

Yale University Library
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the Gibbs-Van Name Papers

GEN MSS 83



by Heather L. Holeman

October 1986

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 83

CREATOR: Van Name, Ralph Gibbs, 1877-1961

TITLE: Gibbs-Van Name papers

DATES: 1843-1959

BULK DATES: 1929-1957

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.5 linear feet (8 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain correspondence and other materials documenting the efforts of Ralph gibbs Van Name to publish technical and biographical work on Josiah Willard Gibbs, the scientist who developed the theory of thermodynamics.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.gibbs>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.gibbs>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Many of the papers were originally part of the Gibbs Family Papers in Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, which were transferred to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in December 1982. Additional Gibbs-Van Name papers were donated to Beinecke Library by Theodora Van Name Palmer in 1961.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 8: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Use

The Gibbs-Van Name Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Gibbs-Van Name Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

JOSIAH WILLARD GIBBS (1839-1903)

Josiah Willard Gibbs, mathematician and physicist, was born in New Haven on February 11, 1839, the son of Josiah Willard Gibbs, professor of sacred literature at Yale, and Mary Anna Van Cleve. He received a B.A. from Yale in 1858, an M.A. in 1861, and a Ph.D. in 1863. After serving as tutor in Latin (1863-65) and natural philosophy (1865-66), Gibbs went to Europe to study for three years. He returned to New Haven in 1869 and was appointed professor of mathematical physics at Yale in 1871, a position he held until his death.

Best known for developing the theory of thermodynamics, Gibbs wrote a number of extremely important and influential scientific works, the most significant being "Graphical Methods in the Thermodynamics of Fluids" (1873), "A Method of Geometrical Representation of the Thermodynamic Properties of Substances by Means of Surfaces" (1873), "On the Equilibrium of Heterogeneous Substances" (1876, 1878), "Electrochemical Thermodynamics" (1886, 1888), and *Elementary Principles in Statistical Mechanics* (1902).

He lived at the home of his sister and brother-in-law, Julia Gibbs and Addison Van Name, and died unmarried in New Haven on April 28, 1903.

For additional biographical information, see the *Dictionary of American Biography*, IV, pp. 248-51; Muriel Rukeyser, *Willard Gibbs* (1942), and Lynde Phelps Wheeler, *Josiah Willard Gibbs, the History of a Great Mind* (1951).

RALPH GIBBS VAN NAME (1877-1961)

Ralph Gibbs Van Name was born in New Haven on October 22, 1877. The son of Addison and Julia Gibbs Van Name and nephew of Josiah Willard Gibbs, he was educated at Yale, receiving a B.A. in 1899 and a Ph.D. in 1902. Van Name was an instructor at Yale 1904-09, assistant professor 1909-24, associate professor of physical chemistry 1924-36, research associate in chemistry 1936-44, and research associate emeritus until his death on January 4, 1961. On June 25, 1925 he married Josephine Earl; the couple had two children, John Addison and Virginia Gibbs Van Name.

While serving on the Yale faculty, Van Name devoted much attention to memorializing the life and work of his uncle Josiah Willard Gibbs. He helped edit *The Scientific Papers of J. Willard Gibbs* (1906) and through the Gibbs Memorial Fund assisted in the publication of *The Collected Works of J. Willard Gibbs* (1928) and *A Commentary on the Scientific Writings of J. Willard Gibbs* (1936). He also provided assistance to biographers Muriel Rukeyser and Lynde Phelps Wheeler.

Scope and Contents

The Gibbs-Van Name Papers consist primarily of Ralph Gibbs Van Name's correspondence; they document the publishing of technical and biographical works on his uncle Josiah Willard Gibbs (1839-1903). The papers are divided into five series, each alphabetically and chronologically arranged by material type. They span the dates 1843-1959, with the bulk of the material covering the years 1929-57.

[Series I, *Collected Works*](#), contains correspondence and papers concerning the establishment of the Gibbs Memorial Fund and the republishing in 1928 of *The Collected Works of J. Willard Gibbs*. Included in the series are letters from Edwin B. Wilson and G. A. Hewlett, an agreement to establish a memorial fund, committee reports and notes, and a typescript of the introduction which summarizes the committee's work. Printed works include reviews.

[Series II, *Commentary*](#), documents the writing, editing, and publishing of the two-volume work, *A Commentary on the Scientific Writings of Josiah Willard Gibbs* (1936). F. G. Donnan of University College, London, edited volume I and Arthur Haas of the University of Vienna edited volume II. As supervising administrator for the project, Ralph Gibbs Van Name maintained a steady flow of correspondence with the editors. His correspondence with Yale treasurer George Parmly Day and president James Rowland Angell concerns the financial difficulties of publishing the volumes during the depression. Other prominent correspondents include Irving Fisher, Paul Epstein, George W. Morey, and William F. G. Swann. Memorandum and payments to authors complement the correspondence.

The papers concerned with the first of two modern biographies of Josiah Willard Gibbs are found in [Series III](#). In her *Willard Gibbs: American Genius* (1942), Muriel Rukeyser (1913-1980) intended to discuss Gibbs's life, personality, and scientific importance, but the Van Name family was not pleased with her research or with the completed biography. The correspondence provides insights on Ralph Gibbs Van Name's character, Van Name family relationships, and the sentiments of Gibbs's former students. Correspondents include Theodora Van Name, Norman Holmes Pearson, William Lyon Phelps, and Edwin B. Wilson. Much of Ralph Gibbs Van Name's correspondence addresses his misgivings about Rukeyser's abilities as a biographer, which resulted in his decision to withhold family correspondence from her. Van Name called upon former students to review the biography in the hope of discrediting it. Folders 122-26 contain reviews of the book. Rukeyser generally received favorable literary reviews and mixed scientific ones. Miscellaneous genealogical notes are also found, probably written by Theodora Van Name to help answer questions raised by Rukeyser.

[Series IV, *Lynde Phelps Wheeler*](#), contains correspondence and other papers relating to Wheeler's biography, *Josiah Willard Gibbs: The History of a Great Mind* (1951). After publication of Rukeyser's biography, Van Name asked Wheeler to help compile reminiscences of Gibbs for future biographical research. Later he encouraged Wheeler to write a Gibbs biography to counteract the image Rukeyser created. The series contains correspondence with several associates of Gibbs, including Irving Fisher, Edwin B. Wilson, and George W. Morey. The series also includes a complete list of Gibbs's living students in 1944 and a number of reviews of Wheeler's book.

The final series, [Additional Papers](#), includes a variety of information on Gibbs, Ralph Gibbs Van Name, the Van Name family, and the Gibbs family. Biographical inquiries contain requests for information on Gibbs and Van Name's responses. Biographical works include sketches of Gibbs that shed light on attitudes towards him as a professor, scientist, and an individual. The estate and family papers provide genealogical charts, copies of early Gibbs correspondence, and financial records. Gibbs Memorial and Hall of Fame material combine to describe how the memorial was established and its financial connection with the Hall of Fame nomination. Also included are lecture notes taken by Van Name in 1899-1900 for a class taught by Gibbs, photographs, press releases on the USNS *Josiah Willard Gibbs*, and printed material.

The papers present a relatively complete account of efforts by Van Name to publish Gibbs's works, to encourage biographical studies of him, and to enhance his reputation. Through the correspondence and biographical sketches the character of J. Willard Gibbs and the Van Name family are revealed.

Collection Contents

Series I: Collected Works, 1927-1948

0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Collected Works consists of alphabetically arranged correspondence, followed by related papers.

Correspondence		
b. 1, f. 1	"A-B" general	1927-44
b. 1, f. 2	"C" general	1927-33, n.d.
b. 1, f. 3	"D" general	1927-37
b. 1, f. 4	"E-F" general	1927-30
b. 1, f. 5	"G-J" general	1924-30
b. 1, f. 6	"K-L" general	1930-48
b. 1, f. 7-11	Longmans, Green & Company	1927-31
b. 1, f. 12	"M-W" general	1930-48
b. 1, f. 13	Agreement	1948 Jun
b. 1, f. 14	Committee report and notes	1927 May
b. 1, f. 15	Introduction: typescript	n.d.
b. 1, f. 16	Printed material	1906-48, n.d.
b. 1, f. 17	Reviews	1929, n.d.
b. 1, f. 18	Miscellaneous papers	n.d.

Series II: Commentary, 1908-1946*0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)*Series II, *Commentary*, contains alphabetically arranged correspondence, followed by related papers.

Correspondence		
b. 2, f. 19	Andrews, Donald H.	1931-35, n.d.
b. 2, f. 20	Angell, James Rowland	1932-36
b. 2, f. 21	"B" general	1928-33
b. 2, f. 22	"C" general	1928-46
b. 2, f. 23	"D" general	1928-33
b. 2, f. 24-28	Day, George Parmly	1926-36, n.d.
b. 2, f. 29-41	Donnan, F. G.	1928-1938, n.d.
b. 2, f. 42	"E-J" general	1928-36, n.d.
b. 2, f. 43-44	Epstein, Paul	1929-36, n.d.
b. 2, f. 45-46	Fisher, Irving	1928-36, n.d.
b. 2, f. 47-56	Haas, Arthur	1928-35
b. 3, f. 57-58	Haas, Arthur	1936, n.d.
b. 3, f. 59	"J" general	1928
b. 3, f. 60	Johnston, John	1928-36, n.d.
b. 3, f. 61	"K" general	1927-36
b. 3, f. 62	"L" general	1927-36
b. 3, f. 63	"M" general	1928-36
b. 3, f. 64	McGraw-Hill Book Company	1933
b. 3, f. 65-67	Morey, George W.	1927-37, n.d.
b. 3, f. 68	"N-R" general	1927-37
b. 3, f. 69	"S" general	1927-28
b. 3, f. 70-71	Swann, William, F. G.	1927-36
b. 3, f. 72	"T" general	1927-28, n.d.
b. 3, f. 73	"W-Z" general	1927-28
b. 3, f. 74-77	Wilson, Edwin B.	1927-36
b. 3, f. 78-80	Yale University Press	1933-36
b. 3, f. 81	Letter fragments	1927-36, n.d.

b. 3, f. 82	Memorandum: Committee on "Protokoll"	1929, n.d.
b. 3, f. 83-84	Miscellaneous papers	1927-37, n.d.
b. 3, f. 85-90	Payments to authors	1929-36, n.d.
	Printed material	
b. 3, f. 91	<i>Nature</i>	1928 Feb
b. 3, f. 92	<i>Science</i>	1928 Apr
b. 3, f. 93	Miscellaneous	1908-37, n.d.

Series III: Muriel Rukeyser, 1906-1952*0.5 linear feet (1 box)*Series III, *Muriel Rukeyser*, is composed of alphabetically arranged correspondence, followed by

Correspondence		
b. 4, f. 94	"C" general	1942-43
b. 4, f. 95	Doubleday, Doran and Company	1941-42
b. 4, f. 96	"E-F" general	1944-45
b. 4, f. 97	Fisher, Irving	1942
b. 4, f. 98	Gesell, Arnold	1942
b. 4, f. 99	"H-L" general	1942-44
b. 4, f. 100	Johnston, John	1942-43
b. 4, f. 101	"M" general	1942-43
b. 4, f. 102	Pearson, Norman Holmes	1942
b. 4, f. 103	Phelps, William Lyon	1942
b. 4, f. 104-105	Rukeyser, Muriel	1940-42
b. 4, f. 106-107	Van Name, Theodora	1940-44, n.d.
b. 4, f. 108-115	Wilson, Edwin B.	1940-49
b. 4, f. 116	Miscellaneous	n.d.
b. 4, f. 117	Articles	1941-52
b. 4, f. 118	Biographical information	n.d.
b. 4, f. 119	Excerpts from biography: typescript	n.d.
b. 4, f. 120	Notebooks: Theodora Van Name	n.d.
b. 4, f. 121	Printed material: <i>The Scientific Papers of J. Willard Gibbs</i>	1906
b. 4, f. 122-25	Reviews	1943, n.d.
b. 4, f. 126	Scrapbook	1941-43
Miscellaneous papers		
b. 4, f. 127	Envelopes	1942
b. 4, f. 128-29	Genealogical notes	n.d.

Series IV: Lynde Phelps Wheeler, 1906-1957*0.5 linear feet (1 box)*

Series IV contains alphabetically arranged correspondence and additional related papers. An

Correspondence		
b. 5, f. 130	"D-F" general	1947-49
b. 5, f. 131-34	Fisher, Irving	1944-57
b. 5, f. 135	Gale, Arthur S.	1945-47
b. 5, f. 136	Herrick, Samuel	1949-53
b. 5, f. 137	Morey, George W.	1956
b. 5, f. 138	"O-P" general	1931-52
b. 5, f. 139	"S-W" general	1947-52
b. 5, f. 140	Simon and Schuster, Inc. Publishers	1954
b. 5, f. 141-54	Wheeler, Lynde Phelps	1944-57, n.d.
b. 5, f. 155	Willard, F. W.	1944
b. 5, f. 156	Wilson, Edwin B.	1944-57
b. 5, f. 157-60	Notes	1944, n.d.
b. 5, f. 161	Printed material: miscellaneous	1906-51
b. 5, f. 162-64	Reviews	1951, n.d.
b. 5, f. 165	Writings: "The Early Works of Willard Gibbs in Applied Mechanics," by Samuel Dudley	1947
b. 5, f. 166	Miscellaneous envelopes	1951, n.d.
b. 5, f. 167	Miscellaneous papers	1946-52, n.d.

Series V: Additional Papers, 1843-1959*1 linear foot (3 boxes)*

The papers in Series V are alphabetically arranged by person and subject.

b. 6, f. 168-76	Article: unidentified	1933-38, n.d.
b. 6, f. 177-83	Biographical inquiries: correspondence	1905-53
	Biographical works	
b. 6, f. 184	Donan, F. G.: typescript	n.d.
b. 6, f. 185	Fisher, Irving: typescript	1946
b. 6, f. 186	Johnston, John: correspondence	1927
b. 6, f. 187	Johnston, John: galley	n.d.
b. 6, f. 188	Johnston, John: manuscript	n.d.
b. 6, f. 189-90	Johnston, John: typescript	n.d.
b. 6, f. 191-98	Estate papers	1903-07
	Family papers	
b. 6, f. 199	Correspondence: manuscript and typed copies	1843-88
b. 6, f. 200-01	Dasburg, Alfred: correspondence	1951-52
b. 6, f. 202	Donations to Yale University	1920-51, n.d.
b. 6, f. 203	Genealogical notes	n.d.
b. 6, f. 204	Photographs	n.d.
b. 6, f. 205	Van Name, Addison	1906, n.d.
	Gibbs, Josiah Willard	
b. 7, f. 206-07	Dissertation, "On the Form of the Teeth of Wheels in Spur Gearing": Correspondence	1937-45
b. 7, f. 208	Paper, "The Proper Magnitude of Units of Length": typescript	1866 Mar 21
	Gibbs Memorial	
b. 7, f. 209	Committee report	1927 May
b. 7, f. 210-11	Correspondence	1910-28, n.d.
b. 7, f. 212	Description	n.d.
b. 7, f. 213	Minutes	1927-28, n.d.
b. 7, f. 214	Proposal	n.d.
b. 7, f. 215	Resolution	n.d.

Hall of Fame		
b. 7, f. 216	Correspondence	1940-57
b. 7, f. 217	Memorandum	n.d.
b. 7, f. 218	Newspaper clippings	1945
b. 7, f. 219	Lecture: Whitney, Margaret D.	1937
b. 7, f. 220	Lecture: correspondence and text	1938-39, n.d.
b. 7, f. 221-24	Newspaper clippings	1906-51, n.d.
b. 7, f. 225-32	Printed material	1881-1945
b. 7, f. 233-34	Sheffield Scientific School	1947-49
b. 7, f. 235-39	USNS <i>Josiah Willard Gibbs</i>	1958-59, n.d.
Van Name, Ralph Gibbs		
b. 7, f. 240	Lecture notes: class from Josiah Willard Gibbs	1899-1900
b. 7, f. 241	Notes	n.d.
b. 8, f. 242-46	Notes	n.d.
b. 8, f. 247-52	Miscellaneous papers	n.d.

Series VI: Restricted Fragile Papers

Box 8: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 8, f. 253	Box 2, folder 43
b. 8, f. 254	Box 3, folder 57
b. 8, f. 255	Box 5, folders 139, 155

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Authors, American
Biography
Publishers and publishing
Scientists -- United States

Occupations

Biographers -- United States

Names

Angell, James Rowland, 1869-1949
Day, George Parmly, 1876-1959
Donnan, F. G. (Frederick George), 1870-1956
Epstein, P. (Paul), 1871-
Fisher, Irving, 1867-1947
Gibbs, J. Willard (Josiah Willard), 1839-1903
Haas, Arthur Erich, 1884-1941
Hewlett, G. A.
Johnston, John, 1881-1950
Morey, G. W. (George Washington), 1888-1965
Pearson, Norman Holmes, 1909-1975
Rukeyser, Muriel, 1913-1980
Swann, W. F. G. (William Francis Gray),
1884-1962
Van Name, Ralph Gibbs, 1877-1961
Van Name, Theodora
Van Name, Willard G. (Willard Gibbs),
1872-1959
Wheeler, Lynde Phelps, 1874-1959

Families

Gibbs family
Van Namee family

Corporate Bodies

Yale University -- Faculty
Yale University Press