

Harrison Allen papers, 1861-1867
1861-1897
Mss.B.AL54

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Allen, Harrison, 1841-1897
Title	Harrison Allen papers, 1861-1867
Date [inclusive]	1861-1897
Call number	Mss.B.AL54
Extent	3.0 Volume(s)
Extent	3 volumes.
Location	LH-MV-E-1; LH-SB-Black Case-26 (OS); LH-SB-XOS Case 1-4 (XOS, Diplomas and certifs.)
Language	English
Container	1-3
Abstract	Two volumes contain genealogical data on the Allen family. One volume is a scrapbook of miscellaneous material on Allen and his family, containing letters, newspaper clippings, etc. and much material pertaining to the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania. There are nine diplomas and certificates of membership in learned societies, military associations, etc.

Background note

Harrison Allen (1841-1897) was a physician, surgeon, and anatomist. He was a professor at the School of Medicine at University of Pennsylvania.

Allen was born in Philadelphia in 1841, the son of Samuel Allen and Elizabeth Justice Thomas. His early education was in Philadelphia public grammar schools and at Central High School, where he was interested in natural history. Although he would have preferred the pursuit of pure scientific research, Allen took regular courses in medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, and studied dentistry with Dr. J. Foster Flagg, an early, if not the first, American born dentist. Allen graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1861 and became a resident physician at the Blockley Hospital in Philadelphia. He married Julia A. Colton in December, 1869, and the couple had a son and daughter.

During the Civil War Allen worked in hospitals in and around Washington, D.C., but spent much of his free time at the Smithsonian Institution, where he was influenced by its Secretary Joseph Henry and Assistant Secretary Spencer F. Baird. After the War, Allen opened a medical practice in Philadelphia. As a result of his dental training, he developed a special surgical technique for operating on air passages. Nevertheless, his deeper interests in science led Allen to undertake poorly paid teaching positions while actively engaging in scientific research. During this period he was much influenced by his teacher Joseph Leidy of the Academy of Natural Sciences. He joined a group of researchers active at the Philadelphia School of Anatomy, and also was an active member of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. His first published scientific paper, "A Description of New Pteropine Bats from Africa" appeared in the *Proceedings* of the Academy of Natural Sciences in 1861, beginning a series of about thirty papers relating to bats. The most important of these was the *Monograph on the Bats of North America*, published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1864. Although Allen's work on bats represented his most significant contribution to science, he also authored numerous papers on various medical and biological topics. These included studies of human joints, the muscles, locomotion, the distribution of color markings (in animals) and craniology. He also published two textbooks, first his 1869 *Outlines of Comparative Anatomy and Medical Zoology* and in 1884 *A System of Human Anatomy*.

Despite an interest in craniology, Allen was no racist, and "deprecated" it as a "certain criterion" in evaluating races. Likewise, after careful study of four hundred inferior maxillae, he concluded that "the lower jaw is of little value as a test of character of race owing to its wide variations."

Allen held many appointments. He served as Assistant Surgeon of the United States Army from 1862 until December, 1865, when he resigned as brevet-major. He was professor of anatomy and surgery at the Pennsylvania Dental College from 1866 to 1878, visiting surgeon at the Philadelphia Hospital from 1874 to 1878, assistant surgeon at Wills Eye Hospital from 1868 to 1870 and assistant surgeon at St. Joseph's Hospital from 1870 to 1878. At the University of Pennsylvania he was successively appointed to the chairs of comparative anatomy and zoology in the auxiliary department of medicine in 1865, and the chair of the institutes of medicine in the medical department 1878. In 1885 he was emeritus professor of the institute of medicine, before resuming the chair of comparative anatomy and zoology which he held until 1896. He taught medicine at the University of Pennsylvania for over thirty years. Allen was quite active in learned and professional societies. Among the societies with which he was affiliated were the Natural

History Society of Boston, the Philadelphia Pathological Society, the Washington Biological Society, and the Association of American Anatomists of which he was president from 1891-1893. He was also a member of the Anthropomorphic Society of which he was president in 1891.

Allen died suddenly on November 14, 1897. He was survived by his wife Julia, as well as by his son and daughter.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Presented by Mrs. Robert P. Esty and accessioned, 10/--1952 (1952 90693-90695).

Indexing Terms

Corporate Name(s)

- University of Pennsylvania. School of Medicine.

Family Name(s)

- Allen family

Genre(s)

- Certificates of membership.
- Diplomas.
- Genealogies.
- Scrapbooks.

Occupation(s)

- Anatomists -- United States.
- Physicians -- United States.

- Surgeons -- United States.

Subject(s)

- Medicine -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia.

Collection Inventory

Papers

Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	July 29, 1862	13-1/2x18
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Certificate of membership to Harrison Allen;

Printed D.filled in in ms.S.: Isaac Lea, et al. 1p. (see Allen papers.)

Philadelphia County Medical Society	June 1, 1877	16-1/2x21
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Certificate of membership to Harrison Allen;

D.S.: W[illia]m Goodell,etc. 1p. Seal End. (see Allen papers.)

Boston Society of Natural History	March 5, 1879	15x19-1/2
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Certificate of Corresponding Membership to Harrison Allen;

Boston, Printed D.filled in in ms.S.: Tho[ma]s T. Bouvé, etc. 1p. (see Harrison Allen papers.)

Grand Army of the Republic. Pennsylvania Post No.2	Feb. 11, 1886	14x17
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Certificate of membership to Harrison Allen;

Printed D.filled in in ms.S.: N.Ferree Lightner, etc. 1p. (see Allen Papers.)

Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States	Feb. 15, 1887	20x24
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Certificate of membership to Harrison Allen;

Philadelphia, Printed D.filled in in ms.S.: P.H. Sheridan,etc. 1p. (see Allen papers.)

Papers

University of Pennsylvania Diploma for Bacculaurei in Scientia to Harrison Allen;	June 5, 1887	18x24
Printed D.filled in in ms.S.: Carolus C. Harrison, etc. In Latin. 1p. Parchment. (see Allen papers.)		
University of Pennsylvania. University Archaeological Association Certificate of membership to Harrison Allen;	May 16, 1891	8-1/2x11
Printed D.filled in in ms.S.: D.G.Brinton etc. 1p. (see Allen papers)		
Philadelphia County Medical Association Certificate of membership to Harrison Allen;	Feb. 1, 1896	17x14
Printed D.filled in in ms.S.: John C. Da Costa, etc. 1p. (see Allen papers.) Mutual aid association.		
Allen, Harrison, 1841-1897 B.AL54 No.1: Scrap book of material pertaining to Harrison Allen and his family.	undated	12x9
D. 1vol.containing letters, newspaper clippings, etc. and much material pertaining to the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania. (see Allen papers.)		
Allen, Harrison, 1841-1897 B.AL54 No.2: Notebook with material pertaining to Harrison Allen and his family	undated	1.0 Volume(s) 1 vol., 152 pp.