

Guide to the Ellen Swallow Richards Papers, 1868-1934

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Table of Contents

- [Collection Summary](#)
- [Biographical Note](#)
- [Scope and Content Note](#)
- [Subject Headings](#)
- [Related Material](#)
- [Administrative Information](#)
- [Access and Use](#)
- [Encoding Information](#)
- [Container List](#)

Collection Summary

Repository:	Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries
Creator:	Richards, Ellen H. (Ellen Henrietta), 1842-1911
Title:	Ellen Swallow Richards Papers
Dates:	1868-1934
Quantity:	0.3 cubic feet (1 box with approximately 102 letters and one typescript)
Abstract:	Correspondence , manuscripts, clippings, photographs, and other material relating to Richards' personal life, her education, and her work at MIT and Vassar College, the home economics movement, and womens education.

[Top](#)

Biographical Note

Ellen Henrietta Swallow Richards (1842-1911), chemist and leader in applied and domestic science, was born in Dunstable, Mass., in 1842. She was a member of the Vassar College Class of 1870 and the first woman to graduate from MIT (1873). Because of her mother's ill health, overwork, and financial frustrations, she did not enter Vassar until she was twenty-five. At Vassar she became interested in astronomy and chemistry, the latter becoming the subject of her life's work. In 1875, she married Robert Hallowell Richards, a metallurgist and mining engineer, who was equally devoted to science. She was the first woman member of the

American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers.

Ellen Richards' letters to her classmate (Mary) Anna Mineah reflect her amazingly busy and productive next thirty-five years. Dedicated to the scientific education of women, she was a pioneer in the study of sanitation, "sanitary chemistry," food chemistry, public health, and home economics, as well as one of the founders of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, which was later to become the American Association of University Women. After 1880, home economics claimed most of her attention, and she must be considered the creator of this new field of study in which she was a leader until her death in 1911. For the profession of home economics she has been called "its prophet, its interpreter..., its inspirer," and, in her own words, its "engineer."

[Top](#)

Scope and Content Note

These papers include seventy-six letters from Richards to her Vassar classmate (Mary) Anna Mineah concerning Vassar College, women at MIT, education, research, travel, the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, and the home economics movement, 1876-1910; seven letters to Miss Bogg concerning the organization of the home economics movement, 1909-1910; other letters concerning Vassar College, 1869-1903; typescript of an article on "Manpower," ca. 1906, and manuscript on Vassar College, "Alma Mater Bless Her;" excerpts from her letters to her mother written while at Vassar College, 1868-1870; ten letters from her husband, Robert H. Richards, and others about Richards, 1892-1934; and miscellaneous clippings, photographs, and biographical materials.

[Top](#)

Subject Headings

Names:

- Mineah, Anna
- Richards, Robert H.

Organizations:

- Association of Collegiate Alumnae (U.S.)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Vassar College--Alumni and alumnae
- Vassar College--Students

Subjects:

- Food analysis
- Home economics
- Public health
- Sanitation
- Women chemists

- Women in science
- Women's colleges--New York (State)--Poughkeepsie
- Women--Education

VCL Categories

- Math, Science and Medicine
- Vassar College

[Top](#)

Encoding Information

Encoded by Elizabeth Clarke, April 2007.

Updated by Laura Streett, 2019.

[Top](#)

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Ellen Swallow Richards Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Processing Information

Original processing date unknown. Updated by Andrea Ditzkoff in 2018.

Acquisition Information

Gift of (Mary) Anna Mineah, VC 1870, and Annie L. MacLeod, Vassar College, Chemistry Department, 1914-1928.

[Top](#)

Container List

Correspondence	
Folder 1	Richards to Maria Mitchell, 29 November 1872 (1 letter)
Folder 2	Richards to Lucy Maynard Salmon, 1901, 1908 (4 letters, 1 envelope)
Folder 3	Richards to (Mary) Anna Mineah, (10 letters)
Folder 4	Richards to (Mary) Anna Mineah, 1876-1881 (20 letters)
Folder 5	Richards to (Mary) Anna Mineah, 1882-1890 (9 letters)

Folder 6	Richards to (Mary) Anna Mineah, 1891-1895 (11 letters)
Folder 7	Richards to (Mary) Anna Mineah, 1896-1905 (16 letters)
Folder 8	Richards to (Mary) Anna Mineah, undated (8 letters, 1 fragment)
Folder 9	Robert H. Richards to (Mary) Anna Mineah, 1883-1934 (8 letters)
Folder 10	Others to to (Mary) Anna Mineah, 1892-1912, undated (7 letters)
Folder 11	Richards to Miss Boggs, 1909-1910 (7 letters, 1 inventory)
Folder 12	Richards to her mother, 1868-1870 (1 letter, 1 set of abstracts)
Folder 13	Richards to unidentified, (2 letters)
Folder 14	Miscellaneous, 1879, 1898, undated (4 letters,)
Writings	
Folder 15	Typescript of "Manpower," circa 1906
Folder 16	Manuscript and typescript of "Alma Mater Bless Her"
Folder 17	"Euthenics: Better Environment For The Human Race"
Folder 17	"Ellen Swallow Richards" [biographical notes]
Folder 17	Notes on bread
Folder 17	Miscellaneous manuscripts and notes

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

▼ Details

Abstract

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Collection Title

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