



Guide to the John Ridlon papers, 1846-1936 and undated

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Summary

Collection Title:

John Ridlon papers, 1846-1936 and undated

Creator:

Ridlon, John, 1852-1936

Source:

Josiah Charles Trent History of Medicine Collections (Duke University)

Abstract:

John Ridlon was a physician, surgeon, and professor specializing in orthopedic medicine, with a focus on pediatrics, practicing in New York State and Chicago, Illinois. Collection consists of medical case files and casebooks; articles and papers; correspondence; ephemera; diplomas; photographs in the form of prints, negatives, and glass plates; and medical illustrations. Accompanying the papers is a set of 118 black-and-white images from a medical-military training camp in Plattsburgh, N.Y. around 1916. There are also a handful of photographic portraits of Ridlon. Correspondents include: R. Osgood, A. Steindler, P.D. Wilson, R.K. Ghormley, J.E. Goldthwait, A.B. Judson, R.W. Lovett, H.W. Orr, S.W. Mitchell, and H. Cushing. Acquired as part of the History of Medicine Collections at Duke University.

Extent:

8.0 Linear Feet (29 boxes; 2 oversize folders)

Language:

Materials in English

Collection ID:

RL.01092

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1b359>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], John Ridlon papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

Collection documents John Ridlon's medical career and consists of medical case files, casebooks, articles and papers, correspondence, photographic materials, diplomas and ephemera, and medical illustrations relating to Ridlon's research and writings on orthopedics. Case files - a large majority of them pediatric - include tubercular infection of the joints, scoliosis and other deformities, spondylitis (spinal arthritis), and limb or joint injuries. There are hundreds of medical illustrations in the form of photographs mounted on card stock, photographic prints of early X-rays, and printed illustrations on loose sheets that show patients, symptoms or deformities, and treatments such as surgery, braces and casts; many of them were used by Ridlon in his published works.

Among the bound volumes are six casebooks (1889-1892); four letterbooks (1873-1903); an autograph manuscript, "Some comments on the principles and practice of Hugh Owen Thomas" (undated); a scrapbook of figures and illustrations (undated); three volumes composed of reprint clippings and manuscript notes (undated); and a bound volume of 88 reprints (1888-1923). There are also many diplomas and certificates received by Ridlon from various educational institutions.

Correspondents include: R. Osgood, A. Steindler, P. D. Wilson, R. K. Ghormley, J. E. Goldthwait, A. B. Judson, R. W. Lovett, H. W. Orr, S. W. Mitchell, H. Cushing. In addition to discussing medical cases and research, letters also document Ridlon's involvement with two charitable institutions: the Home for Destitute Crippled Children (Chicago) and the Country Home for Convalescent Children.

Accompanying the professional papers is a set of 118 black-and-white photographs taken during Ridlon's service as a surgeon in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during World War I. The photos were taken by several photographers at a medico-military training camp in Plattsburgh, N.Y., around 1916. Ridlon reported on these experiences at a medical conference in 1917 and used a set of 67 glass lantern slides to illustrate the lecture, 49 of which survive in the collection; a reprint of this paper is also available in the collection.

In the same series there is a set of 30 glass plate negatives and still image nitrate film negatives (restricted); these materials are closed to use but contain duplicate or similar images found in the print photographs. Finally, there are several portraits of Ridlon, chiefly photographs taken in his office and examination room, taken in 1911. A glass plate negative with a bust portrait of Ridlon rounds out the photographic series.

The collection also contains several folders of ephemera, early professional diplomas and certificates, letters of recommendation for Ridlon's Chicago appointment in 1892, and his obituary.

Acquired as part of the History of Medicine Collections at Duke University.

Biographical/Historical

John Frederick Ridlon, born in Vermont in 1852, was a physician, surgeon, and professor specializing in orthopedic medicine, practicing in Chicago, Illinois. He served as president of the American Orthopedic Association (1895) and was its secretary for many years. At 65 years of age he served in the U.S. Medical Corps during World War I, advancing to major. He died in Illinois in 1936.

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Arrangement

Arranged in the following series: **Casebooks, Correspondence, Medical Images, Patient Case Files, Photographic Materials, and Writings and Memorabilia**. There is also a group of oversize diplomas and certificates.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Access note. Series contains fragile materials in the form of glass plate negatives, lantern slides, and nitrate negatives and may require extra

assistance from staff. Contact Research Services for access. Most if not all of the images are available in the collection as photographic prints.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Acquisition Information

The John Ridlon papers were transferred to the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library from the Medical Center Library in 2011. An addition was received in 2022.

Processing Information

Processed and encoded by Willeke Sandler, April 2012, and Levi Crews and Paula Jeannet, March 2014.

Updated nitrate film and glass negatives description and rehousing by Paula Jeannet, March 2019. Glass lantern slides set processed and description added by Neil Rogers and Paula Jeannet, June 2019.

Preservation work for original wooden box for lantern slides performed by Conservation staff, 2019.

Accession 2022-0129 added by Leah Tams, August 2022.

Two related John Ridlon collections were merged to form this collection: one was received directly from the Ridlon estate; the other was originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection.

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Names and Subjects

- Ankylosing spondylitis -- History
- Military bases -- New York (State) -- Photographs
- Medicine, Military -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Military training camps -- New York (State) -- Plattsburgh -- Photographs
- Orthopedists -- Correspondence
- Orthopedic surgery -- United States -- History

- Orthopedics -- United States -- History
- Pediatrics
- Pediatric orthopedics -- History
- Physicians -- Correspondence
- Scoliosis -- History
- Scoliosis in children -- History
- Tuberculosis -- History
- Tuberculosis in children -- History
- World War, 1914-1918 -- Medical care -- United States -- Photographs
- Chicago (Ill.)
- Plattsburgh (N.Y.)
- Black-and-white photographs
- Gelatin silver prints
- Glass plate negatives
- Lantern slides
- Negatives (photographs)
- Scrapbooks
- X-rays
- Goldthwait, Joel Ernest, b. 1866
- Ghormley, Ralph K. (Ralph Kalb), 1893-1959
- Judson, Adoniram Brown, 1837-1916
- Lovett, Robert W. (Robert Williamson), 1859-1924
- Lorenz, Adolf, 1854-1946
- Orr, H. Winnett (Hiram Winnett), 1877-1956
- Mitchell, S. Weir (Silas Weir), 1829-1914
- Osgood, Robert Bayley, 1873-1956
- Ridlon, John, 1852-1936
- Steindler, Arthur, b. 1878
- United States. Army. Medical Reserve Corps
- Wilson, Philip (Philip Duncan), b. 1886
- Cushing, Harvey, 1869-1939
- Josiah Charles Trent History of Medicine Collections (Duke University)

Collection Inventory

Casebooks, 1889-1892

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Scope and Contents note

Bound holograph manuscripts containing case notes on orthopedic patients with a variety of complaints, including descriptions of each case and patient data such as name, age, sex, address, dates of consultations, diagnosis, treatment, and outcome. Includes several one-page manuscripts laid in as well as outlines made of patient body parts showing measurements of the actual curvature and

size of affected areas. There are many other patient case studies in folders housed in the **Patient Case Files Series**. Medical records are open for research use.

Vol. 1, 1889 Aug.-1891 Aug.	Box 1
Vol. 2, 1889-1892	Box 1
Vol. 3, 1890 Jan.-Sept.	Box 1
Vol. 4, 1890 Sept.-1891 May	Box 1
Vol. 5, 1891 May-Dec.	Box 2
Vol. 6, 1891-1892	Box 2

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Correspondence, 1873-1936

Physical Description: 10 boxes

Scope and Contents note

Contains correspondence, as well as associated account sheets, contracts, meeting minutes, deeds, loan agreements, bylaws, printed material, bills and receipts, reports, some photographs, reprints, clippings, and typed manuscripts. Correspondents include: R. Osgood, A. Steindler, P. D. Wilson, R. K. Ghormley, J. E. Goldthwait, A. B. Judson, R. W. Lovett, H. W. Orr, S. W. Mitchell, H. Cushing. Letters also document Ridlon's involvement with two charitable institutions: the Home for Destitute Crippled Children and the Country Home for Convalescent Children.

Correspondence, A-B	Box 3
Correspondence, C-E	Box 4
Correspondence, F-H	Box 5
Correspondence, H-K	Box 6
Correspondence, L-M	Box 7
Correspondence, M-P	Box 8
Correspondence, Q-T	Box 9
Correspondence, U-Z	Box 10

Letterbooks, 1873-1880, 1895

Box 11

Physical Description: 2 vols.

Scope and Contents note

Bound outgoing correspondence in both typed and holograph scripts, containing transcriptions of correspondence by Ridlon concerning financial and professional matters.

Letterbooks, 1895-1896, 1896-1903

Box 12

Physical Description: 2 vols.

Scope and Contents note

Bound outgoing correspondence written in both typed and holograph scripts, containing transcriptions of correspondence by Ridlon concerning financial and professional matters.

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Medical Images, 1888-circa 1920s and undated

Physical Description: 11 folders and 1 scrapbook

Scope and Contents note

Contains several hundred black-and-white images taking the form of photographs (mounted on cardstock), early X-rays, and printed illustrations, all relating to Ridlon's case studies and research on orthopedics. Many were used in his publications from the 1880s to the 1920s. The photographer may have been John Ridlon or an assistant. These historic medical images are open to use.

Images show unidentified patients with deformities and abnormalities, treatments (including braces, casts, and sometimes surgery), and outcomes. Many are pediatric patients. Original folder titles have been retained.

Other photographs in the collection are found in the Photographs Materials series and are related to Ridlon's medical training at a military base in Plattsburgh, N.Y., in 1916; also includes portraits of John Ridlon.

"A collection of orthopedic illustrations," circa
1890s-1920s

Box 10

Physical Description: 2 folders; approx. 200 items

Scope and Contents note

Includes one reproduction of early chest/shoulders X-ray. Also includes set of hand-inked reproductions of 16th-century treatments. All undated except

1911 illustration. Originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection, John Ridlon papers.

Spinal deformities and treatments, undated
(mounted on card stock) Box 10

Physical Description: 5 items

"Congenital dislocations of the hip," 1888-1904 Box 13

Physical Description: 5 folders; 27 items

Scope and Contents note

Includes photo prints of early X-rays.

"Pseudo hypertrophied paralysis and curves,"
undated Box 13

Physical Description: 3 items

Scrapbook of figures and illustrations, circa
1900 Box 14

Physical Description: 24 cm. 70 leaves

Scope and Contents note

Bound scrapbook containing illustrations of braces and other tools for treating patients with orthopedic complaints, diagrams illustrating the use of these tools, and photographs and drawings of affected persons. Images were probably used in Ridlon's published writings.

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Patient Case Files, 1880s-1920s

Physical Description: 27 folders

Scope and Contents note

Folders of case summaries maintained by Dr. Ridlon, most of them dating from 1900 to 1915. At least half are pediatric cases. Cases include Pott's disease (tuberculosis of the spine), spondylitis, scoliosis (congenital and idiopathic), tubercular infection of the joints, other joint diseases and injuries, and congenital deformities.

Case summaries are typically one to two pages long, and include patient names, ages, residence, family history, symptoms, measurements, treatment, and outcome. Occasionally other documents such as referral letters and records of tests such as urinalyses are attached. These historic medical records are open to research.

Originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection, John Ridlon papers.

Patient case files, A-M

Box 18

Physical Description: 1-14 of 27 folders

Patient case files, N-Z, and report

Box 19

Physical Description: 15-27 of 27 folders

Scope and Contents note

The last folder consists of a report titled "Investigation of the value of tuberculin in the treatment of tuberculous joint disease at the Home for Destitute Crippled Children [Chicago]" , circa 1920.

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Photographic Materials, circa 1910-1932

Physical Description: 11 boxes

Scope and Contents note

Contains 118 black-and-white photographs of the first medical military training camp at Plattsburgh, N.Y., circa 1916. Camp scenes include cook stations, mules and wagons, a water truck, machine gun pits, headquarters tents, officers and privates, and scenes from drills and reviews of infantry and cavalry. Several photographs show Ridlon during litter drills. Most of the prints are captioned, with some names present on the backs.

Accompanying the photo prints is a set of 49 lantern slides bearing black-and-white positive images of scenes from the Plattsburgh medical camp, most if not all of which are duplicated in the photographic prints in this same series. The original slide set numbered 67 slides. Accompanying the slides is a lecture script presented by John Ridlon at a conference in 1917, describing the camp and the American preparedness for war with respect to military medicine. The lecture text is a photocopy from reprint #82 in the volume *Collected Papers of Dr. John Ridlon*, also found in this collection).

Also in this series are 30 glass plate negatives which, like the lantern slides, contain duplicate images found in the photographs folders.

A set of nitrate negatives originally in the collection was digitized and then deaccessioned in 2023. Those images are only available in digital format.

The series is rounded out by three postcards from the camp at Plattsburgh; a glass plate negative bearing a bust portrait of Ridlon; three photographic studio portraits of Ridlon; two photographs of him seated at a desk in his office, and two of him in his examination room, one of which is a duplicate. A wall calendar

seen in one image shows 1911 as the probable year the clinic photographs were taken.

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Series contains fragile materials in the form of glass plate negatives and lantern slides and may require extra assistance from staff. Contact Research Services for access. Most if not all of the images are available in the collection as photographic prints.

Photocopy of John Ridlon's paper speaking about his experiences at the U.S. Army Plattsburgh camp, 1917 Box 15

Photographs from training camp, Plattsburgh, N.Y., 1916 Box 15
Physical Description: 2 folders, 118 items

Plattsburgh, N.Y. duplicate prints and original processing firm envelopes, circa 1916 Box 15
Physical Description: 21 items

Separated Material:

Eight nitrate negatives were removed from this folder and housed separately for preservation purposes.

Postcard images of Plattsburgh camp (2) and Camp Zachary Taylor base Hospital with staff, Louisville, Kentucky, 1916-1917 Box 15
Physical Description: 3 items

Portraits of John Ridlon, circa 1910s, 1932 Box 15
Physical Description: 3 items

Scope and Contents note

Two portraits from around 1910 measure 7x10 and 8x11 inches, while the bust-length profile photograph from 1932 measures 4.75x6.75 inches.

Photographs of Ridlon in his office and examination room, 1911 Box 15
Physical Description: 4 items

Scope and Contents note

Photographs are each mounted on board and measure 8x10 and 9x11 inches. One is a duplicate.

Glass plate negative, bust-length studio
photograph portrait of John Ridlon, circa 1910

Box 20

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plate that may require extra assistance from staff. Contact Research Services for access.

Scope and Contents

Positive photographic portraits of John Ridlon are available in the collection.

Glass plate negatives of military training camp,
circa 1916

Box 21

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plates that may require extra assistance from staff. Most if not all of these images are available in the photographs series. Contact Research Services for access.

Glass plate negatives of military training camp,
circa 1916

Box 22

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plates that may require extra assistance from staff. Most if not all of these images are available in the photographs series. Contact Research Services for access.

Glass plate negatives of military training camp,
circa 1916

Box 23

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plates that may require extra assistance from staff. Most if not all of these images are available in the photographs series. Contact Research Services for access.

Glass plate negatives of military training camp,
circa 1916

Box 24

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plates that may require extra assistance from staff. Most if not all of these images are available in the photographs series. Contact Research Services for access.

Glass plate negatives of military training camp,
circa 1916

Box 25

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plates that may require extra assistance from staff. Most if not all of these images are available in the photographs series. Contact Research Services for access.

Glass plate negatives of military training camp,
circa 1916

Box 26

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plates that may require extra assistance from staff. Most if not all of these images are available in the photographs series. Contact Research Services for access.

Glass lantern slides with black-and-white
photographs of WWI military medical training
camp, circa 1916

Box 27
Box 28

Physical Description: 49 items
2 boxes

Scope and Contents

These lantern slides contain positive images of a military-medical training camp in Plattsburgh, N.Y., where Ridlon spent some time probably in 1916. The accompanying lecture text indicates there were originally 67 lantern slides; 49 survived and are in this series. About half were created for Ridlon by the Victor Animatograph Corporation of Davenport, Iowa (founded in 1910).

Duplicate images for most or all of these slides can be found in the photographs series. Slides measure 3 1/4 x 4 1/2 inches and are in excellent condition.

Access Restrictions:

Access note. Contains fragile materials in the form of glass plates that may require extra assistance from staff. Contact Research Services for access.

Original wooden box for glass lantern slides set,
circa 1910s

Box 29

Physical Description: This long wooden box belonging to John Ridlon once housed the set of glass lantern slides that have been rehoused by library staff in special glass plate boxes. The wooden box has also been rehoused by Conservation staff in a custom protective enclosure.

Access Restrictions:

Item is fragile and restricted to use; for access please contact the curator for the History of Medicine Collections.

Plattsburgh, N.Y. training camp negatives
(digitized nitrate negatives), circa 1916 (online
item available)

Digital Object: [Plattsburgh, N.Y. training camp negatives \(NITRATE\), circa 1916](#)

Location of Originals:

Original nitrate negatives were digitized for access in 2023 and then deaccessioned. Only digital copies remain.

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Writings and Memorabilia, 1873-1936 and undated

Scope and Contents note

Series includes handwritten and typed manuscripts describing Ridlon's research into surgical and therapeutic treatments for conditions such as scoliosis, spondylitis, and other diseases or deformities. Also includes several folders of ephemera, letters of reference, diplomas and certificates. Ridlon's obituary is also included.

The writings are divided into several sections: a set of bound volumes containing manuscripts and reprints; a series of reprints, arranged in alphabetical order by title; and a folder of loose newsletters and articles.

"Some Comments on the Principles and Practice
of Hugh Owen Thomas, by John Ridlon,"
undated

Box 16

Physical Description: 2 folders

Scope and Contents note

Handwritten manuscript (on the reverse of "Principles and Practice of Orthopaedic Surgery," by Philip Lewin). Hugh Owen Thomas was a Welsh

surgeon considered the father of orthopaedic surgery in Britain. Typed versions of the manuscript can be found in the Correspondence Series.

"Club-foot," circa 1900 Box 2

Physical Description: 10 cm., 22 leaves

Scope and Contents note

Bound typescript manuscript. Pages of text are mounted on to the manuscript, which is an essay by Ridlon on the congenital disorder talipes, also known as clubfoot, including illustrations of presentations of the disorder, possible treatments, and photographs of patients with the disorder.

"General Principles," circa 1900 Box 2

Physical Description: 10 cm., 31 leaves

Scope and Contents note

Bound typescript manuscript with holograph notes containing writings on the general practice of orthopedics as well as diagnosis and treatment of spondylitis and scoliosis.

"Spondylitis," circa 1900 Box 2

Physical Description: 10 cm., 72 p.

Scope and Contents note

Bound notebook written in holograph script containing writings and collected research on cases of spondylitis including causes and cures, as well as clippings pasted in, illustrated notes laid in showing spinal curvature of patients with Ridlon's notes, and two photographs of a dissection of a patient with the disorder. Includes multiple pages of both holograph and typescript notes laid in.

"Jean Pierre-David: The Man that Potted Pott",
circa 1916 Box 20

Scope and Contents

8 pages, including some editorial marks.

"Reprints: Collected Papers of Dr. John Ridlon,
Orthopedic Surgery, 1888-1923" Box 17

Physical Description: 1 vol.

Scope and Contents note

Bound volume of 88 numbered reprints, signed by John Ridlon and dated 1925. Includes typed index of titles. Reprint #82, a paper given by Ridlon at

a conference in 1917, refers to the World War I U.S. Medical Corps training camp in Plattsburgh, N.Y., featured in the photographs in this collection.

Writings by Ridlon, A-J Box 19

Physical Description: 1-9 of 24 folders

Scope and Contents note

Originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection, John Ridlon papers.

Writings by Ridlon, K-Y, notes and other various writings Box 20

Physical Description: 15 of 24 folders

Scope and Contents note

Originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection, John Ridlon papers.

Diplomas, certificates, licenses, and letter of reference, 1873-1892 Box 20

Scope and Contents note

These documents date from Ridlon's earliest professional years, before his appointment to the Chicago Medical School. As the letters and diplomas document, Ridlon matriculated from Tufts College, and went on to serve in New York City at the New York Orthopaedic Dispensary and Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, and Vanderbilt Clinic; he also served at Bellevue Hospital as attending surgeon of the Orthopedic Division (outpatient) from 1887-1889.

Ephemera, 1888-1929 and undated Box 20

Scope and Contents note

American Orthopedic Association (AOA) meeting programs, 1888, 1889, 1929; AOA banquet menus, 1899, 1906, 1909. Also includes a humorous play program and an undated business card from the N.Y. Orthopaedic Dispensary and Hospital. Also includes three copper printing plates for Ridlon's business card and other ephemeral prints. Originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection, John Ridlon papers.

Obituary, 1936 (clipping and photocopy) Box 20

Scope and Contents note

Originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection, John Ridlon papers.

Loose reprints and newsletters, 1886-1929 and undated Box 20

Scope and Contents note

Originally part of the Trent Manuscripts Collection, John Ridlon papers.

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Oversize Materials, 1846-1924

Physical Description: 2 folders

Scope and Contents note

A variety of diplomas from educational institutions, received by John Ridlon during his career. Includes diplomas from Vermont Commercial College (1868), Goddard Seminary, and Columbia University.

Diplomas, 1846-1924 Oversize-folder 1

Physical Description: 11 items

Diplomas, 1868-1892 Oversize-folder 2

Physical Description: 14 items

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