Guide to the Charles V. Chapin Papers
1880-1941

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Published in 2009
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Collection overview

Title: Charles V. Chapin Papers
Date range: 1880-1941
Creator: Chapin, Charles V. (Charles Value), 1856-1941
Extent: 11 linear feet
Abstract: Charles V. Chapin (1856-1941) served as Superintendent of Health in Providence, RI from 1884-1932 and as City Registrar from 1889-1932. Chapin was well known nationally and internationally for his public health work related to contagious diseases, such as diphtheria, scarlet fever, and typhoid. In 1910, he was instrumental in setting up City Hospital, where people who had contagious diseases could get medical care. This collection contains biographical information, certificates, commissions, correspondence, manuscript material, physician’s reports and scrapbooks related to Chapin’s work.

Language of materials: English
Repository: Rhode Island Historical Society
Collection number: MSS 343

Scope & content

This collection, ranging from 1873-1941, has been divided into six series. Series one contains correspondence. Few personal letters are found in this collection. Most of the letters relate to Chapin’s work as the Superintendent of Health and City Registrar.

Series two contains many handwritten and typed manuscripts on a variety of issues. Some are complete, others are incomplete or just notes. All but a few manuscripts have been identified. Many of the manuscripts are talks or lectures that he gave in front of a variety of groups. These groups include: Exchange Club, Rotary Club, Providence Medical
Association, Clinical Club, Brown University, Harvard, Rhode Island Medical Society, Hartford School of Sociology, Brown & Sharpe, and nurses at various hospitals.

Series three contains miscellaneous material. There is material that is biographical in nature, such as a censors report, list of wedding gifts, a commission given by the American Medical Association, a contract with a private physician for service as a contract surgeon in the U.S. Army, as well as obituaries and tributes. The collection also contains certificates, a ledger on the sales of municipal sanitation in the United States and index cards indicating date of expected confinement (birth) of several women in 1928.

Series four contains physician reports on scarlet fever and typhoid sent to the Superintendent of Health. Each report gives names of patients for each address, their ages, and a note on their treatment. For some years the reports also indicate cases in public institutions; deaths; tabulation of results; and reports on patients visited who turned out to have some disease other than scarlet fever. The reports on typhoid also contains "notes on milk supplies."

Series five contains bound volumes of reports on contagious diseases taken by the Sanitary Inspector and series six contains bound scrapbooks kept by Anna Chapin pertaining to her husband, Charles.

**Arrangement**

- Series 1: Correspondence.
- Series 2: Manuscript Material.
- Series 3: Miscellaneous.
- Series 4: Physician Reports on Scarlet and Typhoid Fever.
- Series 6: Scrapbooks: correspondence, programs, newspaper clippings, journal articles, lecture lists, reviews.

**Historical note**

Charles V. Chapin (1856-1941) was born in Providence, Rhode Island to Joshua Bicknell Chapin (1814-1881) and Louise (Value) Chapin (1814-1890). His father was a physician and the Commissioner of Public Schools in Rhode Island. He married Anna Augusta (Balch) (1858-1947) on May 6, 1866 and they had a son Howard M. (1887-1940), who was the director of the RI Historical Society Library from 1913 until his death in 1940.
Chapin obtained his early education at English and Classical High Schools and then entered Brown University and graduated with an A.B. in 1876. After graduation he studied under Dr. George Wilcox and then continued his education at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Bellevue Hospital and Medical College. In 1879, upon graduating with his M.D., he worked at Bellevue for a year. In 1880, Chapin returned to Providence and started a private practice. He was also a Professor of Physiology at Brown University from 1883 to 1896.

1884 was the year in which Chapin was appointed as Superintendent of Health and he served in that capacity until his retirement in 1932. Chapin had tried to retire in the early 1900s due to poor health, however, after taking a hiatus out of the country, he came back and resumed his position. He also held the job of City Registrar from 1889-1932.

Chapin was well known, nationally and internationally, for his public health work related to contagious diseases, such as diphtheria, scarlet fever, and typhoid. His research showed that contagious diseases were not airborne, but were spread through contact. He was also a prolific writer and lecturer and was a member of many associations and societies. Chapin was the president of the American Public Health Association in 1926 and 1927 and was the first president of the American Epidemiology Society in 1927. He also received the Sedgwick Medal in 1930.

In 1910, he was instrumental in setting up City Hospital, where people who had contagious diseases could get medical care. Currently this former hospital building is a dormitory for Providence College. Chapin died in 1941 and is buried at the Swan Point Cemetery in Providence.

Access & use

Access to the collection: There are no restrictions on access.

Use of materials: Researchers are advised that express written permission to reproduce, quote, or otherwise publish any portion or extract from this collection must be obtained from the Rhode Island Historical Society

Preferred citation: Charles V. Chapin Papers, MSS 343, Rhode Island Historical Society

Contact information: Rhode Island Historical Society
121 Hope Street

Administrative information

About the collection

Aquisition: This collection was donated by the Rhode Island Medical Society in 1983.

Processing information: The physician reports on scarlet and typhoid fever sent to the Superintendent of Health are filed in alphabetical order by street name and thereunder by building number.

The numbered manuscript material has been filed according to date and then alphabetically within that certain date, rather than by manuscript number. All folders still carry the manuscript number in the upper right hand corner of the folder. The manuscript number is also indicated in the inventory by parentheses after the title and date of the manuscript material.

Several of the scrapbooks are in poor condition. The bindings are fragile and the ones with brown pages are starting to crumble.

The John Hay Library at Brown has four boxes of correspondence and some manuscript material of books and articles and the Harvard School of Public Health has several hundred volumes and thousands of reprints of articles from Chapin's personal library.

About the finding aid

Author: Finding aid prepared by Harold Kemble.

Encoding: Finding aid encoded by Mark Chepkwony 2009 June 29
Descriptive rules: Finding aid based on Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)

Additional information

Rhode Island Cemetery Database

Search terms

Names: Chapin, Charles V. (Charles Value), 1856-1941
Subjects: Communicable diseases
Epidemiology
Diphtheria
Hygiene
Influenza
Malaria
Mortality
Physicians, Rhode Island
Pneumonia
Public Health
Sanitation
Scarlet Fever(Scarlatina)
Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Tuberculosis
Typhoid fever
## Inventory

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<td>MSS 343 Item 1,</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 2</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 2, Management of milk outbreak of typhoid fever</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 3</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 3,</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 4</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 4, Concerning health care of the sick and poor</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 5</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 5, Chapin's work as registrar of vital statistics</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 10</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 9, &quot;Medical effects of alcohol&quot; (95)</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 10, &quot;Malaria&quot; (117)</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 11, &quot;Origin and progress of the malarial fever now prevalent in New England&quot; (103)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 12, &quot;Progress in anatomy and physiology&quot;(1) Written for the Providence Medical Association.</td>
<td>1886</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 13, &quot;Treatment and diagnosis of malaria&quot;(2) Written for the Clinical Club.</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 14, &quot;Medical delusions&quot;(3) Written for the Clinical Club.</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 15, &quot;Methods for the prevention of scarlet fever&quot; (102) Written for the RI Medical Society.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 17, &quot;Scarlet fever&quot;(110) pencil and pen notes and reading references for a paper,</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 18, &quot;Tuberculosis&quot; (112) notes and card references for a paper</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 22, &quot;Sanitary administration of cities&quot; (7)</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 26, &quot;The opening of the Brown University gymnasium&quot; (9)</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 27, &quot;Recent progress in physiology&quot; (10)</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 30, &quot;Ten lectures on physiology&quot; (97)</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 31, &quot;Vital Statistics&quot; (13)</td>
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Written for the Providence Medical Association.

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MSS 343 Item 33, "Purification of water supplies" (113) 1893

Box 1, Folder 34
MSS 343 Item 34, "Prevention of venereal disease" (15)
Written for the Clinical Club. 1894

Box 1, Folder 35
MSS 343 Item 35, "Memoranda concerning vaccination" (20) 1894

Box 1, Folder 36
MSS 343 Item 36, "The family biologically considered: part 1-5" (63)
Written for Hartford School of Sociology. 1895 Apr 01-1895 Apr 06

Box 1, Folder 37
MSS 343 Item 37, "The family biologically considered: part 6-12" (63)
Written for Hartford School of Sociology. 1895 Apr 01-1895 Apr 06

Box 1, Folder 38
MSS 343 Item 38, "Marriage" (16) 1895
Written for Club.

Box 1, Folder 39
MSS 343 Item 39, "Municipal sanitation in Providence" (18)
Written for the Society for Municipal Prof. 1895

Box 1, Folder 40
MSS 343 Item 40, "Pig's tails" (19). 1895
Written for the "Club".

Box 1, Folder 41
MSS 343 Item 41, "Pneumonia"(17) 1895
Written for the Clinical Club.

Box 1, Folder 42
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Written for Brown & Sharpe. 1896
<p>| Box 1, Folder 43 | MSS 343 Item 43, &quot;Resume on typhoid, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, and diphtheria&quot; Written for nurses at Butler Hospital. | 1897 Jan 12 |
| Box 1, Folder 44 | MSS 343 Item 44, &quot;Epicurean notions&quot; Written for the &quot;Club&quot;. | 1897 |
| Box 1, Folder 45 | MSS 343 Item 45, &quot;Science&quot; Written for the &quot;Club&quot;. | 1897 |
| Box 1, Folder 46 | MSS 343 Item 46, &quot;On the definition of epidemic&quot; | c.1898-1899 |
| Box 1, Folder 47 | MSS 343 Item 47, &quot;Notice of RI Hospital lectures&quot; | 1901 Oct 07-1901 Oct 14 |
| Box 1, Folder 48 | MSS 343 Item 48, &quot;Medical aspects of social evil&quot; Written for Brown University. | 1901 Oct 09 |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | MSS 343 Item 1, &quot;Relation of physical environment on health - dust, ventilation, air, and water&quot; Written for nurses at RI Hospital. | 1901 Oct 14 |
| Box 2, Folder 2 | MSS 343 Item 2, &quot;Municipal sanitation&quot; Written for Brown University-Domestic Economy Class. | 1903 |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | MSS 343 Item 3, &quot;Battle of Salamis&quot; | 1906 |
| Folder 24 | MSS 343 Item 24, &quot;History of garbage collection in Providence&quot; | 1906 |</p>
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<th>MSS 343 Item 5, &quot;Sanitary science&quot; (29)</th>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 7, &quot;The value of life&quot; (33)</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 8</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 8, &quot;Importance of contact infection&quot; (85)</td>
<td>1909 Feb 06</td>
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<td>Written for a group of nurses.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 9, &quot;Persistence of superstition&quot; (34)</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 10</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 10, &quot;The aseptic technique in hospitals: its history, theory and practice&quot; (88)</td>
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<td>Written for nurses at City Hospital</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 11</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 11, &quot;Sanitation inspection: facts and principles in control of contagious diseases&quot; (99)</td>
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<td>Written for the Massachusetts State Board of Health.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 12, &quot;Anti-TB management and its value&quot; (98)</td>
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<td>Written for the city of East Providence.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 13, &quot;Modes of infection&quot; (83)</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 14, &quot;New hygiene facts&quot; (82)</td>
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Written for Harvard Pop. Medical Lecture.

Box 2, Folder 15
MSS 343 Item 15, "Evaluation of Fall River's city betterment act"(87)
Written for the city of Fall River.
1913 Sep 30

Box 2, Folder 16
MSS 343 Item 16, "Efficiency of public health measures and Science and sanitation"(39/40)
Written for Harvard.
1914

Box 2, Folder 17
MSS 343 Item 17, "Organizations of boards of health and Public health education" (41/42)
Written for Harvard.
1914

Box 2, Folder 18
MSS 343 Item 18, "Contagious disease problems and Nuisances" (43/44)
Written for Harvard.
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Box 2, Folder 19
MSS 343 Item 19, "Education (P.H.) and Garbage" (45/46)
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Box 2, Folder 20
MSS 343 Item 20, "Sources and modes of infection" (86)
Written for nurses at RI Hospital
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Box 2, Folder 21
MSS 343 Item 21, "Personal hygiene"(77)
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Box 2, Folder 22
MSS 343 Item 22, "Public health nursing" (78)
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<td>MSS 343 Item 24, Resume and comment on Chapin's survey of state health work. (80) Written for the N.Y. Bureau of Municipal Research.</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 25</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 25, &quot;Health insurance&quot; (75) Written for the Providence Medical Association.</td>
<td>1917 Apr 02</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 26</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 26, &quot;Three stages of public health work&quot; (81) Written for the Reciprocity Club.</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 27</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 28, &quot;Scope and organization of public health work&quot; (84) Written for the First Baptist Church.</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 29</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 29, &quot;Contagious disease hospitals&quot; (76) Written for the N.Y. Bureau of Municipal Research.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 31, &quot;American contributions to bacteriology, medicine, and modern sanitation&quot; (55) Written for the Rotary Club.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 31a, [Address to the North Carolina Health Officers Association]</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 32, &quot;Changing health problems&quot; (51) Written for Washington Park.</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 33</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 33, &quot;Contagious disease control in Providence&quot; (70) Written for the Women's Republican Club.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 34, &quot;Control of contagious diseases&quot; (62) Written for Harvard.</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 35</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 35, &quot;Influenza,&quot; &quot;Pneumonia,&quot; and &quot;Principles of contagious disease control&quot; (68/69/71) Written for Newark.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 36, &quot;Principles of contagious disease control&quot; (58)</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 37</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 37, &quot;False vs. real duties of the H.O.&quot; (52) Written for the Rotary Club (52) Written for the Rotary Club.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 38, &quot;The filth theory&quot; (72) Written for Harvard.</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 39</td>
<td>MSS 343 Item 39, &quot;Personal responsibility for health&quot; (50) Written for the City Club.</td>
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<td>MSS 343 Item 40, &quot;Relation of hospitals to public health&quot; (64)</td>
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Written for New England Hospital Superintendents.

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MSS 343 Item 41, "Relative values in public health" (61)
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MSS 343 Item 42, "What club women can do for public health" (56)
Written for the Federation of Women's Clubs.

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MSS 343 Item 43, "American contributions to bacteriology, medicine, and modern sanitation"
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MSS 343 Item 44, "Changes in type of contagious diseases, etc." (107)

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MSS 343 Item 45, "Control of contagious diseases"
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MSS 343 Item 46, "Health of the family"
Written for the Junior League (73)

Box 2, Folder 47
MSS 343 Item 47, "History of diphtheria immunization"
Written for the Rolph Street School (53)

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MSS 343 Item 47a, "What Good is the Health Department?"

Box 2, Folder 48
MSS 343 Item 48, "American contributions to bacteriology, medicine, and modern sanitation"
Written for the Exchange Club (54)
<p>| Box 2, Folder 49 | MSS 343 Item 49, &quot;Contagious disease hospitals and the community&quot; Written for Providence Health Institution (74) | 1927 |
| Box 2, Folder 50 | MSS 343 Item 50, &quot;Health reports&quot; Written for Harvard (49) | 1927 |
| Box 2, Folder 51 | MSS 343 Item 51, &quot;Contagious disease control&quot; Written for Harvard (59) | 1928 |
| Box 2, Folder 52 | MSS 343 Item 52, &quot;History and scope of public health work.&quot;(60) | 1928 Jun 18 |
| Box 2, Folder 53 | MSS 343 Item 53, &quot;State health administration and Animal diseases&quot; Written for Yale School of Hygiene (65/66) | 1928 |
| Box 2, Folder 54 | MSS 343 Item 54, &quot;Air infection of minor importance&quot; undated (111) | undated |
| Box 2, Folder 55 | MSS 343 Item 55, &quot;Child health&quot; (100) undated (prior to 1920?) | c.1920 |
| Box 2, Folder 56 | MSS 343 Item 56, &quot;Deaths among taxpayers and non-taxpayers in Providence&quot; Notes, statistical computations and partial early draft. Undated (106) | undated |
| Box 2, Folder 57 | MSS 343 Item 57, &quot;Diphtheria&quot; undated (116) | undated |
| Box 2, Folder 58 | MSS 343 Item 58, &quot;Filtration of public water supplies&quot; undated (105) | undated |
| Box 2, Folder 59 | MSS 343 Item 59, Five lectures on biology for Professor Packard. (96) Written for Brown University. Undated. |
| Box 2, Folder 60 | MSS 343 Item 60, &quot;Hints for education reform&quot; Written for the Education Club. Undated. (21) |
| Box 2, Folder 61 | MSS 343 Item 61, &quot;History of state and municipal control of disease&quot; Incomplete typed draft, sources notes, etc. Undated. (114) |
| Box 2, Folder 62 | MSS 343 Item 62, &quot;Incidence of the different causes of mortality in Providence during 55 years&quot; Incomplete with statistical tabulations. Undated. (115) |
| Box 2, Folder 63 | MSS 343 Item 63, &quot;Justifiable measures for the prevention of contagious disease&quot; Undated. (94) |
| Box 2, Folder 64 | MSS 343 Item 64, &quot;Medical and sanitary science&quot; Undated. (28) |
| Box 2, Folder 65 | MSS 343 Item 65, &quot;Medical supervision of school children&quot; Undated. (35) |
| Box 2, Folder 66 | MSS 343 Item 66, &quot;Public hygiene&quot; Undated. (27B) |
| Box 2, Folder 67 | MSS 343 Item 67, &quot;Role, functions, and extent of government&quot; Written for the &quot;Club&quot;. Undated. (26) |</p>
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