

# Randolph, James Robbins, Papers

James Robbins Randolph Papers

1922-1969



## Title Statement

Randolph, James Robbins, Papers James Robbins Randolph Papers, 1922-1969 Ms.1971.001

**Author:** John M. Jackson, Archivist

## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)  
560 Drillfield Drive  
Newman Library, Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
Business Number: 540-231-6308  
specref@vt.edu  
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



2011 (CC0 1.0)

## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2023-08-07 13:35:48 -0400.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

**Descriptive Rules:** Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

Ms.1971.001

### Unit Date

1922-1969

### Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

### Abstract

This collection consists of the papers of engineer, mathematician and physicist James Robbins Randolph, including notes, calculations, correspondence and writings.

### Creator

Randolph, James Robbins, 1891-1969

### Extent

1.5 Cubic Feet 1 box

### Physical Location

**Please note:** This collection is in off-site storage and requires 2-3 days notice for retrieval. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives for more information.

## Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

# Administrative Information

## Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

## Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

The copyright status of this collection is unknown. Copyright restrictions may apply. Contact Special Collections and University Archives for assistance in determining the use of these materials.

Reproduction or digitization of materials for personal or research use can be requested using our reproduction/digitization form: <http://bit.ly/scuareproduction>. Reproduction or digitization of materials for publication or exhibit use can be requested using our publication/exhibition form: <http://bit.ly/scuapublication>. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives ([specref@vt.edu](mailto:specref@vt.edu) or 540-231-6308) if you need assistance with forms or to submit a completed form.

## Source of Acquisition

The James Robbins Randolph Papers were donated to Special Collections and University Archives in 1971.

## Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the James Robbins Randolph Collections commenced and was completed in September 2011.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], James Robbins Randolph Papers, Ms1971-001, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

# Biographical Note

James Robbins Randolph, instructor in mechanical engineering and physics, was born on August 4, 1891. Randolph's father, Lingan Strother Randolph, Sr., served as a professor of mechanical engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI), and the younger Randolph received a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from VPI in 1912. After obtaining a master's degree in physics from Harvard in 1921, Randolph taught physics at Simmons College and Mt. Allison University from 1920 to 1922, was a physicist for the National Bureau of Standards from 1922 to 1925, then taught mechanical engineering at George Washington University and Rhode Island State College from 1925 to 1930. From 1931 to 1943, Randolph was an officer in the U. S. Army Reserve Ordnance Department (and in active service from 1942 to 1943), attaining the rank of major. Randolph returned to teaching in 1943, serving successively in the physics and mechanical engineering departments of Western Maryland College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the Pratt Institute, and Fairleigh Dickinson College. Randolph maintained memberships in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the American Physical Society, the Army Ordnance Association, and the American Rocket Society. In 1947/1948, he served as editor of the *Journal of the American Rocket Society*. James R. Randolph died on February 4, 1969, and is buried at Riverside Cemetery, Springvale, Maine.

# Scope and Content

This collection contains the papers of engineer and physicist James Robbins Randolph and includes such materials as notes, calculations, writings (published and unpublished) and correspondence.

Reflected in the papers are Randolph's research interests in the use of rockets in warfare and space travel. The collection includes several notebooks of calculations and notes on rocket design, planetary atmospheres, and comets. One of Randolph's particular interests during World War II was the subject of mental mobility, the ability to effectively adapt to rapid and extreme changes. Randolph actively researched and promoted mental mobility as a means to combat Germany's blitzkrieg war strategy. The collection contains Randolph's research file on the subject, including correspondence and reports, as well as his published writings appearing in *Field Artillery Journal* and *Cavalry Journal*.

Also included in the collection is a typescript draft of Randolph's unpublished 1920s science fiction novel, "The Neighbor World," including an introduction by Robert H. Goddard. (Randolph referred to his novel, written in the 1920s, as the first serious attempt by a science fiction writer to describe in detail the construction of a rocket that would actually fly to Mars and back.) Accompanying the typescript are summaries, appendices and illustrations for the book, as well as the first section of an unpublished sequel.

The collection also holds Randolph's writings on a number of disparate subjects, including book-length manuscripts on blitzkrieg and retirement planning. Several files contain collections of Randolph's essays, many focusing on the logistics of space travel. Elsewhere, in several pieces, Randolph speculates that medieval legends of fairies may have been based on visitors from Mars. Much of Randolph's writing promotes capitalism over communism and is particularly anti-Soviet. Other essay topics include opinions on current events and relations between the sexes. In one piece, titled "Amanda: Colored Daughter of Southwest Virginia," Randolph reminisces about his family's early 20th-century relationship with an African American family in Blacksburg Virginia (probably the John and Amanda Rollins family).

Completing the collection is a folder of general materials, including a studio portrait of Randolph, some memoranda from Fairleigh Dickinson College, an American Ordnance Association membership certificate, and several pieces of correspondence exchanged between Randolph and T. Marshall Hahn and James B. Eades of Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1963.

## Keywords

Archives of American Aerospace Exploration (AAAE)

Physicists

Physics

Science and Technology

University History

Students and alumni

Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (1896-1944)

## Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the James Robbins Randolph Papers by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

## Arrangement

Randolph's notebooks have been moved intact into file folders, and the folders have been divided according to content type, with a set of calculation/notes files preceding files of essays and other writings. Both sets are arranged alphabetically, with the exception of the files for the unpublished book manuscript for "The Neighbor World," all of which are arranged in front of the essays and other writings.

## Description of Subordinate Components

### Cometesimal Hypothesis

**Unit Date** 1964, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

### Cometsimal Hypothesis of Planet Atmospheres

**Unit Date** 1958-1964, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

### Have and Have-Not Planets and Satellites

**Unit Date** 1966-1968, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

**Isothermal Expansion in Nozzles**

**Unit Date** 1948-1950, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

**Kingston Rocket**

**Unit Date** 1928-1962, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Kingston Rocket**

**Unit Date** 1948-1963, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Mars Rocket and Other Computations**

**Unit Date** 1922-1944

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

**Mechanical Engineering Department, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

**Unit Date** 1944-1947, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

**Moon**

**Unit Date** 1962-1964, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 9 (folder)

**Parabola and Circular Arc**

**Unit Date** 1941-1942, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 10 (folder)

**Planet Atmospheres**

**Unit Date** 1958, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 11 (folder)

**Review of Thermodynamics Course**

**Unit Date** 1952-1956, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 12 (folder)

**Rocket, Comet Calculations**

**Unit Date** 1925-1962, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 13 (folder)

**Rocket Design**

**Unit Date** 1944-1969, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 14 (folder)

**Rocket Designs**

**Unit Date** 1947-1949, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 15 (folder)

**Rocket Designs**

**Unit Date** 1961-1968, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 16 (folder)

**Rocket Motor Design**

**Unit Date** 1955, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 17 (folder)

**Thermodynamics I**

**Unit Date** 1963, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 18 (folder)

**Thermodynamics II**

**Unit Date** 1963

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 19 (folder)

**"The Neighbor World"**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 20 (folder)

**Physical Characteristics** [2 folders]

**"The Neighbor World" Illustrations**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 21 (folder)

**"The Neighbor World" Synopsis and Appendices**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 22 (folder)

**Bikini of the Neighbor World,**

**Unit Date** 1964

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 23 (folder)

**"Peace Between the Worlds" - pt. 1**

**Unit Date** 1968

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 24 (folder)

**"Blitzkrieg-on-Hudson"**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 25 (folder)

**"Celestial Traffic Accidents"**

**Unit Date** 1942, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 26 (folder)

**"Celestial Traffic Accidents"**

**"Comet Scars and Evolution"**

**"What Would Happen If a Comet Struck the Earth"**

**"Why Meteors Are Hot"**

**"Comets Knock Spots Out of Evolution"**

**"Geology and Comets"**

**"Voorlopers of World War III"**

**"The Land of Flying War"**

**"Defense of New England"**

**"Auto Time Table"**

**"How It Works"**

**"The Route Card"**

**"Time Tape"**

**"Red China's Secret Weapon"**

**"Why Be First on the Moon"**

**"How to Conquer a World and Not Lose It"**

**"What Will Rockets Do to History"**

**"Blind Spots"**

**"Communists in America"**

**"Communism Here and There"**

**"They Blew Up Their World" - introduction**

**"They Blew Up Their World"**

**"Guests from Other Worlds"**

**Unit Date** 1956, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 27 (folder)

**"Guests from Other Worlds"**

**"The Flight of the Fairies"**

**"What Will Rockets Do to War"**

**"Are Planets Habitable?" (reprinted from Ordnance**

**"The Town of Stalin"**

**"Magnesium as Rocket Fuel"**

**Unit Date** 1962, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 28 (folder)

**"The Martian Invasion"**

**Unit Date** 1953-1958, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 29 (folder)

**"Maybe We Are Not Wanted on Mars"**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 30 (folder)

**"Maybe We Are Not Wanted on Mars"**

**"American Scientists Will Manufacture a Small Moon Which Will Circulate Steadily Around the Earth"**

**"Predicting Space Discoveries"**

**"Women in Government"**

**"Why Men Don't Like Cruise Ships"**

**"Part Time Wives"**

**"Unproctored Examinations"**

**"Honorary Christians"**

**"Amanda: Colored Daughter of Virginia"**

**"Misreading the Future"**

**Mental Mobility**

**Unit Date** 1938-1962, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 31 (folder)

**Physical Characteristics** [2 folders]

**"Monroe Effect Rocket"**

**Unit Date** 1969, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 32 (folder)

**"Rise and Fall of Blitzkrieg" (pt. 2, ch. 7)**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 33 (folder)

**"The Rise and Fall of Blitzkrieg"**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 34 (folder)

**"Stretching Your Pension Dollar"**

**Unit Date** 1954-1956, n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 35 (folder)

**"A Soldier with Gideon"**

**Unit Date** n. d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 36 (folder)

**"A Soldier With Gideon"**

**"Peace is Wonderful"**

**"Christian Civilization"**

**"Christianity's Secret Weapon"**

**"The Christian's Secret Weapon"**

**"Riotproof Capitol"**

**"Why We Are Flunking the Science Talent Search"**

**"How Wars Cause Depressions"**

**"Let's Go to Venus"**

**"How to Go to Venus"**

**"Man on a Black Horse"**

**"Education as a Paying Business"**

**"Under Strange Flags"**

**"Why Men Want War"**

**"Rich Uncles"**

**"City Hicks"**

**"The Four Horsemen"**

**"Men in Mothballs"**

**"Key to Coexistence"**

**"Magnesium as Rocket Fuel"**

**"Meat for Amanda"**

**"Valinia"**

**"Were Brownies Martians"**

**"Fairyland"**

**"Mars Could Have Pines"**

### **General Materials**

**Unit Date** 1936-1963, n. d.

### **Studio Portrait of Randolph**

**Unit Date** n. d.

### **Illustration of Kingston station [probably for "The Neighbor World"]**

**Unit Date** n. d.

### **Physics Class Schedules**

**Fairleigh Dickinson College Memoranda**

**Unit Date** 1954

**The Common Defense (Bulletin 168)**

**Unit Date** 1954-10

**American Ordnance Association Certificate of Membership**

**Unit Date** 1936

**Correspondence with Virginia Tech (T. Marshall Hahn and James B. Eades)**

**Unit Date** 1963