

**The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts & Archives Division**

**Charles Ranlett Flint**

**Papers, 1872-1930**

**John D. Stinson  
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## **Summary**

Title: Charles Ranlett Flint Papers, 1872-1930 (bulk 1885-1915)

Size: 2.9 lin ft. (7 boxes).

Access: Unrestricted.

Source: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 1979; and Gifts & Exchange (unknown donor), 1990.

Description: The papers reflect Flint's multifarious and far-flung business activities in America, Russia, South America and in China.

## Biographical Note

Charles Ranlett Flint (1850-1934), financial capitalist, merchant and industrial consolidator was born in Thomaston, Maine, the son of Benjamin Chapman, a shipbuilder and operator, and Sarah Tobey Flint. His father, after being adopted by a maternal uncle, was allowed by an act of the state legislature, to change his name to Flint. The Flint family eventually moved to New York where his father had charge of the mercantile firm of Chapman & Flint which had been founded (c1837) in Maine. After his graduation (1858) from Brooklyn Polytechnic, Charles Ranlett Flint also entered the shipping business. During the 1870's he was a partner in the firm of Gilchrist, Flint & Company, and afterwards, in W. R. Grace & Company, commission merchants for the South American trade.

In 1885 he joined the firm of Flint & Co., commission merchants, where he was to remain active for some two decades. The firm appears to have been an offshoot of Chapman & Flint, which had gradually evolved from ship-building and operation in Maine, to merchant banking and general merchandise trade in New York. During this period, and indeed earlier, Flint or his firm became involved in numerous commercial and financial ventures at home and abroad including schemes to supply foreign governments with armaments, munitions, and naval vessels. Included among the foreign ventures were the importation of crude rubber from Brazil, the fitting out in 1893 of a group of war vessels for the Brazilian government, the delivery in 1895 of a Chilean ship to Japan for its war against China, and the supplying of munitions to the Russian army during the Russo-Japanese War.

In 1894 Flint & Co. assigned its foreign trade dealings to Flint, Eddy & Co., and in 1899, its merchant fleet, to Flint, Dearborn & Co.

Popularly known as the "Father of Trusts" Flint was responsible for some twenty-one industrial consolidations or mergers including the American Chiclé Co., American Woolen Co., Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co., Sen-Sen Chiclé Co., United States Bobbin and Shuttle Co., and the United States Rubber Co. His attempt to merge the electric light and power interests when he became president (1880) of the United States Electric Company, however, proved a failure. His economic philosophy was based upon his conviction that trade follows price, and not the flag. He argued that if American industry were to compete effectively abroad against cheap foreign labor, it would have to constantly reduce its costs of production by investing in new technology, and that this could best be achieved through industrial consolidation.

During the course of his business life Flint developed numerous relationships with diplomats and politicians. He served at various times as consul at New York for Chile, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. He advised the government on trade policy and was appointed a delegate to the International American Conference (1889-90) held in Washington where he proposed the creation of an international bank for the promotion of foreign trade. During the Russian Revolution of 1917 he was chairman of the American Committee for the Encouragement of Democratic Government in Russia.

Highly cultured and sophisticated with a pronounced literary bent, and despite a redoubtable talent for negotiation, Flint, in his personal life, was known for his gentleness of manner. Although his income was large he apparently never accumulated a large fortune. He was an avid sportsman, devoted to hunting, fishing and yachting.

Flint retired from business affairs in 1931. His wife, Emma Kate Simmons whom he married in 1883, died in 1926. The following year he married Charlotte Reeves of Washington, D.C. who survived him. No children issued from either marriage.

**Condition Note**

About 15% of the papers have been damaged by having been utilized (during the 1940's-1950's) as scrap paper by a real estate and insurance firm (Benjamin West of Setauket, Long Island). Many of the damaged papers bear orange crayon marks canceling the original text and many texts have been completely or partially obscured by the pasting on of the firm's bills, receipts, envelopes, postcards and letters. In some cases it is possible to read the obscured text by holding it in front of an ordinary light source. Also, this utilization of the papers has resulted in a relatively large amount of undated fragments.

**Note on Provenance**

About one-third of the papers were donated to the Library in April of 1979 from the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities. The remainder, or approximately two-thirds of the papers, were acquired in August of 1990 from an anonymous donor.

## Scope and Content

The bulk of the papers (1872-1930) which are contained in seven boxes (2.9 lin. ft.) consists of business correspondence and collateral business papers. There are also a few personal miscellaneous papers.

The business correspondence and business papers are arranged chronologically and by subject. The papers include correspondence, agreements, memoranda, minutes, commercial codes, miscellaneous financial statements of commercial and industrial firms, securities accounts, patent and shipping papers. The papers reflect Flint's multifarious and far-flung business ventures, transactions, associations and interests in America, Russia, South America and in China. Included are papers relating to international trade in general merchandise, industrial mergers, the purchase and re-organization of the New York Times Co., rubber-goods manufacturing on Long Island, the paving of the streets of Manaus, Brazil, and a proposed Guayaquil and Quito Railway. Included are papers relative to the provision of loans to the Chinese government for railway development, and to the Sultan of Turkey for the purchase of Chilean and Argentine war vessels. A large group of papers relate to the arrangement of a loan to the Russian government, the supplying of munitions and cartridge belts to the Russian army, and to a proposed Alaskan-Siberian Railway. Included also are original copies of cables in commercial code (with translations) from (and to) Hart O. Berg, Flint's business associate at St. Petersburg and at Berlin. Some of the correspondence with Berg relates also to a newly designed engine for submarine boats. There are also copies of cables between Flint and William M. Ivins at London relative to the financing of the United States Rubber Co. There is also correspondence (1917) of Flint as chairman of the American Committee for the Encouragement of Democratic Government in Russia relating to the organization of mass meetings and the passing of legislative resolutions in support of the Russian Revolution.

Included is a copy of a lengthy typewritten report (1904) by Pope Yeatman entitled "Description of a Trip to China, August 1904 for the American Chinese Co." which surveys various properties containing deposits of coal, copper, gold, and timber. The report contains numerous manuscript sketches.

Other business firms represented in the papers include the American Ordnance Co., Autosales Gum and Chocolate Co., the Computer-Tabulating-Recording Co., the Harrisburg Pipe and Pipe Bending Co., and the United States Rubber Co. Included is a book of minutes (1886-91) of meetings of the board of directors and of the executive committee of the New York Commercial Company relating to the trade in rubber and Gutta percha in Africa and in the Amazon and to the manufacture of rubber goods on Long Island.

Individual correspondents include Newton D. Baker, Bernard M. Baruch, Rex Beach, August Belmont, Albert B. Boardman, Henry T. Bottinger, Nicholas Murray Butler, Andrew Carnegie, Frank R. Cordley, Josephus Daniels, Robert Hobart Davis, Chauncey M. Depew, George W. Fairchild, Samuel Gompers, Henry R. Lemly, Chester O. Lord, Mario de Mendonca, Salvador de Mendonca, Charles R. Miller, Frank Munsey, Walter H. Page, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Elihu Root, Jacob Schiff, Charles M. Schwab, Henry Rowan Semly, Henry Van Dyke, Herbert Ward, and T. H. Whitehead.

The personal miscellaneous papers include personal receipts of Flint and his wife while traveling in Europe, personal press clippings, and other miscellany. There is an undated group photograph including Flint and his wife taken on shipboard and unidentified photographs of places. There are also printed copies of addresses (1899-1901) by Flint and an imprint entitled The Trust: Its Book, by Charles R. Flint et al (N.Y. Doubleday, Page & Co., 1910).

## Container List

Box

### A. Business Correspondence

(Chronological)

- 1 1888-1906
- 2 1907-16
- 3 1917-30; n.d.; fragments

(By Subject)

Correspondence (1899-1901) re paving of the streets of Manaus, Brazil  
Correspondence (1894-1905) re rubber-goods manufacturing on Long Island

### B. Business Papers

(Chronological)

- 4 1884-1918
- 5 n.d.; fragments

(By Subject)

- 6 Agreements (1893-94, 1903) re rubber-goods manufacturing on Long Island  
Articles of co-partnership (1872-74)  
Financial statements (1898-1901) of miscellaneous commercial and industrial firms  
Miscellaneous papers (including commercial codes and patent papers)  
New York Commercial Co., Limited - minutes (1886-91)  
Securities accounts (including Autosales Gum and Chocolate Co.)

### C. Personal Miscellaneous

- 7 Consular certificates of Wallace B. Flint  
Miscellany  
Photographs  
Press clippings  
Printed Matter  
Receipts and personal accounts (1901-18)



## Partial List of Correspondents

Baker, Newton D.  
Mar. 27, 1917

Beach, Rex  
June 5, 1918

Baruch, Bernard M.  
[Apr. 1902]

Belmont, August  
Feb. 3, 1893

Boardman, Albert B.  
Dec. 8, 1914

Bottinger, Henry T.  
Sept 25, 1906

Butler, Nicholas Murray  
Mar. 30, 1917

Daniels, Josephus  
Mar. 21, 1913

Davis, Robert Hobart  
Jan. 14, 1909; Aug. 31, 1918; n.y., Aug. 12 at Nova Scotia (7 p.)

Depew, Chauncey M.  
Nov. 12, 1903; Apr. 7, 1908; June 24, 1908; Oct. 8, 1913

Fairchild, George W.  
Aug. 28, 1912; June 18, 1913; Nov. 14, 1913; Nov. 21, 1913; Dec. 20, 1913

Gompers, Samuel  
Apr. 4, 1917; June 16, 1917; June 19, 1918 (R. Lee Guard)

Grace, Michael P.  
Jan. 12, 1898

Grace, William A.  
Jan. 19, 1898

Lord, Chester O.  
Mar. 14, 1893; Dec. 13, 1900

McAdoo, William Gibbs  
May 17, 1915;

Mendonca, Mario de  
Dec. 11, 1913; Mar. 22, 1914; May 5, 1914 (from Flint); Mar. 5, 1915; Nov. 8, 1915

Mendonca, Salvador de (Brazilian Minister to the U.S.)  
Mar. 2, 1898; Nov. 21, 1905; Dec. 2, 1905; Aug. 21, 1911

Miller, Charles Ransom  
Aug. 16, 1893; Aug. 21, 1893; Sept. 8, 1893; Apr. 19, 1894; June 28, 1917

Munsey, Frank A.  
May 18, 1901

Page, Walter Hines  
Apr. 5, 1913

Rockefeller, Jr., John D.

Apr. 2, 1902

Root, Elihu

[1917]

Rosen, Roman Romanovich de

Feb. 15, 1907; Feb. 21, 1907; Feb. 22, 1907; Nov. 2, 1907

Rowe, Leo Stanton

July 22, 1902

Rowland, Edward B.

Aug. 31, 1906

Schiff, Jacob

Jan. 19, 1893

Schwab, Charles M.

Nov. 2, 1904; Dec. 1, 1909; Sept. 18, 1918 (Flint to Schwab)

Semley, Henry Rowan

Feb. 21, 1911; Feb. 25, 1911; Mar. 5, 1911

Van Dyke, Henry

Feb. 26, 1898

Ward, Herbert

Nov. 29, 1916