

Guide to the Papers of Robert H. Richards MC.0116

Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Andrews

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Institute Archives and Special Collections
MIT Libraries
Building 14N-118
77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139-4307
617.253.5690
mithistory@mit.edu

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Summary Information

Repository	Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Institute Archives and Special Collections
Creator	Richards, Robert H. (Robert Hallowell), 1844-1945
Title	Robert H. Richards papers
Date [inclusive]	1871-1914
Extent	1.2 cubic feet (5 manuscript boxes, 1 legal manuscript box, 1 flat storage box)
Location	Materials are stored off-site. Advance notice is required for use.
Language	English

Citation

Robert H. Richards Papers, MC 116, box X. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Institute Archives and Special Collections, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Biography

Robert Hallowell Richards, 1844-1945, SB 1868, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), was a member of the first graduating class of MIT. He remained at MIT as an assistant in chemistry. He became an instructor in assaying and qualitative analysis in 1869, assistant professor of analytical chemistry in 1870, professor of mining and assaying in 1871, and professor of mining engineering in 1873. He was head of the course and Department of Mining and Metallurgy, 1873 to 1914, when he became emeritus.

In 1871 Richards was one of five members of the MIT instructing staff and fifteen students to make the first summer school of mining excursion. In 1872 he started the Mining and Metallurgy Laboratory at MIT, which introduced the method of combining practical experience with theory. He was secretary of the faculty, 1873 to 1883, and the first president of the MIT Alumni Association. He married the first female graduate of MIT, Ellen Swallow, in 1875, and after her death he married Lillian Jameson in 1912.

Scope and Contents of the Collection

Of interest in the collection are materials documenting instruction in mining and metallurgy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology during the beginning years of the Institute. Instruction in the mining course consisted of lectures, laboratory work, and a summer school. Diaries record information about the summer school mining trips taken under the direction of Robert Richards. Some of the diaries are written by Richards, other diaries were kept by students for the school. The diary that Richards kept in 1873 offers a more personal view of the trip. In his diary Richards recorded notes for courses he was teaching as well as his equipment packing list for the trip. One can also follow the progress of the trip via his notes about student assignments at mine sites and sketches of machinery. In these beginning years of MIT, there was still much discussion about methods of instruction. Undergraduates studying mining and economic geology were expected to spend a portion of their vacation investigating mining operations and submit a report on what they had learned. The summer excursion for mining students became a well-established part of the curriculum with trips to mining camps across the United States and Mexico an annual venture for many years.

Robert Richards recorded his thoughts in the form of quick notes or observations rather than elaborate prose. Two years after writing his 1873 trip diary, Robert Richards married Ellen Swallow, the first female graduate of MIT (SB 1873). The diary contains a few intriguing glimpses into this personal side of his life. One is a list of dates and places on the trip from which he wrote to her. On another page are notes about educating men and women together, with arguments for and against. He credits one of the "for" arguments to "Swallow."

The collection also contains Robert Richards's laboratory and teaching notes and a bound volume of course notes, including engravings and printed diagrams used by Richards in a mining engineering class in fall 1880. Student work, which may be related to a 4th year class "Memoirs, laboratory reports" listed in the Institute's course catalog, can be found in the set of laboratory reports produced by students.

A photograph album of mining company sites and processes appears to have been made during one of the summer trips, and as it is stamped "Mining Laboratory" to have been used as a teaching tool.

Robert Richards's dual role as a faculty member and alumnus is demonstrated in the reports of the faculty and the Committee of Eighteen on the proposed alliance with Harvard University in 1905, which was opposed by MIT alumni.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Institute Archives and Special Collections

Revision Description

2010

Access note

The collection is open for research.

Intellectual Property Rights

Access to collections in the Institute Archives and Special Collections is not authorization to publish. Separate written application for permission to publish must be made to the Institute Archives. Copyright of some items in this collection may be held by respective creators, not by the donor of the collection.

Processing Information note

Collection originally designated MSC 12.

Related Materials

Related Materials

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Records of Secretary of the Faculty Robert H. Richards, 1879-1880 (AC 562)

Collection on Ellen Swallow Richards, 1873-1945 (MC 659)

Heinrich Hofman Papers (MC 253)

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Laboratory of Mining Engineering and Metallurgy

Genre(s)

- Diaries.
- Faculty papers.
- Photograph albums.

Personal Name(s)

- Richards, Robert H. (Robert Hallowell), 1844-1945

Subject(s)

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology--Curricula.
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology--Faculty.
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology--History.
- Mining engineering--Study and teaching.
- Ore deposits--Research.

Selected Bibliography

Richards, Robert H. "Description of the Calumet Mine." Massachusetts Institute of Technology SB thesis in geology, 1868.

Richards, Robert H. *A Textbook of Ore Dressing*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1909. First edition of work published in the *Engineering and Mining Journal* in 1903.

Richards, Robert H. *Robert Hallowell Richards, His Mark*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1936.

"Richard Hallowell Richards" in *Technology Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, July 1908, pp. 249-259. Includes detailed bibliography.

Hunt, Caroline L. *Life of Ellen H. Richards*. Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1912.

MIT Institute Archives & Special Collections Exhibit: "Diary of Robert Hallowell Richards, 1873" <http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/exhibits/diary-rhr/>

Collection Inventory

	Box
Metallurgy of Iron, Copper, laboratory notes 1890-1892	1
Notes on mining 1890	1
Correspondence undated	1
Letter to Mr. Cabot 1895 January	1
Report of the Faculty on the Proposed Agreement (merger with Harvard) 1905 May 4	1
Committee of Eighteen on the Proposed Agreement (merger with Harvard) 1905 May 4	1
Publications by Robert Richards (3 folders) undated	1
Robert Richards diary 1871 July to August	2
Robert Richards diary 1873 March to July	2
Robert Richards diary 1873 October to 1874 January	2
Lake Superior mining excursion (summer) 1874	2
Geological and mining excursion to Nova Scotia 1879	2
Mining excursion to Pennsylvania (summer) 1881	2
Mining notes, 2 volumes circa 1900	2
Laboratory tests, student work 1898, 1899, 1900	3
Laboratory tests, student work 1901, 1902	4
Laboratory tests, student work 1903, 1911, 1912	5
Mining Laboratory tests, Richard Lodge 1913	6
Class of 1888 papers on mining subjects circa 1888	6

Mining Laboratory photograph album undated

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