Railroad. In 1885, while still a railroad employee, Watkins was offered an honorary curatorial position in the Section of Steam Transportation, Department of Arts and Industries in the United States National Museum (USNM); in 1887 he was promoted to Curator of Transportation. Watkins returned to the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1892 to prepare its exhibit for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. When the Exposition closed, Watkins joined the staff of the Field Columbian Museum as Director of Industrial Arts. In 1895 he returned to the USNM as Curator of Technological Collections and in 1898 was named Curator of the Division of Technology (Modern Phases). He also served as Engineer of Property, 1888-1889, and Chief of Buildings and Superintendence, 1896-1903, for the USNM.

Descriptive Entry

This collection consists of Watkins' official and personal correspondence concerning the efforts of the Smithsonian to obtain federal appropriations for the establishment of a section of steam transportation in the USNM, the construction of ship models for an exhibit at the Cotton States and International Exposition, Watkins' research on the history of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, and his various appointments at the Smithsonian; an annual report, 1892, for the Section of Transportation and Engineering; biographical material and newspaper clippings; photographs; a history of the Camden and Amboy Railroad by Isaac L. Dripps; personal memorabilia; and publications.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Biography
Locomotion

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographs
Manuscripts

Names:

Camden and Amboy Railroad and Transportation Company
Camden and Atlantic Railroad Co.
Cotton States Exposition (1895 : Atlanta, Ga.)
Delaware and Hudson Railway Company
Dripps, Isaac L.
Pennsylvania Railroad
Smithsonian Institution. Buildings Management Department. Division of Buildings and Superintendence
United States National Museum. Department of Arts and Industries
United States National Museum. Division of Technology
United States National Museum. Section of Steam Transportation
United States National Museum. Section of Transportation and Civil Engineering
Watkins, J. Elfreth (John Elfreth), 1852-1903
World's Columbian Exposition (1893 : Chicago, Ill.)

Container Listing

Series 1: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1869, 1881-1903.

Box 1

Box 1 of 3	Folder 1 A, 1888-1899
Box 1 of 3	Folder 2 B, 1885-1891
Box 1 of 3	Folder 3 C - D, 1886-1892, 1900
Box 1 of 3	Folder 4 E, 1886-1900
Box 1 of 3	Folder 5 G, 1869, 1886-1892
Box 1 of 3	Folder 6 J, 1881-1886
Box 1 of 3	Folder 7 L, 1887-1896
Box 1 of 3	Folder 8 M - N, 1886-1892
Box 1 of 3	Folder 9 P, 1885-1902
Box 1 of 3	Folder 10 R, 1897-1900
Box 1 of 3	Folder 11 S - T, 1886-1903
Box 1 of 3	Folder 12 V - W, 1885-1896

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Series 2: ANNUAL REPORT, BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND OTHER MATERIAL, 1885-1900, 1953, 1966, AND UNDATED.

Box 1

- Box 1 of 3 Folder 13 Acknowledgments of Donations to Smithsonian Institution, 1885, 1888, 1900
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 14 Address by Watkins at presentation of Silver Memorial Vase to Willard A. Smith, 1894
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 15 Annual Report of the Section of Transportation and Engineering, 1892
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 16 Biographies and newspaper clippings, 1886, 1953, 1966 and undated
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 17 Business cards, undated
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 18 Copy of Will, 1899
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 19 Drawing of Proposed "Hall of American Inventions," Paris Exposition, by Watkins and Arthur Watson Sparks, 1898
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 20 History of Camden and Amboy Railroad by Isaac L. Dripps, undated
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 21 Lecture on Transportation, undated
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 22 Letters of Introduction, 1886
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 23 List of Papers by J. Elfreth Watkins in Division of Transportation, undated
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 24 Membership Certificates and Applications, 1895-1896
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 25 Outline for an exhibit on the development of transportation (?), undated
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 26 Photographs, undated
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 27 Scrapbook concerning Honorary Degree, 1900. Stevens Institute of Technology awarded Watkins the Doctor of Engineering degree in 1900.
- Box 1 of 3 Folder 28 Collected Notes on Steamboat Navigation

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Series 3: HISTORY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY, 1892-1901

Box 2

Box 2 of 3

Folders 1-4 Correspondence and related documents concerning the history
of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, 1892-1901

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Series 4: PUBLICATIONS, 1884-1900

Box 3

- Box 3 of 3 Folder 1 J. Elfreth Watkins, "1834-1884 Semi-Centennial of the Pennsylvania Railroad," 1884
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 2 J. Elfreth Watkins, "Report on the Section of Steam Transportation in the U.S. National Museum for the Year Ending June 30, 1886"
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 3 J. Elfreth Watkins, "Report on the Section of Transportation and Engineering in the U.S. National Museum, 1887"
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 4 J. Elfreth Watkins, "Report on the Section of Transportation and Engineering in the U.S. National Museum," 1888
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 5 J. Elfreth Watkins, "Contributions of the Department of Transportation and Engineering to the Ohio Valley Centennial Exhibition, 1888;" Reports on the SI and USNM Participation at the Cincinnati and Marietta Exposition, 1888; "The Evolution of the Railway Passenger Car"
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 6 J. Elfreth Watkins, "Report on the Section of Transportation and Engineering in the U.S. National Museum," 1889
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 7 J. Elfreth Watkins, "Report on the Section of Transportation and Engineering in the U.S. National Museum," 1890
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 8 J. Elfreth Watkins, "Development of the American Rail and Track," 1890
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 9 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Log of the Savannah," 1890
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 10 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Place of the Electrical Industries in History," 1891
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 11 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Ramsden Dividing Engine," 1891
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 12 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Importance of Collecting and Preserving the Relics of the Beginnings of the Telegraph," 1891
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 13 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Camden and Amboy Railroad," 1891; and Biographical Sketches of John Stevens, Robert L. Stevens, Edwin A. Stevens, John S. Darcy, John P. Jackson, and Robert F. Stockton, 1892
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 14 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Development of the American Rail and Track as Illustrated by the Collection in the U.S. National Museum," 1891

- Box 3 of 3 Folder 15 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Beginnings of Engineering," 1891
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 16 J. Elfreth Watkins, "John Stevens and His Sons," 1892
- Box 3 of 3 Folder 17 J. Elfreth Watkins, "The Transportation and Lifting of Heavy Bodies
by the Ancients," 1900

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