Summary Information

Call number: AC347
Repository: Princeton University Library. Special Collections.
          Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library.
          Princeton University Archives.
          65 Olden Street Princeton, New Jersey 08540 USA
Size: 4.96 linear feet
      11 boxes
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: Varnum Lansing Collins was a Princeton alum of the Class of 1893 and served as the University's Secretary from 1917 to 1936. Throughout his life Collins exhibited a special interest in Princeton's history and he authored a number of works relating to that theme. The Varnum Lansing Collins Papers consist primarily of materials generated by Collins while writing several of his most well-known works on Princeton history.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at the Mudd Manuscript Library.
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Varnum Lansing Collins was a Princeton alum of the Class of 1893 and served as the University's Secretary from 1917 to 1936. Throughout his life Collins exhibited a special interest in Princeton's history and he authored a number of works relating to that theme.

Born in Hong Kong, Collins obtained his education in Paris and London before coming to Princeton as a member of the class of 1892. As an undergraduate, he was editor of The Nassau Literary Magazine, president of the Cliosophic Society, leader of the Glee Club, and a member of the Triangle Club. After receiving an Honorary A.M. from Princeton in 1895, Collins worked in the University Library as a reference librarian until he joined the faculty of the Department of Modern Languages in 1906. He was made full professor six years later and assumed the position of clerk of the faculty—a position he held until 1935. Collins also served as the secretary of the Graduate Council from 1917 until 1927 and was an instrumental figure during the years that the Council successfully conducted its $2,000,000 campaign for faculty salaries. In 1917 he became University secretary and served in this pivotal role for nineteen years. When ill health forced Collins to retire in 1936, the Board accepted his resignation "with regret" and named him Historiographer to Princeton University. Collins had long been recognized as the foremost authority on Princeton history, and authored a number of books on the subject, notably a biography of President John Witherspoon, a history of Princeton, and a guide to the town and the University. His love and knowledge of Princeton led to the grassroots development of the University Archives. Named editor of the General Catalogue/Biographical Catalogue in 1906, he compiled files on alumni and on possible, doubtful, and fraudulent "alumni" that have been gold mines for researchers ever since. As secretary he began what is now known as the Historical Subject File, an enormously valuable (and still growing) cache of Princeton history, lore, and trivia.

The Varnum Lansing Collins Papers consist primarily of materials generated by Collins while writing several of his most well-known works on Princeton history. The papers include manuscripts, notes, correspondence, and research materials consisting of both original documents and facsimiles. Also included in the papers are materials pertaining to Collins' personal life, such as undergraduate scrapbooks and correspondence with friends and well-wishers.

Please see series descriptions in contents list for additional information about individual series.

Access
Collection is open for research use.

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### Acquisition and Appraisal

#### Provenance and Acquisition

It would appear that these papers were given to the Manuscript Division of the Special Collections, most likely by V. Lansing Collins himself. At some later point they were transferred to the University Archives where they became part of the Princetoniana Collection of books and manuscripts.

#### Appraisal

No appraisal information is available.

#### Accruals

No further additions to the Varnum Lansing Collins Papers are expected.

### Related Materials

#### Related Archival Material

The Library also holds a faculty and undergraduate alumni file for Collins, and four scrapbooks created by Collins as an undergraduate can be found in the Scrapbook Collection. Series 7 of the Office of the Secretary Records documents Varnum Lansing Collins' role as the Secretary of the University, and the Nassau Hall Iconography Collection is the location of all visual materials which are discussed in series 3 of the papers. All of the published works by V. L. Collins for which the notes and research materials can be found in the papers (excepting several unpublished pieces) are held in the Princetoniana Collection.

### Processing and Other Information

#### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Varnum Lansing Collins Papers, Box and Folder Number; University Archives, Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

#### Encoding


#### Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.
· Collins, Varnum Lansing, 1870-1936.
· Witherspoon, John, 1723-1794.
· Princeton University -- History.
· Nassau Hall (Princeton, N.J.)
· Princeton University
Woodrow Wilson and the Graduate College Controversy, 1902-1937

Size: 0.3 linear feet

Description: The Woodrow Wilson and the Graduate College Controversy series consists of notes, correspondence, collected documents, and other materials assembled by Varnum Lansing Collins documenting the controversy over the proposed site of the Graduate College and the ensuing battle between the supporters of President Woodrow Wilson and Dean Andrew Fleming West. As secretary of the University not long after the war of words subsided, West had access to many of the firsthand participants.

Arrangement: No arrangement has been imposed on this series, the papers remain in their original order.

- Checklist of Items, undated
- Correspondence, 1907-1922
- Documents, 1907-1910, undated
- Woodrow Wilson Graduate College Site notes and Statement to the Board of Trustees, 1908
- Varnum Lansing Collins Notes and Outlines, 1937
- Varnum Lansing Collins Notebook containing Outline of Events Relative to the Graduate College Controversy, 1902-1910
- Wilson Farrand Statements and Correspondence, 1909-1928
- "The Battle of Princeton" (Anti-Wilson Piece), undated
- Printed Pamphlets relating to the Controversy, 1902-1914
- West, Andrew Fleming, Manuscript for "A Narrative of the Graduate College of Princeton University", 1920

Princeton Presidents, 1858-1936

Size: 0.2 linear feet

Description: The Princeton Presidents series contains Varnum Lansing Collins' research materials on the past presidents of Princeton University. Only three of the University's presidents are covered.

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically by President.

- Administration of John MacLean, 1858-1865
- Administration of James McCosh, 1868-1882
Iconography of Nassau Hall, 1915-1961

Size: 0.3 linear feet

Description: The Nassau Hall Iconography series consists of notes and drafts for a project in which Varnum Lansing Collins attempted to catalog historical depictions of Princeton's Nassau Hall. Included are notebooks containing several dated lists of Nassau Hall paintings, etchings, and sketches.

Arrangement: No arrangement has been imposed on this series, the papers remain in their original order.

- Correspondence, 1915-1965
- Clippings and Notes, 1926-1961
- Varnum Lansing Collins Notebooks on Iconography of Nassau Hall, undated

Size: 2 volumes

John Witherspoon Biography, 1925

Size: 1.25 linear feet

Description: The John Witherspoon Biography series contains Varnum Lansing Collins' research materials for the book which was published as President Witherspoon: A Biography in 1925. Also included with the notes, documents, and chapter drafts is correspondence between Collins and other Witherspoon scholars.

Arrangement: No arrangement has been imposed on this series, the papers remain in their original order.

- Annotated Chapter Manuscripts, 1925
  - Chapters 1-2, circa 1925
    - Size: 1 volume
  - Chapters 1-2, second copy, circa 1925
    - Size: 1 volume
  - Chapters 3-4, circa 1925, dates not examined
    - Size: 1 volume
  - Chapters 3-4, second copy, circa 1925
    - Size: 1 volume
  - Chapters 5-6, circa 1925
    - Size: 1 volume
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<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>circa 1925</td>
<td>1 volume</td>
<td>4 Folder 3</td>
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<td>Chapters 5-8, second copies</td>
<td>circa 1925</td>
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<td>4 Folder 5</td>
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<td>circa 1925</td>
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<td>&quot;The Writings of Reverend Witherspoon&quot;, 1925</td>
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<td>Varnum Lansing Collins Notes on John Witherspoon, undated</td>
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**Early Princeton Printing, 1842-1936**

Size: 0.3 linear feet


Arrangement: No arrangement has been imposed on this series, the papers remain in their original order.

- "The Princeton Press" Bill of Sale, Advertisement, Notice of Fire, 1842-1855
- Correspondence, 1912-1931
- Various Notes and Clippings, circa 1911
- Various Notes and Clippings on David Borrenstein, , circa 1911-1936

**Miscellaneous Princetoniana and Personal, 1885-1972**

Size: 1.81 linear feet

Description: The Miscellaneous Princetoniana and Personal series contains a variety of materials assembled by Varnum Lansing Collins. Included are research notes, correspondence, and scrapbooks from Collins' time as a student and as Secretary of the
University. Represented in this series are the beginnings of several research projects which never came to fruition, such as the history of "Jugtown," Colonel George Morgan, and the Episcopal Church in Newark.

Arrangement: No arrangement has been imposed on this series, the papers remain in their original order.

Manuscript Notes on the History of "Jugtown", circa 1927  
Box: 6 Folder: 5

List of Little-Known Alumni, undated  
Box: 6 Folder: 6
Size: 1 volume

Colonel George Morgan and Prospect, 1788-1933

- Correspondence with Members of the Morgan Family, 1808-1933  
  Box: 7 Folder: 1
- Notes and Sources, 1788-1801  
  Box: 7 Folder: 2
- Photographs, 1930  
  Box: 7 Folder: 3
- Correspondence about George Morgan, 1906-1931  
  Box: 7 Folder: 4

Varnum Lansing Collins Correspondence, 1898-1936

- Critchlow, Frank L, 1899 November 3  
  Box: 7 Folder: 5
- Joline, Adrian H, 1904 March 28  
  Box: 7 Folder: 6
- Joline, John F, 1927 February 1  
  Box: 7 Folder: 7
  Description: (re: Samuel L. Howell letters)

- Paratte, Thomas M, 1918 June 23  
  Box: 7 Folder: 8
  Description: (re: Grover Cleveland funeral)

- Schenck, William E, 1900 May 2  
  Box: 7 Folder: 9
  Description: (re: Fitz Randolph burial place)

- Smith, Sydney S, 1907  
  Box: 7 Folder: 10
  Description: (re: Washington engravings for "The Continental Congress at Princeton)

- Wheeler, George P, 1903 January 3  
  Box: 7 Folder: 11
  Description: (re: Hallie Erminie Rives and publication of "Hearts Courageous")

- Wood, Ira Wells, 1898 November 5  
  Box: 7 Folder: 12
  Description: (soliciting vote for New Jersey Assembly)

- Various, 1898-1900  
  Box: 7 Folder: 13
  Description: (List of Correspondents and Dates in Folder)

- Unsorted Correspondence, 1898-1936  
  Box: 7 Folder: 14
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<tr>
<td>Collins Family Geneology, circa 1893-1972</td>
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<td>Varnum Lansing Collins Memorandum Book, undated</td>
<td>7 Folder: 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Princetoniana Notebooks, undated</td>
<td>7 Folder: 17 to 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varnum Lansing Collins Dissertation Notes on Marie de France, 1905-1906</td>
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<td>&quot;A Brief History of the Episcopal Church in Newark from 1744 to 1810,&quot; circa 1892, 1744, 1892</td>
<td>7 Folder: 21</td>
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<td>Lecture on Princeton with Slide List, circa 1920</td>
<td>7 Folder: 22</td>
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<td>Varnum Lansing Collins Scrapbook, 1885-1894</td>
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<td>Varnum Lansing Collins Scrapbook of Contributions to the Nassau Literary Magazine, 1891-1892</td>
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<td>Varnum Lansing Collins Shorthand Books, 1926-1927</td>
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<td>Varnum Lansing Collins Class Record Books, 1907-1921</td>
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