

Field, Cyrus W. Cable Section and Letter

Cyrus W. Field Cable Section and Letter

1858



Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Revision Description

2020-08-31	Finding aid notes updated to new department standards. juliags
2021-05-12	LM Rozema added agent and missing notes for an unprocessed collection (abstract, source, processing, bio, related), added FA title, added FA date from EAD, and added component with instances previously attached to collection level.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1989.053

Unit Date

1858

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

Section (4.5 in.) cut from first (1858) trans-Atlantic telegraph cable, accompanied by a photocopied letter of authenticity from Cyrus West Field, co-founder of Atlantic Telegraph Company.

Creator

Field, Cyrus W. (Cyrus West), 1819-1892

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Cyrus W. Field Cable Section and Letter were purchased by Special Collections and University Archives in 1989.

Processing Information

The processing and description of the Cyrus W. Field Cable Section and Letter commenced and was completed in February 2022.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Cyrus W. Field Cable Section and Letter, Ms1989-053 Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Cyrus West Field, son of Rev. David D. and Submit Dickinson Field, was born in Stockbridge, Massachusetts on November 30, 1819. Around 1834, he moved to New York City, where he became a business apprentice in the offices of A. T. Stewart & Co., a dry goods merchant, then worked in his brother's paper-manufacturing business before establishing his own paper-manufacturing business in 1840. That same year, Field married Mary Bryan Stone; the couple would have seven children. Around 1842, with Joseph F. Stone, his brother-in-law, Field established Cyrus W. Field & Co., a very successful paper wholesaling firm. In 1854, Field became involved in telegraphy and with other investors formed the American Telegraph Company in 1855. In 1857, the company began laying the first trans-Atlantic telegraph line, between Ireland and Newfoundland. The cable was opened for use the following year but malfunctioned after only three weeks. Eight years later, Field laid a second trans-Atlantic cable, afterward repairing the original cable for use as a backup. From 1877 to 1880, Field served as president of the New York Elevated Railroad Company and also participated in the development of the Wabash Railroad. Through bad investments, Field lost much of his fortune in later life. Cyrus West Field died in Stockbridge, Massachusetts on July 12, 1892, and was buried in Stockbridge Cemetery.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of a section (4.5 in.) of cable cut from the original trans-Atlantic telegraph cable, laid in 1858 by the Atlantic Telegraph Company. Attached to the cable section is a tag identifying it as the property of A. H. Griffith. Accompanying the cable section are two photocopies of a letter of authentication dated August 31, 1858, and signed by Cyrus W. Field, co-founder of the Atlantic Telegraph Company. The letter explains that the section was part of the unused portion of the cable, sold to Tiffany & Co. (Tiffany purchased 80 miles of the cable to be cut into small sections, sold as souvenirs.)

Related Archival Materials

Worldcat.org shows a number of archival collections related to Cyrus W. Field at various institutions in the United States, but the bulk of his papers are in the Cyrus W. Field papers, MssCol 993, at the Manuscripts

and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Keywords

Science and Technology

Atlantic Telegraph Company (Limited)

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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Description of Subordinate Components

Cable Section and Letter

Unit Date 1858

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