Supplemental Materials for *Extreme Makeover: Finding Aid Edition*
MARAC Spring 2018- Hershey, PA
Consultants: Jessica E. Johnson, Margaret T. Kidd, Laura Muskavitch; Virginia Commonwealth University

https://bit.ly/2qjfJL (Shortened URL to the complete handout & poster)

Just as fashion trends change over time, so do our standards for finding aids. Recently, we revisited a number of our guides that have existed unchanged online for years and found that many have not aged well. Some finding aids were written by untrained staff or were created prior to the introduction of DACS. Others suffered from neglect in that they weren’t updated to reflect accruals to a collection or were not checked for grammar and spelling errors. It was time to take our finding aids from drab to fab, but how?

We, like many other archives, find ourselves with more projects than we have staff or time to complete, but we also know how important it is to have quality finding aids for our users. Since our efforts began, we have zhuzhed over 30 finding aids, improving intellectual control and patron access to our materials. Our poster explains what we are doing to makeover our existing finding aids, what we have learned in the process, and how we can create a more timeless style for our finding aids and minimize the need for extreme makeovers in the future.

**What does our shorthand mean?**

- ★ DACS- Making the finding aid conform to DACS standards. Often this meant fixing title, dates, names, etc. or adding additional information.
- ★ Formatting- How does the finding aid look? Fixing citations, access, provenance, general look of the finding aid.
- ★ Errors- General mistakes, such as typos, factual issues, punctuation, non-public information published.
- ★ Clarity- Anything that makes the finding aid easier to read or understand through language. Rewriting or revising content, folder titles.
- ★ Physical- Anything to do with the actual collection. Renaming or renumbering physical folders, moving materials, rehousing or reprocessing.

**Poster link:**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-9VGywcaZBbZ0tZN2dlU1phOE9sMktQNmhuNDRIV3ZPWEpR/view?usp=sharing
A Better Look at our Total Teardown

A Guide to the James A. Allison papers, 1893-1896. 1973
A Collection in Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library
Collection Number 88-Mar-1

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Processed by: Danielle Tarullo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection Number</td>
<td>88-Mar-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>The James W. Allison papers, 1893-1896, 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Stacks</td>
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<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
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Administrative Information

Access Restrictions
Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Preferred Citation

James W. Allison Papers, M 1, Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University. The James W. Allison Papers, Collection Number 88-Mar-1, Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Va.

Acquisition Information

Unknown—see letter from James W. Allison, Jr. to Elizabeth Bocock.

Biographical Information

Soon after the Civil War, James W. Allison (1838-1898) established the seed and fertilizer firm of Allison and Addisson with Edmund B. Addison. By the 1890s the company had expanded greatly and become one of the most successful fertilizer producers in the South. The earliest letter in the collection is from Allison to his wife, Minnie. Clemens Jones Allison (1870-1927). It notes their intention to construct a new house. A year later they chose the site on W. Franklin Street, at that time Richmond's most fashionable residential neighborhood. At the time of his death in 1898, Allison left an estate of nearly one million dollars. Allison had also been Vice President of the Conquest Tie and Lumber Company.

In 1933, the Allison family sold the house to Richmond Professional Institute (RPI), the forerunner to VCU on the Monroe Park campus. The building was used as the residence of the head of RPI for thirty years. Since 1968, when VCU was formed, it has served as the main offices of the President of the University. James W. Allison, Jr. (1894-1979) donated the collection of his father's papers to VCU Libraries in the early 1970s. They contain original architectural drawings, correspondence, and other materials. The James W. Allison papers are a valuable resource for those interested in late 19th century architectural history. These documents are housed in Special Collections and Archives at the James Branch Cabell Library. VCU Libraries.

The Architects: Percy Griffin and T. Henry Randall

Allison chose the New York architectural firm of Griffin and Randall to design his house. Both partners boasted fine architectural pedigrees. Percy Griffin (1866-1921) graduated from the architectural school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1884 and then worked in the office of H. H. Richardson. T. Henry Randall (1862-1906) had also worked for Richardson after attending the Johns Hopkins University, MIT, and the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris. Randall, a native of Annapolis, Maryland, was the partner who decided on the colonial revival design of the house, making it one of the first of that style of houses built in Richmond. It pre-dates other early Colonial Revival houses on Monument Avenue by some 10 years.

The correspondence also details the demise of the firm. In 1885, Griffin and Randall decided to part ways in the middle of the construction of the Allison house. As the letters indicate, Allison was forced to choose which architect he wanted to oversee the completion of his house. Randall, who was the senior partner and who had the most influence over the building's design, was selected.

Scope and Content

This is a collection of correspondence dating from 1883-1896 and 1973, including specifications, building notes, memoranda, blueprints, and illustrations dealing with the design and construction of 998 West Franklin Street. The majority of the letters are from the partnership of the short-lived New York architectural firm Griffin and Randall (Percy Griffin and T. Henry Randall). Also included is an estimate on the Anderson House at West Franklin at Jefferson with a small map of the same.
- At the very least if the immediate source of acquisition is unknown, simply say "The acquisition information is unknown." Don't say unknown and then reference a letter that obviously has some info in it.

- It states that Allison, Jr. donated the papers to VCU-L in the 1970s. If this is so then it should be listed under the Acquisition Info.
  However, after reviewing the Bocock letter (1973) we find that the collection was given to Bocock by Allison, Jr. She then donated the materials to Warren W. Brandt, Pres. of VCU. He then transferred them to the Library.

- According to the Contents List the earliest letter is from 1893. I checked the diarized letters and the 1891 letter does appear online (it looks like it is scanned from a photocopy though). So why doesn't the letter not appear? Also, the letter makes no mention of their intention to construct a home. Instead it states that Allison has been looking at homes to purchase.
ARRANGEMENT

The collection is arranged into three series and are arranged chronologically therein.

Series II—Electric Light and Gas Fixtures: updated, circa 1885-1886
Series III—Plans and Blueprints: 1853-1886

CONTENTS LIST

By DACS standards this section is done incorrectly, but since this FA is derived from processing which occurred in the 1970s/80s, the FA librarian we will leave it.

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Box-folder 1:2: Griffin, Percy: third floor rooms for guests, 1893 November 1
Box-folder 1:3: Griffin, Percy: shipment of horses, 1893 November 20
Box-folder 1:4: W.H. Harbaugh, Veterinarian: examination of horse, 1893 November 20
Box-folder 1:5: Griffin, Percy: horses; 1-4 inch scale layout of house, 1893 November 29
Box-folder 1:6: Griffin and Randall: proposal for two-story bay window in rear extension of house, 1893 December
Box-folder 1:7: Griffin and Randall: plans and estimates, 1894 January 6
Box-folder 1:8: Griffin and Randall: settlement for plans, 1894 January 24
Box-folder 1:9: Griffin and Randall: asking about Mr. Higham of Richmond as architect, 1894 February 7
Box-folder 1:10: Griffin and Randall: requesting names of builders that Allison prefers, 1894 February 17
Box-folder 1:11: Griffin and Randall: carpenters, masons, and Mr. Higham, 1894 February 19
Box-folder 1:12: Griffin and Randall: employment of W. Lee as Program of Operations, 1894 February 21
Box-folder 1:13: Read, Charles H: bill for services to date, 1894 February 22
Box-folder 1:14: Griffin and Randall: sending drawings and specifications, 1894 March 6
Box-folder 1:15: Griffin, Percy: acknowledging receipt of check, 1894 March 7
Box-folder 1:16: Griffin and Randall: visit, 1894 March 10
Box-folder 1:17: Griffin and Randall: number of bricks, window openings, and openings in partition, 1894 March 20
Box-folder 1:18: Griffin, Percy: suggesting reduction of thickening of walls, 1894 March 24
Box-folder 1:19: Griffin and Randall: receipts of bids, 1894 March 24
Box-folder 1:20: Griffin and Randall: work estimates, 1894 March 27
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Box-folder 1:22: Griffin and Randall: estimates on heating and hardware; Robinson's estimate; brownstone water table, 1894 March 29
Box-folder 1:23: Griffin and Randall: thickness of foundation walls, use granite or bricks, 1894 April 7
Box-folder 1:24: Griffin and Randall: estimates from marble, 1894 April 14, 17
Box-folder 1:25: Griffin and Randall: estimates: telegram, 1894 April 17
Box-folder 1:26: Griffin, Percy: leaving for England, 1894 April 24
Box-folder 1:27: Randall, T. Henry: Griffin left for England; Randall takes over project, brickwork; slate window sills, 1894 April 26
Box-folder 1:28: Randall, T. Henry: masonry; visiting Richmond, 1894 May 17
Box-folder 1:29: Griffin and Randall: advising marble caps; Mr. Randall visiting Richmond, 1894
Box-folder 1:30: Randall, T. Henry: drawings and explanations of interior finish, 1894 June 14
Box-folder 1:31: Griffin and Randall: joints shrinking; Mr. Randall in Richmond; the firm of Karcher and Rehn Co., 1894 June 22
Box-folder 1:32: Griffin, Percy: congratulations on son; windows, 1894 July 15
Box-folder 1:33: Randall, T. Henry: fixtures, bedroom mantel, with samples, 1894 July 21

http://read.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxit/view/?docid=vcc-cab/vrcu00154.xml&doc.viewprint=chunk.id=3/7
Griffin and Randall two ways to enable use of sill; rear door, 1894 July 23
Griffin and Randall outside pilasters: metals to use; 'English Putty,' 1894 July 30
Griffin and Randall: finish of dining room, 1894 August 3
Randall, T. Henry: visit to Richmond to go over matters of house, 1894 August 4
Griffin and Randall: dining room finish with Kimbell and Sons and E. H. Purdy and Co.; Griffin out of country, 1894 August 14
Griffin and Randall: mahogany panel for dining room; wainscoting; Japanese paper, 1894 August 20
Griffin and Randall: dissolving the firm and choosing Mr. Randall to continue the work, 1894 September 4
Randall, T. Henry: the limitations of Mr. Griffin, 1894 September 5
Griffin, Percy: announcing his arrival back in New York; asking to be received; thanking Mr. Allison for not letting any advantage be taken of him during his absence, 1894 September 15
Griffin and Randall: no estimate yet from Stowe and Nuckols on finish of interior; Mr. Randall to be in Baltimore, possibly Richmond, 1894 September 21
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Griffin and Randall: height of outlets for gas; Stowe and Nuckols sent 3,000 dollars estimate for finishes not received; sliding door hangers ordered, 1894 October 1
Randall, T. Henry: able to come to Richmond, 1894 October 5
Randall, T. Henry: nothing from Stowe and Nuckols—coming to Richmond to hurry them, 1894 October 13
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Griffin and Randall: defining [Crystal] polished plate, and plate glass; recommends Duparquet special range for $2,20, 1894 October 30
Griffin and Randall: "crashers" are boppers; objections to running rain water into sewers; offices will be moved to 52 Broadway, 1894 November 1
Griffin, Percy: decide who keeps the work on house since firm is broken, 1894 November 4
Griffin, Percy: requesting to finish work rather than Randall, 1894 November 6
Griffin and Randall: office and drawings of firm moved to 52 Broadway, 1894 November 6
Griffin, Percy: best men in office to remain with Griffin, 1894 November 7
Griffin, Percy: removal of office; decide who keeps the work, 1894 November 8
Griffin and Randall: received Stowe and Nuckols estimates; Griffin's reopening question of superintendence, 1894 November 9
Griffin and Randall: further reduced the estimates of Purdy for interior finish, 1894 November 13
Griffin and Randall [to Stowe and Nuckols]: return drawings of Allison House mantels, caps, arch and door of music room; dining room finish, pilaster and trim, 1894 November 20
Griffin and Randall: start Purdy on ornamental work; ordered drawings back from Stowe and Nuckols; dining room finish with wainscoting for $1,200 dollars, 1894 November 20
Griffin, Percy: do nothing in matter between Griffin and Randall until hearing from Griffin again, 1894 November 23
Griffin and Randall: Purdy's estimate for dining room; bid on library; move gas outlets; stained pine not as good as Cyprus; wall paneling, 1894 November 26
Griffin, Percy: informing Allison of legal opinion on differences between Griffin and Randall, 1894 November 28
Griffin and Randall: architects and dining room, 1894 December 3
Griffin and Randall: dining room, 1894 December 6
Griffin, Percy: arbitration between Griffin and Randall, 1894 December 10
Griffin, Percy: arbitration between Griffin and Randall concerning which party
continues to work for Mr. Allison, 1894 December 18
Griffin and Randall dining Room, 1894 December 12
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Griffin and Randall estmate for library finish; estimate on work from Purdy, 1895 January 8
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Griffin and Randall estimates from Stowe and Nuckols and Purdy on blinds for dining room and library; oak trim, 1895 January 9
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January 12
Griffin and Randall no "L" hinges for outside blind, advised to use ordinary hinges; dining room and library finish, 1895 January 19
Box-folder 2.10
Griffin and Randall Stowe and Nuckols unable to make estimate without personal interview. Mr. Randall in Richmond, 1895 January 25
Randall, T. Henry: authorized Stowe and Nuckols to begin red 9 inch tile for hearth; Purdy's woodwork; library bid, 1895 February 16
Box-folder 2.11
Griffin and Randall prefer quartered oak in library; Newman to finish screw sash fasts, substitute brass for bower finish except in case of knobs and hinges, 1895 February 28
Box-folder 2.12
Randall, T. Henry: Purdy finishing mahogany wood work; fire place marble facing and hearth, 1895 March 4
Randall, T. Henry: drawings have been made for changes in library and front porch, 1895 March 12
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Randall, T. Henry: tiles for hearths; iron rai and heating, 1895 March 14
Randall, T. Henry: flooring-wood type, 1895 March 21
Box-folder 2.15
Griffin and Randall painter's samples for staining black walnut doors; approved samples of hardware; staining instructions, 1895 March 29
Griffin and Randall: wood stain samples-enamel paint; fireplace tile, 1895 April 3
Box-folder 2.16
Randall, T. Henry: wood stains: Eureka Paint, 1895 April 8
Griffin and Randall estimate from Batterson and Eisele for marble; stain sample, 1895 April 10
Box-folder 2.19
Randall, T. Henry: to be in Richmond; Purdy to ship material, 1895 April 15
Randall, T. Henry: Newman the hardware man; Purdy sent material; lacquered knobs, 1895 May 7
Box-folder 2.22
Randall, T. Henry: bill for Purdy; bill from Newcomb MFG Co for trim, ornament caps, etc. needs revision, 1895 May 13
Box-folder 2.23
Randall, T. Henry: registers for music, reception, bed room and halls white enameled; library and dining room bronzed, 1895 May 15
Box-folder 2.24
Griffin and Randall: library hardware, mantels and trim by Purdy, 1895 May 27
Griffin and Randall: carpet strips for rooms in second and third floors, 1895 June 1
Box-folder 2.25
Randall, T. Henry: El Dorado paper, 1895 June 12 should be July
Box-folder 2.27
Randall, T. Henry: directions for putting on the "push button" fastenings in library and hall closets; no Yale locks ordered; red and Dutch times; moulding, 1895 June 16
Box-folder 2.28
Randall, T. Henry: postponing trip to Richmond; if papers are too expensive will search for less expensive ones, 1895 July 29
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Randall, T. Henry: Boot's bill for tile, tile estimates, 1895 July 30
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Randall, T. Henry: paints for "leadled" sash, 1895 August 5
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Randall, T. Henry: in Annapolis-can come to Richmond, vacation, 1895 August 10
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Randall, T. Henry: suggesting tinted ceiling; in Adirondacks, 1895 August 16
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Randall, T. Henry: color of blinds for vestibule; in Richmond on Wednesday, 1895 September 23
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Randall, T. Henry: report on El Dorado paper; suggests Kalsomining halls, 1895 October 16
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Randall, T. Henry: El Dorado paper costs, suggestion for supplying the deficiency in paper, 1895 October 22
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Randall, T. Henry: approval for work and sending man to hang El Dorado paper and tint ceiling, 1895 October 26
Box-folder 2.37
Randall, T. Henry: settlement of the firms accounts, 1896 April 11
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Randall, T. Henry: urging remittance of balance owed to Griffin and Randall, 1896 June 4
H. Seaton Taylor and Sons, Real Estate Agents, Auctioneers and Brokers, 1892 October 8
Graves, John L.C.: wallpaper, includes samples, 1894 June 1
W. C. Hughes and Co.: wondows, shades and awnings, circa 1895 October 25
Mitchell Vance Company: gas and electric light fixtures, 1895 September 11-
1896 January 23
Stearns, James F. of the James F. Stearns Paper Hanging and Decorations Co., 1895 September 18-1896 July 1

Allison, James W., Jr. [to Elizabeth S. Bocock]: concerning death of father,
mother, and home, 1973 March 6

Notes on estimates, sketch and the E. T. Burrows Co. wire window screen
installation instructions, undated, circa 1895-1896
Plumbing specifications and General Report by Griffin and Randall, undated,
circa 1895

Series 2: Light and Gas Fixtures 1885-1886
Box 4

Box-folder 4:1-4
Card 1: P.13.414, 1-1 It. Gas, 2 lt. Electric, Antique Brass Combination
Brackets, made 3 arms; centre for gas; 2 side arms electric, with rich cut
glass, 1885-1886

Box-folder 4:5-9
Card 2: P.15.170, 1-3 lt. Rich French Gilt Combination Bracket, with etched
glass, and Card 2: P.16.171, 1 lt. Comb. Bracket, 1885-1886
Card 3: P.16.872, 1-4 lt. Antique Brass Combination Chandelier, made with 8
arms, all with rich cut glass globes, 1885-1886
Card 4: P.16.873, 1-4 lt. Rich French Gilt Combination Chandelier, 8 arms,
with etched glass on electric arms, 1885-1886
Card 5: P.16.877, 4-2 lt. Etruscan Combination Brackets, with rich cut glass
electric shades, 1885-1886
Card 6: P.16.940, 4-2 lt. Butler's Silver combination Brackets, with rich cut
electric shades, 1885-1886

Series 3: Wallpaper and Plaster 1885-1886- how can it have these dates if house not built
until 1893? Most likely this is a cut & paste error.
Box 5

Box 5
Wallpaper and Plaster Fragments from the Entry Hall at 910 West Franklin
Street, undated
Fragments a-m

Box 6
Wallpaper and Plaster Fragment from the Entry Hall at 910 West Franklin
Street, undated
Fragments n-ab
Series 4: Plans and Blueprints 1890s-1894
Map-case: 1

Map-case 1.1 Plans to Allison House grounds, 1890s
Map-case 1.2 Original Griffin and Randall plans for Allison house—Nine drawings which include: west elevation, east elevation, transverse section, foundation plan, first floor plan, second floor plan, attic and roof plan, longitudinal section and north elevation, 1894
Map-case 1.3 Plan for Front Porch—scale and detail—Griffin and Randall, 1894
Map-case 1.4 Side Elevation, 1894
Map-case 1.5 Fireplace and bookshelf plans, 1894
Map-case 1.6 Sketch of dining room, Allison House, 1894

See the Updated Finding Aid: http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=vcu-cab/vircu00154.xml