

Finding Aid : A Guide to the Papers of the Virginia Military Institute Superintendent. Francis H. Smith, 1839-1889 RG.02.01-SmithFH

Records of Superintendent Francis H. Smith, 1839-1889

1839-1889

Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

RG.02.01-SmithFH

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/38

Unit Date

1839-1889

Language

English

Creator

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Creator

Virginia Military Institute. Office of the Superintendent.

Extent

30 Linear Feet

Physical Location

Archives stacks, Record Group 02, Superintendent

Repository

Virginia Military Institute Archives

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

There are no restrictions

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Records of the Superintendent. Francis H. Smith Administration. [specific series/item/date]

Biographical / Historical

Francis H. Smith served for fifty years (1839-1889) as VMI's first Superintendent. Smith was born in 1812, graduated from West Point in 1833, and came to Lexington, Virginia in 1839 to lead the newly established Virginia Military Institute. He died in March 1890, a few months after his retirement as Superintendent. He was known as the builder and --after the Civil War-- rebuilder of VMI. His official correspondence spans the period 1839-1889, with few gaps. The Civil War era and earlier letters survived Gen. David Hunter's destruction of many Institute buildings in June 1864. Smith corresponded with the notable military, educational, and political leaders of his time, making the correspondence a rich resource for scholars.

Scope and Contents

These files constitute the major record series generated by the office of Francis H. Smith, VMI's first Superintendent. He served from 1839-1889. The records, (ca. 30 linear feet) consist of incoming and outgoing correspondence, order books, speeches and publications, annual reports, personal file, and subject files.

Related Materials

Annual and Special Reports of the Superintendent

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Civil War, 1861-1865

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Military education -- Virginia -- History -- 19th century

Correspondence

Online Access

Some items from the Smith papers are available online.

Some annual reports from the Smith administration are available online

Description of Subordinate Components

Superintendent, Correspondence, 1839-1870, Incoming (Francis H. Smith)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/38

Unit Date 1839-1870

Language English

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Extent 20 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

Incoming correspondence of VMI's first Superintendent, Francis H. Smith, for the period 1839-1870. The original 19th century filing order has been retained. Each incoming letter was assigned a number by Smith's secretary; these letters were then filed numerically by letter number within each year. Some years

were further broken down into alphabetical sections (A-K; L-Z etc.) and thus have more multiple numerical sequences within an individual year. It is therefore the case that some years have more than one letter number 1, 2 etc. Some letters for the year 1870 are missing; occasional other missing letters are identified on the index; however the series is largely complete. These letters are indexed by name of sender. Outgoing letters for the period are located in bound letter books, which are arranged chronologically.

Superintendent, Correspondence, 1885-1889, Incoming (Francis H. Smith)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/39

Unit Date 1885-1889

Language English

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Extent 3 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

Francis H. Smith incoming correspondence, 1885-1889. These letters are no longer filed in the numbered sequence that was used for the period 1839-1870; they are filed alphabetically within each year. Corresponding outgoing letters are located in separate letter books for the period. Incoming correspondence for the period 1871-1884, except for a few miscellaneous items, is not extant. This was noted by William Couper in the 1930's, and it is not known at what point or under what circumstances the incoming letters for this period were lost. Outgoing letters for 1871-1884 are extant.

Superintendent, Correspondence, 1839-1889, Outgoing (Francis H. Smith)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/40

Unit Date 1839-1889

Language English

source Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Extent 51 Volumes

Scope and Contents

The outgoing letterbooks (bound volumes) of VMI's first Superintendent Francis H. Smith, who served from 1839-1889. There are no outgoing letters from 1864 August 9-1865 October 30.

Keywords

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Francis H. Smith Circular Letter Soliciting Items to Establish a Museum at VMI

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/8005

Unit Date 1845 February 27

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Physical Location Archives stacks, Record Group 02, Superintendent. Outgoing correspondence, 1845

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased, November 2015.

Scope and Contents

Virginia Military Institute printed circular, signed in ink by Superintendent Francis H. Smith, petitioning alumni for donations of "Curiosities, both literary and natural" to help establish a Museum at VMI. This example is dated February 27, 1845, and addressed to William S. Beale, a member of the Class of 1843.

Also mentions addition to Barracks, new Gun House, Society of Cadets Hall, and Library.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Virginia Military Institute—Buildings, structures, etc.

Correspondence

Virginia Military Institute. Museum

Virginia Military Institute. Alumni Association

Virginia Military Institute. Library

Beale, William S. (William Steenbergen)

Superintendent, Subject Files, 1839-1884 (Francis H. Smith)**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/41**Unit Date** 1839-1884**Language** English**source** Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890**Extent** 3 Linear Feet**Scope and Contents**

Subject Files maintained by the office of VMI's first Superintendent, Francis H. Smith

Keywords

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Cadet Letters of Application and Recommendation**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/42**Unit Date** 1839-1864, with gaps**Language** English**Extent** 3 Linear Feet**Scope and Contents**

Applications and letters of recommendations for students applying to VMI, 1839-1864 (gaps). Includes successful and unsuccessful applicants and some who were accepted but never matriculated. 5 boxes

Faculty applications, 19th century**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/43**Unit Date** 1839-1860; 1884**Language** English**Extent** 3 Linear Feet**Scope and Contents**

Faculty applications, historical. Letters of application and supporting letters of recommendation submitted for several faculty and staff positions. Includes positions of Professor of Modern Languages, Physical Sciences, Steward, Quartermaster. This file only relates to a few specific positions. 1839-1860; 1884.

Keywords

Gilham, William, 1818-1872

Washington College**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/44**Unit Date** 1845; 1860**Language** English**Creator** Armstrong, George D. (George Dodd), 1813-1899**Extent** 1 Files**Scope and Contents**

Washington College (now Washington and Lee University). Several items, 1845, concerning a complaint lodged by Washington College against VMI, which ultimately led to a severance of academic ties between the two institutions. Prof. George Dodd Armstrong represented the College on this issue. For a full account, see the book *100 Years at VMI* (William Couper), vol. 1, pps. 139-147. The file also includes one unrelated document from 1860.

Keywords

Washington and Lee University—History

George Washington Statue

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/45

Unit Date 1856-1866; misc. later documents

Language English

Creator Bowcock, John, Rev.

Creator Taliaferro, John B.

Extent 1 Files

Scope and Contents

Includes letter from Francis H. Smith to Dr. Galt inviting him to the statue dedication; original manuscript of remarks made at the Washington Statue dedication on July 3, 1856 by William B. Taliaferro, Revd. John H. Bowcock, Francis H. Smith. Information (photocopies, 1864-1866) concerning the confiscation of the statue by Gen. Hunter's troops and its return from West Virginia in 1866, including copies of letters from David H. Strother of Gen. Hunter's staff.

Misc. Later documents (post-Smith era) re: Statue

Keywords

Lexington, Va. -- Washington Statue.

Washington Statue (Lexington, Va.) -- History

Virginia Military Institute—Buildings, structures, etc.

Virginia Military Institute—George Washington Statue

Financial Claims Against Cadets, 19th century

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/47

Unit Date 1871-1873

Language English

Extent 1 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

19th century legal documents. Records of VMI attorneys Letcher, Maury and Letcher relating to collection of cadet debts after Civil War, 1871-1873

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Academic Departments, Annual Reports, 19th century

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/46

Unit Date 1843-1848; 1865-1899

Language English

Creator Williamson, Thomas H. (Thomas Hoomes), 1813-1888

Creator Preston, John T. L. (John Thomas Lewis), 1811-1890

Extent .50 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

A chronological file, 1843-1848; 1865-1899, containing examples of academic department annual reports from the 19th century. These reports from the various academic departments were submitted to the Superintendent and help to document the early academic history of the Institute. This file includes early reports by John T. L. Preston (Languages), and Thomas H. Williamson (Engineering), as well as reports by other early faculty members. The series has many gaps; for example, none from the 1850's. The reports reflect some subjects that are no longer taught, e.g., Latin, drawing, mineralogy. 1 box

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Curricula

Virginia Military Institute—Faculty

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Virginia Military Institute—Faculty—19th century

Frederick Volck Document

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/48

Unit Date July 13, 1870

Language English

Extent 1 items

Scope and Contents

Three page memorandum of agreement (July 13, 1870) between sculptor Frederick Volck and VMI Superintendent Francis H. Smith. Volck was to complete a bronze equestrian statue of Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, but the project was never finished. (See the book "One Hundred Years at VMI" by William Couper, vol 3, p. 212, for an account of Volck's relationship with VMI).

Keywords

Volck, Frederick.

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Court Martial and Board of Inquiry Records, 19th century

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/49

Unit Date 1848-1854; 1881-1898

Language English

Extent 1 Linear Feet

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1840-1849

Virginia Military Institute—History—19th century

Virginia Military Institute—Faculty—19th century

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1850-1859

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1880-1889

Virginia Military Institute—Cadet life—1890-1899

Courts-martial and courts of inquiry

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Walker, James A. (James Alexander)

Francis H. Smith Personal and Biographical Material

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/50

Unit Date 1858-1890; 1890 - ongoing

Language English

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Extent 1 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

Biographical material and miscellaneous Smith and Smith family personal papers.

Francis H. Smith Biographical File

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/71

Unit Date ca. 1890-ongoing

Language English

Extent 0.5 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

Francis H. Smith individual biographical file, compiled over decades. Contains biographical and genealogical information, clippings, articles and other general information relating to Francis H. Smith and his family.

Old Spex of the VMI. Francis H. Smith.**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/69**Unit Date** ca. 1940**Language** English**Extent** 1 items**Scope and Contents**

Unpublished typescript by Francis H. Smith III. This is the only full length biography of Francis H. Smith and is a useful source for information not found elsewhere.

Francis H. Smith Personal Papers**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/68**Unit Date** 1833-1890**Language** English**Creator** Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890**Extent** 3 Linear Feet**Scope and Contents**

Miscellaneous Francis H. Smith and Smith family personal records. Includes 2 volumes of personal letters written while on his trip to Europe in 1858, along with a scrapbook containing engravings of places visited; misc. personal correspondence, including one letter from Scott Shipp thanking Smith for his condolences upon the death of Shipp's wife.

Francis H. Smith West Point Diploma**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/2887**Unit Date** 1833**Language** English**Creator** Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845**Extent** 1 items**Scope and Contents**

The United States Military Academy diploma awarded to Francis H. Smith in 1833. The ink is badly faded. Bears the signature of President Andrew Jackson.

Scope and Contents

Oversized case 9

Keywords

United States Military Academy—History—19th century

Diplomas

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Francis H. Smith United States Army commission document**Unit ID** /repositories/3/archival_objects/4293**Unit Date** 1834**Language** English**Physical Location** Oversized case 9**Scope and Contents**

U. S. Army commission document signed in 1834; commission as Second Lieutenant to date from November 1833.

Keywords

Military commissions

Francis H. Smith European Travel Letter Books and Related

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/4207

Unit Date 1858

Language English

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Extent 2 Volumesletter books & related

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The original letter books were donated to the VMI Archives in 2013 through the estate of Alexander Morrison, VMI Class of 1939, a descendant of Gen. Smith.

Biographical / Historical

In 1858, after nearly twenty years as Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, Francis H. Smith needed some time off. Consequently, he was granted a leave of absence by the VMI Board of Visitors to travel to Europe to visit military, scientific, and agricultural institutions and to write a report on his findings upon his return.

Smith and several young alumni departed on the 9th of June and returned at the end of December 1858 having visited Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Italy. Each night, he wrote a letter home to his wife Sara describing what he had seen and experienced that day. These letters, possibly Smith's only personal correspondence that has survived, were transcribed into three small letter books on his return.

Over the years, the three volumes passed down through the Smith family, but sadly one was lost. Col. Edwin Dooley, a historian who has done extensive research on Smith, transcribed and annotated the two surviving letter books covering Smith's travels through the United Kingdom and France.

Related Materials

Report on Scientific Education in Europe

Keywords

Travel -- Europe -- 19th century

Online Access

An annotated full text transcription is available online

General

The original letter books were transcribed and annotated by Edwin L. Dooley, Jr.

Bible inscribed by Francis H. Smith to Francis H. Smith, Jr.

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/4294

Unit Date 1869

Language English

Keywords

Smith, Francis H., Jr. (Francis Henney), 1849-1917

Edwin Dooley Research Collection. Francis H. Smith-related research.

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/70

Unit Date 1980-2007

Language English

Creator Dooley, Edwin L., 1942-

Extent 4 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

Edwin L. Dooley, Jr., former Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and Secretary to the Board of Visitors, is also a historian who has studied Francis H. Smith in depth. This material comprises some of his research notes. It relates to Smith's biography and tenure as Superintendent/official records.

Francis H. Smith speeches and publications

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/51

Unit Date 1841-1879

Language English

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Extent .5 Linear Feet

Scope and Contents

A chronological file containing originals and copies of Smith's published addresses, speeches, discourses. These were published in pamphlet form. VMI owns originals for many; for those not found in the VMI Archives, the staff obtained photocopies from the Library of Virginia.

Keywords

Virginia Military Institute—Speeches, addresses, etc.

Speeches, Addresses, etc.

Lecture on the History of Mathematics

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53

Unit Date 1841

Language English

Elimination between two unknown equations with two unknown quantities

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/54

Unit Date 1842

Language English

Regulations of Military Institutions applied to the Conduct of Common Schools

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/55

Unit Date 1849

Language English

College Reform

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/56

Unit Date 1851

Language English

Memoir of Dr. Thomas Henderson of the United States Army by his son-in-law

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/57

Unit Date 1854

Language English

Introductory Address to the Corps of Cadets ...on the Resumption of Academic Duties

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/58

Unit Date 1856

Language English

Special Report of the Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute on Scientific Education in Europe

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/59

Unit Date 1859

Language English

Keywords

Education—History

Ecole polytechnique (France)—History

Online Access

This item is available online

Discourse on the Life and Character of Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/3233

Unit Date 1863

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Keywords

Jackson, Stonewall, 1824-1863

Introductory Lecture Read Before the Corps of Cadets on the Resumption of Academic Duties...at the Alms House

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/60

Unit Date 1864

Language English

Introductory Address to the Corps of Cadets of the Virginia Military Institute on the Resumption of the Academic Exercises.

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/3234

Unit Date 1866-09-10

Language English

Creator Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890

Inner Life of the VMI Cadet, its responsibilities and privileges

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/61

Unit Date 1866

Language English

Synopsis of argument of Gen. Smith in behalf of the claims of the Virginia Military Institute

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/63

Unit Date 1871

Language English

Gymnastic and technical education in the Virginia Military Institute

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/62

Unit Date 1871

Language English

Schools and Schoolmasters of Virginia in the Olden Time

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/64

Unit Date 1874

Language English

Annual report of the Board of Managers of the Male Orphan Society of Richmond

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/66

Unit Date 1876

Language English

Synopsis of Argument of Gen. F. H. Smith before the joint committee of the Senate

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/65

Unit Date 1876

Language English

West Point Fifty Years Ago

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/67

Unit Date 1879

Language English