Speer, William McMurtrie, 1865-1923.
Papers, 1880-1936.
17 linear ft. (ca. 11,000 items in 34 boxes, 3 oversize volumes, 1 oversize
folder).

Biography: William M. Speer was born in Huntingdon PA in 1865 and died in Piermont NY in
1923. He graduated from Yale University in 1880 and from the Albany Law School in 1887. He
was a journalist, public official, lawyer, inventor, businessman, publisher, and author.

Summary: Correspondence, manuscripts, typescripts, contracts, legal briefs, patents, and
other documents, music scores, cartoons, technical drawings, account books, blueprints,
photographs, clippings, printed legal briefs & transcripts, proofs, scrapbooks, and other printed
materials of William M. Speer.
There are 14 manuscript boxes & 3 oversize volumes concerning his work as a journalist &
publisher. Speer was the Albany correspondent for "The Sun" from 1884 until 1893. From
1893 to 1896 he was editor and part owner of "The Argus" in Albany and there are business
records from this period. In 1896 he founded The Law Press as a commercial printer for
lawyers, and The Cornucopia Company to publish music and a literary periodical. From 1904
to 1909, he was editorial and legislative writer for the "Evening World" in New York City and
there are files of his correspondence, editorial writing, and his investigations of the insurance
industry and the Panama Canal libel suit. From 1903 until 1922, he contributed to periodicals
and wrote books and pamphlets on many subjects. Starting in 1919, he worked on a scenario
and publicity for the Fox Film Corporation's film on wounded veterans of the war. In 1922, he
became an editorial writer for "The Evening Mail".

There are 10 boxes of material covering his activities as a public official and political
appointee. In 1889, he was Secretary of the Johnstown Flood Committee; in 1889 and 1890,
Secretary to The Committee for The International Exposition of 1892; in 1890, Secretary to
Mayor of New York City Hugh J. Grant; in 1894, Delegate to the New York State Constitutional
Convention. In 1910, he was appointed Special Counsel to New York City for the Ashokan
Reservoir Compensation Claims, advising the city on landowners' claims in Ulster County. In
1912 and 1913, he was Special Counsel for the Aldermanic Police Investigation in New York City
during the anticorruption drive of Mayor William J. Gaynor. In 1920, he became a Special
Assistant to the Attorney General of the United States to investigate profiteering in the coal
industry. There are 5 boxes of case files from his private legal practice for the period from 1890
to 1923.

And there are 4 boxes of papers and an oversize folder of drawings concerning his interests as an
inventor, promoter, and businessman. These are files about the Snow Melter (his device to clear
city streets), his New York & Brooklyn Economic Power & Construction Company (for the
transmission of electricity), The Pneumatic Co. (to manufacture stencil cutting machines), The
Philippines Company (a shipping business), hinge making machines (patents and contracts for
manufacturing), rack cutting apparatus, an old age pension plan (for the sale of annuities), the
Food Committee (a planned co-operative purchasing company), Fabricated Concrete Corporation (which built, rented, and sold houses made of cinder block), Sunlight Gas Machine Co. (which sold equipment for gas lighting), timber mill and timber land sales (acting as an
agent for selling land in the southern states), and public transit reorganization (his plan for
improving the transportation system in New York City.

Among the cataloged correspondents are: Maxwell Anderson, Charles A. Dana, David B. Hill,

Organization: Selected materials cataloged; remainder arranged chronologically within
professional categories. Box 1-2: 1888-1936, Cataloged correspondence & Misc.; Box 3-14: 1884-
1923, Journalist & Publisher; Box 15-24: 1889-1921, Public Official & Political Appointee; Box
25-29: 1890-1923, Attorney in Private Practice; Box 30-34: 1891-1923, Inventor, Promoter, &
Businessman.


Permission to publish materials must be obtained in writing from the Librarian for Rare Books
and Manuscripts.
Finding aids: Contents list, 5p.


ID: NYCR92-A56
WILLIAM McDERMIE SPEER PAPERS


Box 1
Cataloged correspondence:
Maxwell Anderson  Chester Lord
Anthony Comstock  S.S. McClure
Charles A. Dana    Walter Hines Page
Paul Dana          Julian Ralph
Martin H. Glynn    Elihu Root
David Bennett Hill William Sulzer
William M. Laffan  Samuel Untermyer

Uncataloged misc. correspondence, 1888-1936
Including folders for Farming & Banking
Uncataloged misc. documents, 1889-1923

Box 2
Photographs of W.M. Speer
Misc. printed pamphlets & clippings
Including folders for Farming, Kingston NY, & William Sulzer

1884-1923. Journalist & Publisher.

1884-1893. The Sun (New York NY) - Speer was the Albany correspondent
Oversize vol. Scrapbook of clippings of his articles, & some later
freelance work, 1889-1915

Box 3
Misc. correspondence & printed materials

1893-1896. The Argus (Albany NY) - Speer was editor & part owner
Correspondence, 1893-1898

Box 4
Manuscripts & documents, 1893-1897
(Editorial drafts; contracts & documents re. typographic
& syndication arrangements, job printing, & New York State
government affairs)
The New York Mail and Newspaper Transportation Company, 1893
/Documents & printed materials
Printed materials & clippings, 1888-1896

Box 5
1896-1897. The Law Press - Legal & other printing
Correspondence & documents

1896-1901. The Cornucopia Company - Periodicals & music publishing
Correspondence, music scores, documents, & printed items

1896-1903. The Buffalo Express (Buffalo NY) - Correspondent
Scrapbook of his articles, 1896
Scrapbook of his articles, 1897

Box 6
Scrapbook of his articles, 1898-1899
Scrapbook of his articles, 1902-1903
WILLIAM McMurtrie SPEER PAPERS

1884-1923. Journalist & Publisher (cont.)

Oversize vol. Scrapbook of his articles from various newspapers, 1896-1923

1904-1909. The World (New York NY) - Editorial & legislative writer

Box 7
Correspondence & editorial matter, 1904-1912
Cartoons of Speer, no date
Clippings & other printed materials, 1904-1905

Oversize vol.
Scrapbook of clippings, 1905

Box 8
Printed editorials by Speer, clippings, & other printed materials, 1906-1908

Box 9
Printed editorials by Speer, clippings, & other printed materials, 1908-1913

Box 10
Insurance investigation, 1905-1909
Correspondence, drafts & memoranda, clippings, & other printed materials

Box 11
Panama libel suit, 1907-1910
Correspondence, drafts & proofs, memoranda & documents, clippings & other printed materials

Box 12
Panama libel suit, 1907-1910
Printed briefs, transcripts, & other legal documents

Box 13 1903-1910. Periodical articles & books by Speer
Correspondence, drafts, proofs, & printed copies of his articles, including many on insurance
Correspondence, the typescript, & a reader's report of his novel, John Van Buren, Politician.

Box 14 1906-1922. Periodical articles & books by Speer
Drafts & printed materials for his writings on several subjects including W.R. Hearst, Theodore Roosevelt, real estate, & legal subjects

1919-1922. Scenario & publicity for the Fox Film Corporation
Correspondence, drafts, & printed materials for his work on a film on wounded veterans of World War I

1922-1923. The Evening Mail (New York NY) - Editorial writer
Correspondence & typescript drafts

1889-1921. Public Official & Political Appointee

Box 15 1889. Johnstown Flood Committee - Secretary
Lists & accounts

1889-1890. The Committee for The International Exposition of 1892 - Secretary
Correspondence, account books, lists, & printed materials
WILLIAM MCMURTRIE SPEER PAPERS

1889–1921. Public Official & Political Appointee (cont.)

Box 15 1890. Secretary to Mayor of New York Hugh J. Grant
Correspondence, documents, & printed materials, 1890–1891

1894. New York State Constitutional Convention – Delegate
Correspondence, documents, typescripts of articles, &
printed materials

Box 16 1910–1919. Special Counsel to New York City re. the Ashokan Reservoir
Compensation Claims – (Aqueduct Commissioners; Board of
Water Supply; Commissioners of Appraisal; Corporation
Counsel, etc.)
Correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, & printed
materials, 1904–1911

Box 17 1912–1915

Box 18 1916–1917

Box 19 1918

Box 20 1918–1923

Box 21 1912–1913. Special Counsel for the Aldermanic Police Investigation
in New York City
Correspondence, documents, & printed materials
(including very many clippings on police corruption,
on Mayor Gaynor, & about his death & funeral)

Profiteering in Coal
Correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, etc.
General, 1920–1921

Box 23 Brooklyn Edison Company, Inc., 1917–1920

Box 24 Complaints from the public, 1920
Dixie Transportation Co., Inc., 1920
Douglass Barnes Corporation, 1920–1922
Printed materials

1890–1923. Attorney in Private Practice

Box 25 General correspondence, documents, & printed materials
Case files
Injunction re. City Record, 1891
New York Real Estate Improvement Co., 1896
John Robinson & Mary Gray, 1897–1898
Rubenfeld vs. Rabiner, 1897–1899
WILLIAM McMURTRIE SPEER PAPERS

1890–1923. Attorney in Private Practice (cont.)

Box 26

Case file

Towns & McCrossin, Attorneys, 1897–1899
Sexton vs. Ives, 1900–1903
Brown vs. Proctor, 1903–1905
Keystone Farm Machine Co. vs. N.Y. Agricultural Co., 1903–1909
Platt vs. Innovation Trunk Co., 1903–1904
Cowles bankruptcy, 1909
The Bordon Company – Bordon’s Milk, 1910
Masten & Nichols – Food legislation, 1911–1916
S.S. Kaplan to F.W. Brooks – Mortgages, 1912
Stamford Water Company, 1916–1919
Sylvia Perlson – Custody suit, 1917

Box 27

Case files

Delaware and Eastern Railway Company, 1918–1921

Box 28

Case files

Delaware and Eastern Railway Company, 1918–1923
Dunlap vs. Star Company, 1918–1923
Burke vs. Freundlich, 1920–1922
Prohibition permits, 1920–1921
Richardson vs. The Brooklyn Citizen, 1920–1922
Jergens vs. Woodbury, 1921
Pennsylvania Railroad Company, 1921

Box 29

Case file

Converse D. Marsh, 1921–1922
Stern Miller Co., Inc bankruptcy, 1921–1922
Vogue Shirt Co., Inc. bankruptcy, 1921–1922
Drake patent, 1922
New York Law Journal, 1922
618 West 148th Street, 1922

1891–1923. Inventor, Promoter, & Businessman

Box 30

1891–1911. The Snow Melter – a street clearing machine
Correspondence, 1895–1911
Documents & manuscripts
Drawings & blueprints
Photographs & photoengraving block
Printed materials

Mapcase 14/13/6

Drawings & blueprints

Box 31

Correspondence
Contracts & documents

1893–1904. The Pneumatic Co. – Stencil cutting machines, etc.
Correspondence, contracts, patents, & other documents,
& printed materials
1891-1923. Inventor, Promoter, & Businessman (cont.)

Box 31  1899. The Philippines Company - shipping
Document & printed materials

Box 32  1902-1912. Hinge making machines.
Correspondence
Contracts & documents
Patent documents
Patent drawings
Printed materials

1903-1905. Rack cutting apparatus
Correspondence, contracts, & patents

Box 33  1911-1917. Old age pension plan - sale of annuities (Iron &
Steel Board of Trade)
Correspondence
Manuscripts & documents
Printed materials

1912-1913. Food Committee - a planned co-operative purchasing
company
Correspondence, 1912-1921
Documents, manuscripts, & printed materials

1918-1923. Fabricated Concrete Corporation - cinderblock houses
Correspondence, 1920-1923
Concrete boat hulls
Manuscripts & documents, 1918-1923
Printed materials
Technical drawings & blueprints

Box 34  1918-1923. Sunlight Gas Machine Co., Inc. - gas lighting
Correspondence, 1920-1923
Manuscripts & documents, 1918-1922
Printed materials

1919-1920. Timber mill & timber land sales - land in the southern
states
Correspondence & documents

1921. Public transit reorganization - New York City
Correspondence, manuscripts, & documents