

Benjamin Smith Lyman Japanese Book Collection

1644-1898

268 items (87 linear foot)

Call no.: RB006

Collection overview

A prominent geologist and mining engineer, Benjamin Smith Lyman traveled to Japan in the 1870s at the request of the Meiji government, helping introduce modern surveying and mining techniques. Omnivorous in his intellectual pursuits, Lyman took an interest in the Japanese language and printing, collecting dozens of contemporary and antiquarian volumes during his travels.

Lyman's book collection begins with his background in the natural sciences, but runs the gamut from language to literature, religion, the arts, and culture. With several hundred volumes, the collection includes a number of works dating to the eighteenth century and earlier, and while the majority were printed in Japan, a number, particularly of the older works, are in Chinese.

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Background on Benjamin Smith Lyman

A prominent geologist and mining engineer, Benjamin Smith Lyman traveled to Japan in the 1870s at the request of the Meiji government, helping introduce modern surveying and mining techniques. Omnivorous in his intellectual pursuits, he took an interest in the Japanese language and printing, collecting dozens of contemporary and antiquarian volumes during his travels.

An accomplished and omnivorous scholar, Lyman's interests extended far beyond the geology that called him to Asia. Across nearly two decades of close study of Japan, his book collecting evolved and grew to encompass not only the breadth of the natural sciences, but geography, history, language, art, and culture. As might be expected, Lyman



Benjamin Smith Lyman (right) in Japan, ca.1879

collected maps as well.

Scope of collection

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Lyman's books are thoroughly described and included in the [library's online catalog](#).

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

The Lyman Papers were originally part of a collection donated to the Forbes Library in Northampton by Benjamin's cousin Frank Lyman in 1921. Weighing 8 tons, the collection included 4,105 books, over 1,800 in Japanese. It is chiefly these Japanese books, with the addition of others in Chinese and in Western languages pertaining to Asia, that were transferred to UMass Amherst along with the late Edo- and Meiji-era Japanese maps acquired by Lyman and a substantial collection of his papers.

Acquired from the Forbes Library.

Related Material

SCUA is also home to the [papers of Benjamin Smith Lyman](#) and other members of his family. Other significant collections of Lyman materials can be found at the American Philosophical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Hokkaido University, and in the Horace Capron papers at Yale University.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, October 2018.

Language:

English

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Search terms

Subjects

- Japan--History--1868-
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