

Thomas Jefferson University Archives and Special Collections

MS 059

Silas Weir Mitchell Collection, 1855-1964 0.5 linear feet (1 box)

Biographical Note

Born in Philadelphia on 16 February 1829, S. Weir Mitchell (1829-1914) was the son of John Kearsley (Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine at Jefferson Medical College, 1841-1858) and Sarah Matilda (Henry) Mitchell. Mitchell studied at the University of Pennsylvania (ca. 1844-1847), received his MD from Jefferson Medical College (1850), and studied in Europe (1850-1851). Upon his return from Europe, Mitchell began a practice in Philadelphia. He interrupted his practice to serve as a surgeon for the Union Army during the Civil War. After the war, he resumed his practice with an emphasis on the research and study of neurology. Mitchell gained attention for his "rest cure," which advocated bed rest, massages, isolation and the avoidance of disturbing events, as well as a very rich and fattening diet. During his career, Mitchell also became a major critic of asylums and institutional psychiatry; he contributed to medical literature in several fields. In 1858, Mitchell married Mary Middleton Elwyn; they had two children. After her death, he married Mary Cadwalader in 1875; they had one child. Mitchell died in Philadelphia on 4 January 1914. He is recognized today as the "Founder of American Neurology," as well as a respected novelist and poet.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of materials by or about S. Weir Mitchell, MD, and his family from 1855-1954 (bulk 1855-1912). Types of material include addresses (1872-1897) mainly presented to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, medical journal articles (1863-1912 with gaps), and correspondence.

Organization and Arrangement

I. Addresses (1872-1897)

Arranged in alphabetical order by the name of the sponsoring organization, thereafter in chronological order.

II. Correspondence (1855, 1900)

III. Publications (1863-1912 with gaps)

IV. Events and Ephemera (1884-1964)

Arranged in alphabetical order by subject.

Container List

I. Addresses (1872-1897)

- 1.1 College of Physicians of Philadelphia
1897 - A clinical re-examination of the motor symptoms of chorea.
- 1.2 College of Physicians of Philadelphia
1887 - President's centennial address.
- 1.3 College of Physicians of Philadelphia
1887 - President's centennial address.
- 1.4 Congress of American Physicians & Surgeons
1891 - President's address. The early history of instrumental precision in medicine.
- 1.5 Orthopaedic Hospital & Infirmary for Nervous Diseases
1872 - Clinical lecture on certain painful affections of the feet.

II. Correspondence (1855, 1900)

- 1.6 1900 - From: S. Weir Mitchell
To: Editor of the Philadelphia Medical Journal
Re.: Practical tests by state boards.
- 1.7 1855 Nov. 20 - From: S. Weir Mitchell
1855 Nov. 21 - From: S. Weir Mitchell To: Robley Dunglison
Re.: G. L. Sellars' medical condition, withdrawal from JMC, and fee repayment.

III. Publications (1863-1912 with gaps)

- 1.8 1912 - Some recently discovered letters of William Harvey with other miscellany.
- 1.9 1886 - Physiological studies of the knee jerk and of the reactions of muscles under mechanical and other excitants.
- 1.10 1873 - Anal and perineal neuralgia.
1872 - Nitrate of Amyl in epilepsy.
1872 - Injuries of nerves & their consequences [Review of Dr. Mitchell's book in Medical Times].
- 1.11 1864 - Reflex paralysis [Reprint 1941]
- 1.12 1863 - Researches upon the anatomy and physiology of respiration in the chelonia.

IV. Events and Ephemera (1884-1964)

- 1.13 College of Physicians of Philadelphia - S. Weir Mitchell Associates program and library book plate - 1964
- 1.14 College of Physicians of Philadelphia - Mutter Museum Committee - Common Pleas Court Petition - 1884
- 1.15 News Clippings - 1968
- 1.16 Poetry - The Physician [Read before the Congress of American Physicians & Surgeons] - 1900
- 1.17 Poetry - The Birth & Death of Pain - 1896
- 1.18 Poetry - Minerva Medica - 1888

Reprocessed and described:

Dan Flanagan
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