

# Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute records

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In 1829, Colonel Nathaniel Rochester and other Rochester community leaders founded the Athenaeum, an association “for the purpose of cultivating and promoting literature, science, and the arts.” The Athenaeum was located in the Reynolds Arcade and housed a meeting room and a small reading room with a library, provided by Abelard Reynolds. The Rochester Athenaeum grew into a popular cultural center for Rochesterians. It offered public lectures and debates, and began establishing a substantial library.

In 1847, the Athenaeum merged with the Mechanics Literary Association, founded in 1836 by William A. Reynolds (son of Abelard Reynolds), to form the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Association. It continued the tradition of public lectures, book reviews, and debates. The two groups merged their literary collections to create a singular library of more than 8,000 volumes covering a variety of subjects. Lectures were held at Corinthian Hall, which could hold 1,100 people, and distinguished speakers included Charles Dickens, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Frederick Douglass.

The Mechanics Institute was founded in 1885. Captain Henry Lomb, Max Lowenthal, Ezra Andrews, Frank Ritter, William Peck, and other Rochester businessmen and influential citizens established a school to provide needed technical training for skilled workers in industry. Lomb was the first president of the Board of Trustees and guided the direction of the institute until his death in 1908. Eugene Colby was appointed first teacher and principal of the Mechanics Institute. All funds for running the school were donated by the citizens of Rochester and instruction was free for the first year. The first class offered at the newly formed Mechanics Institute was mechanical drawing, held in the evening on November 23, 1885. The community response is overwhelming. More than 400 students enrolled in the institute.

In 1891, the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute merged, bringing under one roof cultural education and practical technical training. Enrollment reached 1,000 students, but by 1903, when the Mechanics Institute established its first five academic departments (Industrial Arts, Mechanic Arts and Sciences – language, mathematics, science, Manual Training, Science and Art – Mary Bliss, and the Department of Fine Arts) enrollment had increased to 3,000.

By 1940, enrollment had increased to 4,565 students, and in 1944, the institute adopted the name Rochester Institute of Technology.

## Box 1 – History – c.1900-1940s

- **Folder 1:** Annotated draft of the *History and Development of the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute*, by Eugene C. Colby – c.1925
- **Folder 2:** Draft of the *History and Development of the Rochester Athenaeum and mechanics Institute*, by Eugene C. Colby – c. 1925

- **Folder 3:** Photocopy of the *History and Development of the Rochester Athenaeum and mechanics Institute*, by Eugene C. Colby – c. 1925
- **Folder 4:** “History of the Institute” manuscript – c. 1940s
  - Appears to be largely intact, although other unrelated documents may be stuck in at various points—difficult to tell due to different formats/paper types
- **Folder 5:** Booklets about the history and progress of the Mechanics Institute and RAMI
  - “An Historical Sketch – The Mechanics Institute, 1885-1891 – The Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute, 1891-1900” (10 copies)
  - “An Eleven Years Record (1901-1911)” (3 copies)
  - “A Thirty-One Year Record 1885-1916” (3 copies)
  - “Forty-One Years 1885-1926 A Historical Resume of the Rochester Athenaeum & Mechanics Institute” (6 copies)

## **Box 2 – History – 1885-1980s**

- **Folder 1:** Various drafts of “The Idea of an Educational Center,” by John Randall and/or Carl Lomb, c. 1930-31
- **Folder 2:** Enrollment and graduation statistics, 1885-1925 and 1935-36
- **Folder 3:** “Take Rochester, for Example,” by Raymond G. Fuller, March 1938 (9 copies)
- **Folder 4:** “Historical Milestones and Characteristics” charts (in presentation binders and photocopies) documenting important events in RAMI/RIT’s history from 1829 to 1984
- **Folder 6:** Brief manuscripts, notes, and publications outlining the founding and general history of RAMI, c.1934-1965
  - Includes a photocopy of “History of the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute,” by Mrs. Georgie C. Hoke and Mark Ellingson, 1936, and a photocopy of excerpts from “Present Status of Junior College Terminal Education,” by Walter C. Eells, 1941
- **Folder 7:** Assorted authorless, undated portions of manuscripts regarding the history and function of RAMI
- **Folder 8:** Records on the “Committee on Mission,” who were appointed to investigate the origins and creation of the mission of the Mechanic’s Institute, c.1900-1920s
- **Folder 9:** Remarks on and clippings about the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rochester Athenaeum, 1930
- **Folder 10:** Memo regarding the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Mechanics Institute, 2 copies of “About Rochester Institute of Technology – An Editorial Resource Memorandum” (as prepared for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1985), and a letter regarding public relations opportunities surrounding school anniversaries, 1972 and 1985
- **Folder 11:** News clippings and records highlighting the connection between the founding of the Rochester Athenaeum and the Bush family, 1890, 1986, and 1988
- **Folder 12:** Organizational diagrams of RAMI and the Mechanics Institute, 1913 and undated
- **Folder 13:** Brochures on cooperative program in Fine Arts/Applied Arts and Education between RAMI and University of Rochester, 1941
- **Folder 14:** Technical Education News periodical publication, 1942

- **Folder 15:** Ben D. Wood publications
  - The Major Strategy of Guidance, October 1934
  - Information for Guidance, June 1935
- **Folder 16:** Radio Address by John A. Randall, “Working Night and Day for Rochester,” 1927

### Box 3 – Administrative Records – 1885-1980s

- **Folder 1:** Lists of the Board of Directors/Board of Trustees for RAMI and RIT, 1885-1984
- **Folder 2:** Constitution and By-Laws of RAMI, 1898, 1905, 1911-13
- **Folder 3:** Constitution and By-Laws of RAMI/RIT, 1929, 1942, 1944, 1953, and undated
- **Folder 4:** “Treasurer’s Reports for Year Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1911”
- **Folder 5:** Individualized Education at Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute
  - “Individualized Education at Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute” booklets, 1936 (6 copies)
  - “Individualized Instruction in the Industrial Arts Department of Rochester Mechanics Institute or ‘Serving Diversified Student Needs with A Flexible Instructional Program,’” undated

### Box 4 – Ephemera – 1880s-1980s

- **Folder 1:** Miscellaneous correspondence relating to RAMI, 1924, 1928, 1931, 1942, 1943, and undated
- **Folder 2:** Clippings and articles about RAMI/RIT, 1886, 1888, 1891, 1894, 1895, 1899-1903, 1906, 1910-1913, 1924, 1925, 1930-1932, 1934, 1936, 1938, 1940, 1943, 1944, 1962, 1984, 1985, 1987, and undated
- **Folder 3:** Maps of RAMI/Downtown Campus area
  - Includes 16 copies (and 2 photocopies) of and undated “New York State Railways Rochester Lines” map showing the location of the Institute before Broad St. was constructed
  - Also includes a CD with a map of the original 100 acre tract where RAMI was located (from Plat book of the City of Rochester, New York)
- **Folder 4:** Informational booklets from RAMI/RIT featuring images of the campus
  - “A Pictorial Outline of Courses,” undated
  - “Pictures of Rochester Athenaeum and mechanics Institute, Rochester, N.Y.,” 12 copies, c. 1911?
  - “Rochester Institute of Technology at Rochester, New York on the New York Central,” 2 copies, undated
  - A “little folder” with photographs of classes, c. 1910s
- **Folder 5:** RAMI postcards and stationary, 1893, 1917, and undated
- **Folder 6:** RAMI enrollment, application, and membership forms, graduate surveys, and report cards, c. 1880s, 1890s, 1902, 1919

- **Folder 7:** 1885-1895 RAMI Handbook of Information, and assorted informational fliers, 1889, 1890, 1893, 1899, 1900, 1902, 1904, 1905, and undated
- **Folder 8:** RAMI event tickets and dance cards, 1904, 1906, 1913, 1931, and 1932
- **Folder 9:** Institute Day programs and menus, 1901, 1903, 1905, and 1906
- **Folder 10:** Miscellaneous ephemera, including:
  - Photocopied photographs
  - "A Great Tradition" booklet (2 copies), 1930
  - Assorted items/images with RAMI logo
  - Announcement of lecture by Emily M. Bishop
  - 1940 Directory booklet for the Mechanics Institute Management Conference Association
  - "Our Class of 1907" booklet
- **Folder 11:** Museum Service bulletin, 1939/1940, referencing RAMI
- **Folder 12:** Historical sketches of M.I.