

**LOUISIANA LEPER HOME RECORDS**

Mss. 2515

Inventory

By

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Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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## CONTENTS OF INVENTORY

<u>Summary</u>	3
<u>Biographical/Historical Note</u>	4
<u>Scope and Content Note</u>	5
<u>List of Series and Subseries</u>	6
<u>Series and Subseries Descriptions</u>	7-11
<u>Index Terms</u>	12-13
<u>Container List</u>	14-15

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**SUMMARY**

<b>Size</b>	11 linear ft., 16 v.
<b>Geographic Locations</b>	Iberville Parish, La.; New Orleans, La.; Washington D. C.;
<b>Dates</b>	1884-1921, undated.
<b>Bulk dates</b>	1895-1920
<b>Languages</b>	English, French, German.
<b>Summary</b>	Correspondence, legal documents, payroll records, office files and financial records related to the operations of the Louisiana Leper Home, Carville, La.
<b>Arrangement</b>	Arranged chronologically within series and subseries.
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	None.
<b>Copyright</b>	Physical rights and copyright are retained by the LSU Libraries
<b>Citation</b>	Louisiana Leper Home Records, Mss. 2515, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
<b>Stack Locations</b>	96:1-6; OS:L; O:18

### BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Louisiana Legislative Act No. 85, enacted in 1892, required that all lepers found within the borders of the State of Louisiana be confined within an institution or hospital. Dr. Isadore Dyer, a dermatologist and leprologist from Tulane University Medical School, was instrumental in the establishment of the Louisiana Leper Home in 1894 at Indian Camp Plantation, in Iberville Parish. At that time, this abandoned antebellum sugarcane plantation belonged to the estate of Henry J. Budington. The mansion was uninhabitable, leaving seven slave cabins to serve as a home for the patients who were brought from New Orleans in November 1894. Dr. L. A. Wailes managed the hospital and provided medical care for the first year. In 1896, Dr. Dyer contracted with the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul to operate the hospital. They arrived under the charge of Sister Beatrice Hart. In 1901, Sister Benedicta succeeded her as administrator, a position she held until 1917. She was followed by Sister Edith in 1917. Dr. Ralph Hopkins took the position of visiting physician in 1901 and made weekly visits until his death in 1945.

By 1902, the population had grown to 62 patients, and Dr. Hopkins worked to improve the facilities. The State of Louisiana purchased the hospital in December 1905 from the heirs of Henry J. Budington, and the following year replaced the slave cabins with twelve new cottages. Construction and improvements continued as the funds were available. The daily routine of the patients was regulated, and living quarters were separated by sex and race, with no social interaction between men and women. Patients, who were able, were required to perform duties at the hospital. After requests from authorities in other states, the hospital began admitting out of state patients in 1917. The State of Louisiana sold the hospital to the United States Federal Government for \$35,000 in 1920, and on January 3, 1921, it became the United States Marine Hospital No. 66, Carville, La., under the control of United States Public Health Service.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

Collection, consisting of correspondence, legal documents, printed items and graphic material, administrative records and financial records, relates primarily to the financial operations of the Louisiana Leper Home. The majority of correspondence discusses funding, expenditures, building maintenance and construction, but also refers to patient conduct and care. Legal documents consist of court orders confining lepers to the Home, conveyances, leases, certificates of indebtedness, contracts, and insurance policies. Printed items contain published reports, newspaper clippings, and legislative acts; and graphic material includes blueprints, floor plan drawings and photographs. Office files and record books comprise administrative records and include surveys, supply requisitions, supplies delivered, reports, and questionnaires. Financial records include papers related to business transactions, accounts, payroll and billing.

**LIST OF SUB-GROUPS, SERIES, AND SUBSERIES**

- Series I. Correspondence, 1894-1921, undated.**  
    **Subseries 1. General correspondence, 1894-1921, undated.**  
    **Subseries 2. Governmental correspondence, 1894-1921.**  
    **Subseries 3. Commercial correspondence, 1895-1921, undated.**
- Series II. Legal documents, 1884-1920.**  
    **Subseries 1. Court records, 1897-1911.**  
    **Subseries 2. Business records, 1884-1920.**
- Series III. Printed items and graphic material, 1902-1916, undated.**
- Series IV. Administrative records, 1894-1920, undated.**
- Series V. Financial records, 1894-1921, undated.**  
    **Subseries 1. General financial records, 1894-1921.**  
    **Subseries 2. Financial statements, 1894-1921, undated.**  
    **Subseries 3. Payroll records, 1895-1921, undated.**  
    **Subseries 4. Bills, 1894-1921, undated.**

## SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

### Series I. Correspondence, 1894-1921, undated.

#### Subseries 1. General correspondence, 1894-1921, undated.

This series relates primarily to the financial operations of the La. Leper Home but includes correspondence pertaining to employees, general patient care and the conduct of patients. In his correspondence (1894-1895), Dr. Wailes complains of staffing problems (June -Sept. 1895), shortages of necessary items, the lack of funds (June-Aug. 1895), and the water supply (Oct. 13, 19, 1895). Wailes also remarks on the benefits of patients working at the hospital (Nov. 3, 1895).

After Dr. Wailes' resignation, Dr. Dyers communicates with the Catholic Sisters of Charity inviting them to assume control the Home (Nov. 19, 25, Dec. 3, 4, 1895; March 1896). The new administrator, Sister M. Beatrice Hart, (1896-1901) writes on the general operations, financial accounts, charitable donations, admissions, patients' general health, deaths, personnel, building repairs and construction, leasing land for cultivation, and patients activities. She remarks on the use of patients for housekeeping, grounds maintenance, and the production of poultry and vegetables gardens to offset the cost of food. She complains of substandard housing for patients and suggests replacing the resident physician with a visiting one in order to cut costs (Oct. 14, Nov. 1896). Other topics include flooding (April 3, 25, 1897; Feb. 1, 1898), disinfecting patients' money (May 27, 1897), and the use of assumed names by patients (May 30, 1899; Oct. 14, 1901). In his letters, Dr. Hopkins (1901-1918), reports on the health of his patients and the needs of the Home.

Sister Benedicta (1901-July 5, 1919) discusses expenditures, progress of repairs and construction, sewage problems, and the conduct of patients, employees, and workers. Aside from discussing the expenditures and general operations of the Home, she complains of workers and contractors not completing projects or performing substandard work, and patients refusing to work, violating rules, and running away. She submits rules to the Board for approval (Dec. 8, 1907) and urges the Board take action against impertinent and disrespectful inmates. Letters discuss the confinement of unruly and "insane" patients (Nov. 1906; March 19, May 1913; July 13, Aug. 24, Nov. 11, 1914; March 20, May 19, 1915; Dec. 2, 1916; undated: "June 7 Dear Sister, Your letter..."). Correspondence also discusses the use of armed guards (May 27, Aug. 24, 26, Nov. 1914; April 23, 28, May 31, 1915; May 8, 1917) to prevent patients for leaving, and male patients from visiting the female quarters. Sister Benedicta also expresses concern over individuals committed to the Home who do not suffer from leprosy (Nov. 26, 1911)

In their letters to the Board, patients request permission to socialize (July 1, 24, Aug. 6, 1907), complain about Sister Benedicta's restrictions (Sept. 7, 1902; July 14, 1910; Feb. 17, 1915), and the withholding of food, tobacco (Oct. 26, Dec. 29, 1911) and medical

1884-1921

treatment (Aug. 20, 23, 1907; April 26, 1912). One patient, in his request to return to his native country, details his history and medical condition (Aug. 19, 26, Sept. 30, 1914). The Board reprimands patients for their conduct, reaffirms the rules and threatens punishment for violations (Oct. 11, 12, 15, 1912; undated: "Sister Benedicta, I spoke to Mr. Weil..."). The Board also tells patients they must assist in the care of fellow patients (Sept. 17, 1913) and perform chores at the hospital (July 9, 1908; April 24, 29, 1909; July 16, Nov. 17, 1910).

Comments on African American patients appear throughout the series, including an employee's refusal to transport two African American women to the Home (Aug. 23, 1895). References are also made to tenants (Oct. 38, 1895; Jan. 26, 1900), unusable clothing given to local African Americans (April 24, 1900), segregated housing at the Home (June 15, 1901; Dec. 2, 1905), and contamination of drinking water by sewage from the Home (Nov. 16, 27, 1907). Additionally, Sister Edith (1918-1921) comments on the arrival of minority patients (March 18, 1921).

Correspondence demonstrating public sentiment includes refusals to transport lepers (Dec. 22, 1894, May 20, 1900); possible cases of leprosy (Dec. 11, 1894; ca. March 1895; June 21, 1897; Nov. 26, 1900); workers refuse to enter the hospital grounds (Nov. 18, 1909); Iberville Parish residents complain of contaminated sewage, drainage and patients leaving the grounds (Nov. 16, 1907; March 1910). Typhoid (Dec. 22, 1910) and several cases of malaria among patients are mentioned (June 30, July 18, Aug. 4, 7, Sept. 1, Nov. 3, 1895; Oct 3, 18, 1896; Oct. 7, 18, 31 1897; Nov. 29, 1900; Feb. 2, 1901; Jan. 8, April 28, June 26, 1902; Nov. 5, 1906). Other topics include the deportation of a foreign patient (April 27, 29, May 2, 1915), report of hurricane damage (Sept. 1909, Oct. 28, 1915), and a land survey of Indian Camp Plantation (Aug. 5, 1920). Correspondence related to the transfer of the hospital from State to Federal control (1918-1921) reflects concern over the uncertain status of the Home and inadequate State funding during this period.

A small portion of correspondence pertains to professional activities and specific medical treatments for leprosy (1895-1914, 1920, undated). A member of the German Royal Health Office writes of an upcoming international conference on leprosy [in German] (Aug. 29, 1897). Albert S. Ashmead details the goals and proposed activities for the conference, and reports on the participating governments (Sept. 16, 1896). In later correspondence, He later suggests that fleas and mosquitoes may transmit leprosy in the Gulf Coast region, particularly in Louisiana (March 31, April 13, 1905). A letter from the French Ministry of the Colonies discusses the experimental use of chaulmoogra oil as a treatment for leprosy [in French] (May 5, 1901).

There is also a letter concerning the publication and distribution of Howell Carter's *A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War* (Sept. 6, 1900).

### **Subseries 2. Governmental correspondence, 1894-1921.**

This series consists of correspondence with various federal, state and local authorities relating to funding, expenditures and the detainment of individuals afflicted with leprosy.

1884-1921

Correspondence with state officials centers chiefly on funding needs, legislative appropriations, and the transport of patients. The Attorney General interprets sections of legislative Act 80 regarding state funding (Oct. 5, Nov. 13, 1894). The State Board of Health and the Board of Control dispute over which board is legally responsible for transporting of patients to the Home (May 1895). Public officials later express concern over the Board's inaction in expediting the recovery of escapees (July-Aug. 1905). Albert G. Phelps, President of the Board, asks Gov. Blanchard to arrange a loan to pay overdue debts (Dec. 21, 23, 1906; April 14, May 27, 1907). Patrick E. Burke in a letter to the governor and State General Assembly the financial status of the Home, reports on patients' medical treatment and construction needs (April 20, 1910). In their correspondence, law enforcement and public health officials discuss the transfer and confinement of reported lepers. Gov. Blanchard prohibits admission of nonresidents and discourages public acknowledgement of the leper hospital's existence (Dec. 14, 1905). The Attorney General later advises the Board that it may accept out of state patients at its own discretion (May 20, 1916). Additional correspondence concerns the admission of nonresidents detained in other regions of the country (Oct. 4 1919; Jan. 26, 30, Feb. 11 1920), in particular, John Early, (May 26, 30, 1917; Dec. 10, 1918; May, 1919). Letters also discuss overdue bills, maintenance and the construction of new buildings, including the construction of detention cells for patients (July 21, 1913; March 2, 1914; April 27, 1915; March 12, 1918). The State Board of Health makes recommendations for repairs to the sewage system and construction of a waste treatment facility (Sept. 10, 1914; May 5, 19, Oct. 30, 1916). The Highway Commission requests information from the Home in order to move forward on road improvements (March 6, 1917, Nov. 19, 24, 1919). Later correspondence (1918-1921) pertains to the sale and transfer of the Home to the Federal Govt. Other topics include hurricane damage (Sept. 26, 1909; Jan. 26, 1910; Oct. 6, 1915), and the refusal of the Dept. of Justice and State Board of Health to allow a pregnant inmate to leave the Home or to keep her child (March 29, 31, 1917).

**Subseries 3. Commercial correspondence, 1895-1921, undated.**

This subseries consists of correspondence with suppliers, contractors, and merchants. They relate primarily to estimates, bids, bills for repairs, new construction, and supplies and services delivered to the Home. Letters itemize costs for work performed and goods and services delivered. Letters also discuss disputed charges, dissatisfaction with completed jobs, and nonpayment of bills. Inspector for the Ponchartrain Levee Board offers to handle the necessary repairs for a fee (Jan. 28, 1914), the National Petroleum Corp. reports that a delay in shipment is due to two on two accidents involving oil tankers, and Board of Control's response (June 10, 17, 1920).

**Series II. Legal document, 1884-1920.**

**Subseries 1. Court records, 1897-1911.**

Court records consist primarily of court orders and judgments issued by state district courts against individuals diagnosed with leprosy, confining them to the Louisiana Leper Home. A physician's medical report accompanies some documents, and petitions submitted by local authorities to the courts requests confinement of individuals suffering

1884-1921

from leprosy. Additionally, resolutions presented to the State Supreme Court contain a biographical sketch of Joel J. Prowell (Oct. 1915).

**Subseries 2. Business records, 1884-1920.**

Documents include land conveyances, contracts, agreements, leases, bonds, and certificates of indebtedness and insurance policies (1914-1920). A bond issued by the State of Louisiana to the Board of Control provides funding for the Home (Nov. 12, 1894). Records related to Indian Camp Plantation contain an abstract of the title (undated); copies of land conveyances (March 26, 1884; June 20, 21, July 28, 1904); contracts with contractors and the Sisters of Charity (1896), leases for the property, and subleases for land cultivation (Nov. 20, 1903; Feb. 4, 1912). These records also include death certificates (in French) of Auguste Bilgen (April 14, 1890) and Mary Budington (July 26, 1905), power of attorney for the sale (July 31, 1904), affidavits of Katherine and Alice Budington (July 28, 1905) and contracts. Additional items include leases for office space in the Hennen Building in New Orleans (1894-1908) and certificates of indebtedness (1915-1917). Legislative Act No. 77 authorizes the sale of the leper hospital by the State of Louisiana to the Federal Govt. (July 6, 1920).

**Series III. Printed items and graphic material, 1902-1916, undated.**

This group consists of pamphlet, *Specific for Leprosy, Treatment of Leprosy, and of All Skin Diseases*, (1897); a reprint from the New Orleans Times-Picayune soliciting donations for a chapel (Jan. 22, 1905), published reports, newspaper clippings, and legislative acts. Reports are comprised of a bi-annual report to the Governor and General Assembly (1902), and those of the Leper Home Chapel Committee (1909) and the League of the Sacred Heart on charitable contributions for the Home (1903). Newspaper clippings report on the expenditure of the Home (undated), repairs and construction (undated), problems with escapees (undated), management of the Home (May 3, 1909; undated); damage by storms (undated). Legislative House Bill No. 407 includes appropriations for the Home for June 30, 1916-June 30, 1918. Legislative acts include Act. No. 25, giving the Supervisor of Public Accounts authority to examine the financial books of State boards, commissions and public offices, Act. No. 128 defining breaches of trust among public boards, and Act. No. 155 authorizing the State to assume its own insurance. Graphic materials contain blue prints for construction projects at the Home (1904; 1914; undated) and blueprint maps of the French Quarter, Garden District and Uptown New Orleans, La. (undated). Photographs include unidentified individuals, Indian Camp Plantation main house and cabins (undated).

**Series IV. Administrative records, 1894-1920, undated.**

This series is comprised of office files and record books containing surveys, supply requisitions, supplies delivered, reports, questionnaires and Surveys give statistical information on leprosy by parish (1894) and requisitions list needed foods and supplies (1895). A record book, v. 15 (1895-1898) records patient information, food, goods and medicines shipped, and members of the Louisiana State Legislature, New Orleans City Council, and several other prominent figures. Reports log admissions, deaths, race and

1884-1921

number of patients (July-Nov. 1905; April 1906), patients who absconded (May 22, 1915), and the daily delivery of agricultural products (Jan. 24, April 1916). Other reports include an analysis of well water at the Home (June 16, 1903), construction projects (Aug. 7, 1906), equipment (Oct. 13, 1909; March 28, Aug. 17, 1916), and the architect's weekly progress reports (Dec. 12, 19, 1914; Jan. 16, 1915). Reports submitted to the governor record the status of the Home (April 30, 1898; June 30, 1916; May 4, 6, 1918). Questionnaires sent to residents of Iberville Parish reflect the effect of the Leper Home on the community (May 18, 1901). Other papers include a description of land in St. John the Baptist Parish (undated), an inventory of the Home's movable property (undated), succession of Johanna Meagher July 25, 1913), notes referring patients to the hospital, and a draft of rules regulating patients and visitors (Nov. 11, 1917; undated). Board meeting minutes (1894-1920, undated) discuss possible sites for the Home, land leases, needs of the Home, patients, and additional funding. A physician's report (April 18, 1918) details various medical treatments, the number of cases undergoing treatment, and the results of this care. Patient lists and admission cards provide information on medical condition, race, age, occupations, and runaway status of patients. Similar information, as well as family history, is found in the Register of Patients, v. 16 (undated).

**Series V. Financial records, 1894-1921, undated.**

**Subseries 1. General financial records, 1894-1921, undated.**

General financial records include promissory notes; bank records (1905-1921; undated), and construction bids and specifications (1895-1920, undated). Additionally, warrants issued by the State Treasurer guarantee funds for expenditures (April 22, 1912; July 1, 1915; Oct. 15, 1920). Bank records are comprised of monthly statements, vouchers and checks, and deposit slips (1894-1921). Vouchers and checks document payments made to businesses and individuals for goods and services. Manuscript volumes found in this subseries include bank books, v. 1-4 (1902-1921), check book stubs v. 7-12, (1896-1921), account ledgers for expenditures, v. 13-14 (1895-1904; 1917), and cashbooks for petty cash expenses v. 5 (1902-1905), v. 6 (1909-1912).

**Subseries 2. Financial statements, 1894-1921, undated.**

Annual, semi-annual and monthly financial statements prepared by the Board's secretary and hospital administrator itemize receipts and expenditures. Some monthly statements include payroll costs.

**Subseries 3. Payroll records, 1895, 1902-1921, undated.**

Payroll records reflect labor costs and type of work required to keep the Home operational. Monthly labor accounts list occupation, rate of pay, time worked and wages earned by construction workers, hospital staff and handymen. Receipts show the pay received by individuals on a particular date.

**Subseries 4. Bills, 1894-1921, undated.**

This series consists of financial papers related to the billing for food, goods, services, medical supplies, personal transportation, shipping costs, equipment, and construction projects. They are comprised of monthly statements, invoices and receipts.

INDEX TERMS

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Series and subseries</b>
African Americans.	I.1; III; IV
Ashmead, Albert S., 1850-1911.	I.4
Banks and banking--Louisiana.	V.5
Blueprints--Vieux Carrê (New Orleans, La.).	III
Buildings--Louisiana.	I. 3; V.5
Buildings--Design and construction.	I.1, 2, 3; III; IV; V.5
Carter, Howell, 1844-1918.	I.1
Collecting of accounts--Louisiana.	I.3;V.4
Construction contracts--Louisiana.	V.5
Conveyancing--Louisiana.	II.2
Court records--Louisiana.	II.1
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul-- Emmitsburg (Md.)	I.1
Debts, Public--Accounting.	I.1, 2
Deportation.	I
Detention of persons--United States.	I.1, 2; II.1
Early, John.	I.2
Finance, Public.	I.1, 2; II.2; III; V.5
Floods--Louisiana.	I.1
Hospital administrators--Louisiana--Iberville Parish.	I.1, 2, 3; III
Hospital trustees--Louisiana--New Orleans.	I.1, 2, 3; III
Hospital--Food service--Louisiana.	I.1, 3; IV; V. 3, 4
Hospitals--Maintenance and repair.	I.1, 2, 3; V
Hospitals--Staff.	I.1; V.1, 3, 5
Hospitals--Waste disposal--Louisiana--Iberville Parish.	I.1
Hurricanes--Louisiana.	I.1, 2; III
Iberville Parish--History.	I-V
Institutional care--Louisiana--Iberville Parish.	I.1, 2
Isolation (Hospital care).	I.1, 2; II.1
Land titles--Registration and transfer.	I.2, 3
Law--Interpretation and construction.	I.2
Leprosy-- Louisiana.	I-V
Leprosy patients--Louisiana.	I-V
Leprosy--Diagnosis.	I.1; IV
Leprosy--Hospitals.	I-V
Leprosy--Patients--Social conditions.	I.1, 2; III; IV
Leprosy--Patients--Transportation.	I.1, 2
Leprosy--Transmission.	I.4
Leprosy--Treatment.	I.1, 4; III; IV
Long-term care facilities--Louisiana.	I-V

**LOUISIANA LEPER HOME RECORDS****Mss. 2515**

1884-1921

Louisiana Leper Home--Pictorial works.	<b>III</b>
Malaria--Louisiana--Iberville Parish.	<b>I.1</b>
Mycobacterium leprae.	<b>I.4</b>
Garden District (New Orleans, La.)--Maps.	<b>III</b>
Payrolls--Louisiana.	<b>V.1, 3; V.2, 4</b>
Pregnant women.	<b>I.2</b>
Prowell, Joel J.	<b>II.1</b>
Public hospitals.	<b>I-V</b>
Rain-water (Water-supply)--Louisiana--Iberville Parish.	<b>I.1; IV</b>
Registers (lists)	<b>IV</b>
Sewage disposal--Louisiana-- Iberville Parish.	<b>I.1, 2; V</b>
Statutes--Louisiana.	<b>I.2; III</b>
Tankers--Accidents.	<b>I.2</b>
Vieux Carré (New Orleans, La.)--Maps.	<b>III</b>

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
96:1	1	1-73	<b>Series I.</b> Correspondence, 1894-1921, undated.
	2	1-33	<b>Subseries 1.</b> General correspondence, 1894-1914.
	2	34-76	General correspondence, 1915-1921, undated.
96:2	3	1-60	<b>Subseries 2.</b> Governmental correspondence, 1894-1921.
			<b>Subseries 3.</b> Commercial correspondence, 1895-1921, undated.
96:3	3	61-67	<b>Series II.</b> Legal documents, 1884-1920.
		68-72	<b>Subseries 1.</b> Court records, 1897-1911.
			<b>Subseries 2.</b> Business records, 1884-1920.
	3	73-76	<b>Series III.</b> Printed items and graphic material, 1902-1916, undated.
	4	1-14	<b>Series IV.</b> Administrative records, 1894-1920, undated.
96:4	4	15- 42	<b>Series V.</b> Financial records, 1894-1921, undated.
	5	1-28	<b>Subseries 1.</b> General financial records, 1894-1921.
	5	29-61	<b>Subseries 2.</b> Financial statements, 1894-1921, undated.
	6	1-76	<b>Subseries 3.</b> Payroll records, 1895-1921, undated.
96:5	7	1-46	<b>Subseries 4.</b> Bills, 1894-June, 1904.
	8	1-52	Bills, July 1904- 1907.
96:6	9	1-62	Bills, 1908-1910.
	10	1-60	Bills, 1911-1913.
OS:L	11	1-11	Bills, 1914-Sept. 1920.
	1	1	Bills, Oct. 1920-Feb. 1921, undated.
	1	2	<b>Series I.</b> Correspondence [oversize material], Sept. 6, 1900, Nov. 16, 1907, April 20, 1910.
OS:L	1	2	<b>Series II.</b> Legal documents [oversize material]
			<b>Subseries 2.</b> Business records: conveyance, 1884; leases 1894-1908; insurance policies, 1894, 1907-1920.
OS:L	1	3-4	<b>Series III.</b> Printed items and graphic material [oversize material] blueprints, 1904, 1914, undated.

CONTAINER LIST(cont.)

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
OS:L	2	1	<b>Series V.</b> Financial records, 1894-1920 [oversize material].
		2	<b>Subseries 1.</b> General financial records. 1919-1921
			<b>Subseries 3.</b> Financial statements, 1894-1920.
		3-4	<b>Subseries 4.</b> Bills, 1896-1920
<u>Stack Location</u>		<u>Volume</u>	<u>Contents</u>
O:18			<b>Series IV.</b> Administrative records, 1894-1920, undated [manuscript volumes].
		v. 15	Record book, 1895-1898.
		v. 16	Register of Patients, undated.
O:18			<b>Series V.</b> Financial records, 1894-1921, undated [manuscript volumes].
			<b>Subseries 1.</b> General financial records, 1894-1920.
		v. 1-4	Bank books, 1902-1921.
		v. 5-6	Cashbooks for petty cash expenses, 1902-1905; 1909-1912.
		v. 7-12	Checkbook stubs, 1896-1921.
	v. 13-14	Account ledgers, expenditures, 1895-1904; 1917.	