



Institute Archives and Special Collections

David Maxson Greene (1832-1905) Papers, 1872-1905



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Biographical Note

David Maxson Greene was born July 8, 1832 in Brunswick, NY. At the age of three his family moved to a farm in Adams, NY. He was schooled in a local district school until the age of fifteen. He then spent the following three years studying at Adams Seminary. In 1850 he was admitted to the graduating class at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He completed the coursework required for a Civil Engineer degree in one year, graduating in 1851. Upon his graduation he accepted a position at R.P.I. as Assistant Professor of Mechanics and Physics, which he held for one year. In 1852, Greene left R.P.I. and worked as Assistant Engineer on the Enlargement of the Erie Canal for one year. He then traveled west where he was Assistant and Division Engineer on a railroad in Ohio and Indiana. In 1854, he returned east due to sickness and in 1855 he was married to Maria Skinner of Adams, NY. That same year, Greene once again took a position at R.P.I., as Professor of Geodesy and Topographical Drawings. Prior to commencing his professorship he studied topographical drawing at West Point in preparation for teaching the course at R.P.I. He remained at R.P.I. until the spring of 1861.

In late 1861 Greene joined the United States Navy and over the next eight years he served various appointments in the Navy, moving from Third Assistant Engineer to First Assistant Engineer in his first four years of service and serving on the Susquehanna (1861) and the Narragansett (1868). In 1869 he resigned from the Navy and took up residence in Troy, NY.

Once Greene settled in Troy, he was active in local politics and was an engineer/consulting engineer holding a variety of positions, including the following: Chief Engineer of Walloomsac Railroad (1872), Consulting Engineer of Ottawa City Water Works (1872), Chief Engineer of Dansville Water Works (1873), Village Surveyor of West Troy (1874), Engineer for the State Commission (1871-1874), Division Engineer of New York State Canals (1874), Deputy State Engineer (1874-1878) and Engineer of the Troy City Water Board (1872-1885). Additionally, he was a director of the Troy City National Bank, the Troy Citizens' Steamboat Company and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

While Greene was the Director of R.P.I. (1878-1891), he also was a professor of Geodesy, Road Engineering and Topographical Drawing. He abruptly resigned his position as Director in 1891. He returned to his family homestead in Adams, NY and lived there until his death November 5, 1905.

Scope and Content Note

The David Maxson Greene (1832-1905) Papers, 1872-1905, consist mainly of material relating to his time as Director of R.P.I. (1878-1891). The material, arranged chronologically, contains four daily diaries (1883, 1884, 1885, 1888) in which the coursework for each division of students is noted for each day. Also included in the diaries are notes on faculty meeting attendance and, in a few cases, conditions of advancement for students who have taken the entrance examination. Of particular interest in the collection is a letter written expressing the need for the advancement of R.P.I. The feeling that R.P.I. was not advancing as it should during Greene's directorship is one that has been subsequently written about in histories on the Institute. The author of this letter is unknown.

Also in the collection is material relating to coursework taught by Greene, including notes on railroad engineering and four bound volumes, written by Greene, of notes on heat, steam and steam engines.

Inventory

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Steam on the Canals, Report of the Commission	1872
	2	Letter expressing need for advancement of R.P.I.; author unknown	1880
		Diary	1883
		Diary	1884
	3	Synopsis of Lectures on Railroad Engineering	1884
		Diary	1885
		Diary	1888
	4	Appendix II to Notes on the Steam Engine, 2 copies	1889
	5	Correspondence	1885, 1889
	6	Entrance Examination Notices	1888-1889
	7	Progress of R.P.I. (attendance based graph), 3 copies	1891
	8	Tributes after death	1905
2	1	Notes on Heat, Steam and the Steam Engine, copy 1; bound volume	1886
	2	Notes on Heat, Steam and the Steam Engine, copy 2; bound volume	1886
	3	Notes on Heat, Steam and the Steam Engine, copy 1 ; bound volume	1888
	4	Notes on Heat, Steam and the Steam Engine, copy 2; bound volume	1888