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# Guide to the O'Gorman Mahon Papers 1824-1892



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## **Descriptive Summary**

**Identifier** ICU.SPCL.MAHON

**Title** O'Gorman Mahon. Papers

**Date** 1824-1892

**Size** 6.5 linear feet (10 boxes)

**Repository** Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library  
1100 East 57th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

**Abstract** James Patrick Mahon, also known as "The O'Gorman Mahon" was an Irish politician and adventurer. The collection contains correspondence, materials from court cases, documents pertaining to business ventures, a letter book, a diary, a passport, election posters, and two scrapbooks of newspaper clippings. Papers document Mahon's various political, military and business activities. Correspondents include Ann Choquet, John Adams-Acton, Arthur Richard Wellesley, William O'Shea, and Charles Parnell.

## **Acknowledgments**

### **Information on Use**

#### **Access**

The collection is open for research.

### **Digital Images**

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The University of Chicago Library appreciates hearing from anyone who may have information about any of the images in this collection.

## **Citation**

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: O'Gorman Mahon. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

## **Biographical Note**

James Patrick Mahon, also known as "The O'Gorman Mahon," entered Irish politics in 1821, while still a student at Trinity College, Dublin. becoming (upon the death of his father) a J.P. for his native county, Clare. Around the time of his graduation from Trinity in 1826, he joined then newly-formed Catholic Association, headed by Daniel O'Connell. Mahon was one of the first to urge O'Connell to stand for Parliament from County Clare in the election of 1828. O'Connell's election marked the first time since the Glorious Revolution that a Catholic was elected to Parliament and ultimately seated.

The success of this undertaking inspired Mahon to try his luck as a candidate. He was elected in 1830, along with Major W. N. MacNamara, but was charged with bribery and unseated. (He was subsequently cleared of the charge.) When he again became a candidate in 1831, it was without the important support of O'Connell. O'Connell backed MacNamara; a rift between Mahon and O'Connell resulted, which was never to be mended. Mahon did, however, win the seat.

In 1835, Mahon began an extensive sojourn abroad. He traveled in a number of European countries, Africa, the East, and South America, before returning to Ireland in 1846. From 1847 to 1852, he again represented Clare. When he stood for re-election in 1852, Lord Fitzgerald defeated him. He thereupon resumed his foreign travels, becoming for a time a lieutenant in the Czar's army. From Russia, he wandered across China, India, Arabia, Turkey, and Austria; in the latter two countries, he served in military capacities. He returned to England in 1858, but soon left for South America, where he became involved in one of the many plans to construct a canal across Central America.

Mahon also spent several months in Peru. During his time there, he took an active interest in investigating the mysterious disappearance of Captain Lionel Lambert, commander of the British ship *Vixen*, on which Mahon had traveled. Mahon compelled the Peruvian government to investigate, and it was found that Lambert had been murdered. Mahon reported the findings to Lord Palmerston, whose acquaintance Mahon had cultivated during his second term in Parliament.

Mahon served in a number of military capacities while in South America, most of them honorary appointments. Legend has it that he was even made an archbishop in Brazil. Upon learning of the outbreak of civil war in the United States, Mahon went to fight on the side of the North. In 1866, he returned to Europe and was granted a colonelcy in a regiment of chasseurs by Louis Napoleon. Although Mahon's escapades have taken on a legendary quality, it is nonetheless clear

that his foreign travels constitute one of the most interesting--if, unfortunately, not always well documented periods of his life.

In 1867, he proceeded to Berlin, where he became acquainted with Bismarck and the crown prince. He petitioned Bismarck for a concession to establish a joint-stock bank in Berlin, to be called the Anglo-Prussian Bank. Negotiations had begun in the autumn of 1863, while Mahon was still in South America.

Mahon returned to Ireland in 1871, and two years later took part in the Home Rule Conference founded by Isaac Butt. Through his association with the Home Rule Party during this period, Mahon became friends with Mitchell Henry and his family. Henry was a wealthy manufacturer from Manchester, who settled in County Galway and represented this county in Parliament as an advocate of Home Rule.

During this same period Mahon formed a friendship with Arthur Richard Wellesley, the second Duke of Wellington. Wellington's father, ironically, had strongly disapproved of the young O'Gorman Mahon's actions fifty years earlier during the campaign for O'Connell's election. Both Wellington and Mahon were in their seventies by the time they became friends. Wellington, in the spirit of his father, strongly disapproved of Mahon's Home Rule stand. Despite this difference, their friendship grew.

In 1879, Mahon was elected to Parliament from Clare as a Home Ruler. By this time, Isaac Butt's leadership of the Home Rule Party had become ineffective. As a result, Charles Stewart Parnell superseded Butt in the leadership of the party, though Butt remained nominal head. Butt died in the autumn of 1879, and was temporarily succeeded by William Shaw. The following year, when Disraeli dissolved Parliament and called for new elections, Mahon was returned. At a party meeting before Parliament met, Mahon proposed the election of Parnell as head of the party. Parnell defeated Shaw.

After Parliament was dissolved, Mahon had proposed to Shaw that Captain William O'Shea succeed Lord Francis Conyngham as the other representative from Clare. O'Shea was elected along with Mahon and a deep friendship developed between the two men.

In 1885, Mahon failed to obtain renomination in Clare. Many in his constituency felt the need for a younger representative in Parliament. Mahon succeeded, however, in a bid for office in 1887 as representative of Carlow. During this time also Mahon found himself distracted by a personal matter--a lengthy and unpleasant court case contesting the will of his son, St. John, who had died in 1884.

Mahon's health began to fail as he approached his ninetieth year. When his attendance in Parliament became irregular, Parnell and Justin McCarthy (leader of the party in Parnell's absence) requested that Mahon try to attend more frequently, especially when the party was to vote on an important issue. Mahon died in London on June 15, 1891. Shortly before his death, he publicly repudiated Parnell, with whom he had broken over the issue of the O'Shea divorce. Mahon was buried in the O'Connell circle in Glasnevin Cemetery on June 21, 1891.

## Scope Note

The O'Gorman Mahon Papers comprise some three thousand documents, the personal records of Charles James Patrick Mahon (ca1800-1891), a flamboyant figure in nineteenth-century Irish politics. He styled himself "The O'Gorman Mahon," using his mother's maiden name and his surname in this title reminiscent of the Irish chieftains. The first and largest part of the papers (boxes 1-7) consists largely of correspondence received by Mahon during the years from 1824 to 1891, but includes also several drafts of letters from Mahon. The correspondence is arranged chronologically. The second segment of the collection (boxes 7-9) contains materials from court cases in which Mahon was involved, documents pertaining to various business ventures, a letter-book, diary (1870-1874), passport, election posters (etc.), and two scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, mainly about the Irish political issues in which Mahon was involved.

Some of Mahon's numerous correspondents include: Ellen Courtenay, Daniel O'Connell, Ferdinand de Lesseps, Lord Palmerston, Ann Choquet, John Adams-Acton, Henry Cardinal Manning, Captain William O'Shea, Lord Francis Conyngham, Charles Stewart Parnell, William Gladstone, John Redmond, James O'Kelly, T.P. O'Connor, and G.O. Trevelyan.

The collection also includes a series of letters and a prison diary from Melville White, who appealed to Mahon for help in securing his release while Mahon was visiting Peru. Another large body of documents in the collection pertains to a venture Mahon was involved in to establish the Anglo-Prussian Bank. Letters from Mahon's ward, Ann Choquet, makes up a significant portion of the collections as does correspondence from the sculptor John Adams-Acton and his wife Jeanie, a writer. Adams-Acton was supposedly commissioned by Mahon to execute a bust of Pope Leo XIII. When Mahon collection was first organized it contained one of the largest known bodies of letter of Captain William O'Shea.

Perhaps the most noteworthy segment of the correspondence is the group of nine letters from Charles Stewart Parnell, dated from 1880 to 1888, including three written from Kilmainham Prison. In addition, there are three drafts of letters from Mahon to Parnell, including one of a reply to a telegram sent by Parnell. It was written after the O'Shea divorce proceedings had been completed and Parnell was attempting to reassert his authority in the party.

## Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

## Subject Headings

- O'Shea, William Henry
- Mahon, James Patrick, called The O'Gorman Mahon, 1800?-1891
- Parnell, Charles Stewart, 1846-1891
- Ireland -- Politics and government, 19th century

## INVENTORY

**Box 1**

**Folder 1**

1824,1826

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-001>

**Box 1**

**Folder 2**

1827

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-002>

**Box 1**

**Folder 3**

1828

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-003>

**Box 1**

**Folder 4**

1829 March-August

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-004>

**Box 1**

**Folder 5**

1829 September-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-005>

**Box 1**

**Folder 6**

1830 January August

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-006>

**Box 1**

**Folder 7**

1830 July-August

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-007>

**Box 1**

**Folder 8**

1830 September

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-008>

**Box 1**

**Folder 9**

1830 October

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-009>

**Box 1**

**Folder 10**

1830 November-December

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**Box 1**

**Folder 11**

1830

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0001-011>

**Box 1**

**Folder 12**

1831 January

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**Folder 13**

1831 February-March

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**Folder 14**

1831 April

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**Folder 15**

1831 May

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**Box 1**

**Folder 16**

1831 June-September

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**Folder 17**

1831 October-December

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**Folder 18**

1832

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**Folder 19**

1833-1836

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**Folder 20**

1850-1852

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**Folder 21**

1853-1858

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**Box 1**

**Folder 22**

1859 January-June

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**Box 1**

**Folder 23**

1859 July-December

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**Box 2**

**Folder 1**

1860 February

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1860 March

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**Folder 3**

1860 April-May

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**Folder 4**

1860 June-August

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1860 September

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1860 October-November

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**Folder 7**

1860 December

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**Folder 8**

1861 January-March

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**Folder 9**

1861 April

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**Folder 10**

1861 May-August

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**Folder 11**

1863-1864

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**Folder 12**

1865

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**Folder 13**

1867-1868

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**Folder 14**

1869 January-March

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1869 April-June

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1869 July-August

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**Folder 17**

1869 September-December

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**Folder 18**

1870 January-April

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**Folder 19**

1870 May

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1870 July

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1870 August-November

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1870 December

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**Box 2****Folder 24**

1871 January-March

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1871 April

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1871 May-June

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1871 July-August

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1871 September-October

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1871 November-December

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**Box 3****Folder 1**

1872 January-June

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1872 September-October

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1872 November-December

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1873 January

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1873 September-December

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**Folder 10**

1874 January-June

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1874 July-August

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1874 September-October

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1874 November-December

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1875 January

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1875 November-December

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**Box 3****Folder 20**

1875-1879 No precise dates

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**Box 3****Folder 21**

1876 January-February

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1876 March-April

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1876 May-October

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1876 November-December

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**Box 4****Folder 1**

1877 January-April

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1877 May-June

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1877 September-October

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1878 January-March

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1878 October-December

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1879 January-April

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1879 November

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**Folder 20**

1880 January

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1880 March

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**Box 4**

**Folder 23**

1880 April-May

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**Box 4**

**Folder 24**

1880 June-August

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0004-024>

**Box 4**

**Folder 25**

1880 September-October

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0004-025>

**Box 4**

**Folder 26**

1880 November-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0004-026>

**Box 5**

**Folder 1**

1881 January-March

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**Folder 2**

1881 April-May

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1881 June

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View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-008>

**Box 5**

**Folder 9**

1882 February-March

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-009>

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**Folder 10**

1882 April-May

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-010>

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**Folder 11**

1882 June-July

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-011>

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**Folder 12**

1882 August-September

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-012>

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**Folder 13**

1882 October-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-013>

**Box 5****Folder 14**

1883 January-March

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-014>

**Box 5****Folder 15**

1883 April-May

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-015>

**Box 5****Folder 16**

1883 June-August

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-016>

**Box 5****Folder 17**

1883 September

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-017>

**Box 5****Folder 18**

1883 October

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-018>

**Box 5****Folder 19**

1883 November-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-019>

**Box 5****Folder 20**

1884 January-February

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-020>

**Box 5****Folder 21**

1884 March-April

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-021>

**Box 5****Folder 22**

1884 May-June

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-022>

**Box 5****Folder 23**

1884 July-September

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-023>

**Box 5****Folder 24**

1884 October-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0005-024>

**Box 6**

**Folder 1**

1885 January-February

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-001>

**Box 6**

**Folder 2**

1885 March-September

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-002>

**Box 6**

**Folder 3**

1885 October

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-003>

**Box 6**

**Folder 4**

1885 November-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-004>

**Box 6**

**Folder 5**

1886 January-April

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-005>

**Box 6**

**Folder 6**

1886 May-June

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-006>

**Box 6**

**Folder 7**

1886 July

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-007>

**Box 6**

**Folder 8**

1886 August-November

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-008>

**Box 6**

**Folder 9**

1886 December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-009>

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**Folder 10**

1887 January-February

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-010>

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**Folder 11**

1887 March-April

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-011>

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**Folder 12**

1887 May-August

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-012>

**Box 6****Folder 13**

1887 September

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-013>

**Box 6****Folder 14**

1887 October-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-014>

**Box 6****Folder 15**

1887 January-April

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-015>

**Box 6****Folder 16**

1887 May-July

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-016>

**Box 6****Folder 17**

1887 August-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-017>

**Box 6****Folder 18**

1889 January-April

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-018>

**Box 6****Folder 19**

1889 May-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-019>

**Box 6****Folder 20**

1890 January-June

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-020>

**Box 6****Folder 21**

1890 July-October

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-021>

**Box 6****Folder 22**

1890 November-December

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0006-022>

**Box 7****Folder 1**

1891 January-May

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-001>

**Box 7**

**Folder 2**

Mahon vs. Chapman, affidavits

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-002>

**Box 7**

**Folder 3**

Mahon vs. Chapman, affidavits

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-003>

**Box 7**

**Folder 4**

Mahon vs. Chapman, depositions

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-004>

**Box 7**

**Folder 5**

Mahon vs. Chapman, request for opinion from Attorney-General

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-005>

**Box 7**

**Folder 6**

Mahon vs. Chapman, evidence for Chapman

View digitized documents, part 1. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-006-01>

View digitized documents, part 2. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-006-02>

View digitized documents, part 3. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-006-03>

**Box 7**

**Folder 7**

Mahon vs. Chapman, evidence for Chapman

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-007>

**Box 7**

**Folder 8**

Hilliard Bankruptcy case, appeal to House of Lords

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-008>

**Box 7**

**Folder 9**

Hilliard Bankruptcy case, petition and proceedings

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-009>

**Box 7**

**Folder 10**

Hilliard Bankruptcy case, petition and proceedings

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-010>

**Box 7**

**Folder 11**

Anglo-Prussian Bank, charter

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0007-011>

**Box 8**

**Folder 1**

Undated letters, A-H

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0008-001>

**Box 8**

**Folder 2**

Undated letters, I-Z

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0008-002>

**Box 8**

**Folder 3**

Miscellaneous-accounts, documents, etc

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0008-003>

**Box 8**

**Folder 4**

Speeches, resolution poems, memoranda, quotations, etc

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0008-004>

**Box 8**

**Folder 5**

Newspaper clippings

**Box 9**

**Folder 1**

Diary, 1870-1874; Bankbook, 1879

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0009-001>

**Box 9**

**Folder 2**

Letter books, 1871-1878

View digitized documents, part 1. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0009-002-01>

View digitized documents, part 2. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0009-002-02>

**Box 9**

**Folder 3**

Passport, 1852-1887

**Box 9**

**Folder 4**

Financial memoranda

**Box 10**

Campaign posters, 1870s

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/mahon-0010-001>