William Francis Magie Papers,
1875-1945 (bulk 1875-1920): Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C1122
Repository: Princeton University. Library. Dept. of Rare Books and
Special Collections
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544
USA
Size: 0.4 linear feet
2 half-size archival boxes
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: Consists of miscellaneous academic records and
manuscripts of William Francis Magie, distinguished
Princeton physics professor and dean.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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William Francis Magie graduated from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) in 1879 as valedictorian of his class. (His father, William Jay Magie, was valedictorian of the Princeton Class 1852.) He was a founder of the American Physical Society and was its president from 1910 to 1912. He taught physics at Princeton University for almost half a century, and was one of the group of alumni who nurtured Princeton's development from a college to a university. At the end of his senior year, on Commencement Day, one of his professors, Cyrus Fog Brackett, offered him the job to become his assistant. In 1884 Magie took a leave of absence and went to Germany, where he studied at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin under Hermann von Helmholtz and subsequently earned his Ph.D. A decade later he collaborated with two physicians in publishing the first paper in the U.S. on the possible use of X-rays in surgery. He was also the author of a highly regarded textbook on the rise and content of physical theories, Principles of Physics (1911). His greatest work, however, was in teaching and administration. After Brackett retired in 1908, Magie succeeded him as chairman of the physics department and, later, as Joseph Henry Professor of Physics. From 1912 to 1925 he served as dean of the faculty, and he continued to serve as chairman of the physics department until his retirement in 1929, when, at Commencement Day, he was awarded an honorary Sc.D.

The collection consists of miscellaneous papers of Magie: records and report cards from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), school records from Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin, manuscripts of some of his addresses, a manuscript of the "Account of the process of making the Ph.D. at Berlin, 1885," and selected correspondence. The records from the College of New Jersey include an entrance exam schedule, Magie's letter of admission (1875), and his award certificate (1878) for the Dickinson Prize. There are six autograph (and one typewritten) addresses on various scientific topics given at conferences and club meetings. The records from Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin include a registration form, a student ID card, a receipt, a student manual (1882), three lists of classes, a record of courses taken, his Ph.D. degree (1884), and a printed copy of his dissertation (1885). The correspondence includes three letters (1882) to Magie's mother and father from Princeton, and a letter and two photographs from Frederick S. Osborne to Edward Steese, dated July 2, 1945, regarding the Magie grave tablet. In addition, there is short document about physics signed by Hermann von Helmholtz, Magie's German mentor.

Arranged by accession number.
The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from the Associate University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Custodial History

The collection was formed as a result of a Departmental practice of combining into one collection material of various accessions relating to a particular person, family, or subject.

Provenance and Acquisition

The collection materials were a gift of David Magie on December 30, 1954.

Processing and Other Information

Preferred Citation

Citations should be as follows: William Francis Magie Papers, Box #, Folder #, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Dina Britain on June 29, 2006. Finding aid written by Tenley Eakin on June 30, 2006. Folder inventory added by James Clark ’14 in 2012. Folder Inventory for additions (Box 2) added by Jameson Creager ’2015 in 2012.

Encoding

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2012-08-29T12:25-0400

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

· College of New Jersey (Princeton, N.J.). Class of 1879.
· Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin.
· Princeton University--Faculty--20th century--Manuscripts.
· Princeton University. Dept. of Physics--History--Sources.
· Physicists--New Jersey--Princeton--20th century--Manuscripts.
· Diplomas--Germany--19th century.
· Dissertations--Germany--19th century.
· Manuscripts--20th century.
· Report cards--19th century.
· School records--19th century.
· History of science
· Princeton University
Contents List

- DS from Helmholtz, Ferdinand, undated
- Registration, Student ID, Receipts, Record of Courses, Dissertation, Ph.D. Degree from the Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universitat zu Berlin, 1884 April 15-1885 March 25
- Student Manual, 3 Lists of Classes, 1882-1885 August 15
- AMS, Account of the Process of Making the Ph.D. at Berlin, 1885
- Speech: "Culture and Science," Read at Evanston Northwestern University Graduate Club, 1906 March 12
- Speech: Physics Club of New York, 1914 March 7
- Speech for 250th Anniversary of Elizabeth, New Jersey, in First Church, 1914 October 27
- Speech: "Cases of Appreciation of the Theory of Dimensions to the Determination of Physical Relations," 1915 April 15
- Speech at Wooster, 1915 October
- Speech at Science Conference, Dartmouth Sesquicentennial, 1919 October 20
- Speech at Conference of New Jersey State Classical Association, New Brunswick, 1920 October 19
- 3 ALsS to His Mother and Father, 1882 December 3-6
- College of New Jersey Entrance Exam, Report Cards, Dickinson Prize Award, 1875 July 1-1878 December
- ALS and 2 photos to Edward Steese Regarding the Photos of the Magie Tablet, 1945 July 2
- Photographs of Dr. Foster, Prof. Weyerstrass, Berlin und Umgebung, Prof. Leller, Prof. Kirchhoff, Unidentified, 1882-1883
- Entry about Magie from The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, undated
- Various Cards and Tickets, Document concerning Typography of Magie's Book, Letter, Receipt concerning Promotion Rate, 1884-1885
- Letters from General Secretary of The Royal Institution to Magie, 1933 January-February
- Mathematical Notes and Calculations, 1884 October 29
- Draft of "Ueber Capillaritäts-Constanten" (About Capillary Constants), undated
- "Proof by Poissons Equation that I am justified at least with small lutus (see 2) in taking surface as a sphere," undated
"Akademische Lesehalle" (Academic Reading Hall), "Statuten" (Statutes), undated

Papers relating to Capillary Constant- mostly height of bubbles, 1885 October-December

Various Cards, Bills, and Receipts, 1884 April-May

Verzeichniss der Vorlesungen (List of Lectures), Various Cards and Receipts, Missing Pages from Documents, Geometrical Drawing, 1884-1888

Document from United State Department of State granting Magie Free Passage with Description of Magie, 1884 February 25

"Ueber Capillaritäts-Constanten" (About Capillary Constants) Essay, undated