DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Collection name: Nicholas Senn Papers (1877-2001)

Repository: Rush University Medical Center Archives

Creator: Senn, Nicholas, (1844-1908)

Call Number: 4702

Language: English

Extent:
Items: About 170 items
Linear feet: 6.5

Abstract:

Surgeon Nicholas Senn, 1844-1908, was born in Buchs, Switzerland, 31 October 1844, and moved to the United States as a child, his family settling in Ashford, Wisc. He graduated from Chicago Medical College, 1869. Senn held several positions at Rush Medical College in Chicago, Ill., and the University of Chicago from 1888, until the time of his death, mostly serving as professor of surgery and pathology. Senn's experiences as a military surgeon during the Spanish American War, 1898, and during other military events inspired Senn to suggest improvements in standards which led to medical innovations on the battlefield.

Surgeon Nicholas Senn's papers include biographical information, correspondence, and writings. Biographical information includes biographical sketches, obituaries, and several articles written about Senn and his work. Correspondence includes letters to, from, and about Senn. Writings include articles and addresses mostly written by Senn on a variety of medical topics, including abdominal surgery, plastic surgery, animal experimentation, intestine and bone diseases, microscopic diagnosis, and first aid on the battlefield. His experience with military surgery led to research on gunshot wounds, including the use of hydrogen gas to determine perforation of intestines. Pictures include reprints of photographs from the 1880s to early 1900s of Senn, Senn with others, and buildings.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Restrictions to access:

The Nicholas Senn Papers are OPEN to researchers.

Acquisitions Information:

This collection is an integration of Senn's Biographical Reference File and Senn's Medical Offprints.

Processing Information:

Processed by: Staff and Nathalie Wheaton (October 2006)

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], in the Nicholas Senn Papers, #4702, Rush University Medical Center Archives.

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Online Catalog Headings:

These and related materials may be found under the following headings in online catalogs.

Abdomen surgery—History.
Animal experimentation—History.
Chicago (Ill.)—History, 19th century.
History of medicine—United States. Chicago (Ill.)
Medical education—United States.
Pathology—History—United States.
Rush Medical College—Dept. of Surgery—History.
Rush University Medical Center—History, 19th century.
Rush University Medical Center—History, 20th century.
Senn, Nicholas, (1844-1908)
Spanish-American War, 1898—Medical aspects.
Surgery education—United States.
Surgery, Military—United States—History, 19th century.
University of Chicago—Dept. of Surgery—History.

RELATED COLLECTIONS:

Biographical Reference File: Alexander Doolas, Acc. 2001-007
O94-038 Francis H. Straus oral history
RG044000: Audio-Visual (several pictures)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Surgeon Nicholas Senn, 1844-1908, was born in Buchs, Switzerland, 31 October 1844. He moved to the United States as a child, when his family settled in Ashford, Wisconsin. In 1869, Senn graduated from Chicago Medical College and married Aurelia S.

Millhouser (spellings vary). Their children included sons Emanuel J. Senn, 1869-1947, Rush Medical College graduate, 1893, and William Nicholas Senn, 1876-1947, Rush graduate, 1900. Senn died of heart disease on January 12, 1908.

Senn's Chicago career began with his one and a half year internship at Cook County Hospital following his graduation from medical school. He then practiced medicine in Wisconsin for five years and became an attending surgeon of Milwaukee Hospital in 1874. In 1878, Senn attended courses at the University of Munich, Germany and earned a second medical degree. He returned to Chicago in 1884 to serve for three years as a Professor of Surgery at the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

From 1888 until the time of his death, Senn held several positions in surgery and pathology at Rush Medical College and the University of Chicago. Senn was instrumental in raising the medical training at Rush from two to three years and requiring applicants to the college to be high school graduates. During his time at Rush Medical College and the University of Chicago, Nicholas Senn held the following titles:

Professor of the Principles of Surgery and of Surgical Pathology, 1888-1890
Professor of Practice of Surgery and of Clinical Surgery, 1890-1898
Nicholas Senn Professor of Surgery, 1898-1905
Board of Trustees, 1895-1898
Nicholas Senn Professor and Head of the Department of Surgery, and professor of Surgery in the University of Chicago, 1905-1907
Nicholas Senn Professor of Military Surgery, and Professor of Surgery in the University of Chicago, 1907-1908

Senn became Surgeon General for both Wisconsin and Illinois in 1890. Senn gained a reputation as a military surgeon for his experiences assisting the Greeks in the Graeco-Turkish War, and assisting Japan in the Japanese-Russian War. In 1898, he served in the Spanish-American War as Surgeon General of the Sixth Army Corps in Cuba. Senn's experience treating soldiers on the battlefield led him to write several papers suggesting how conditions could be improved. His work led to innovations in army medical services. Senn traveled the world, and wrote about his travels from a medical standpoint.

Senn was a member of several professional associations. He was founder of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States. He also served as president of the American Surgical Association, 1892; of the Chicago Medical Society, 1894; and of the American Medical Association, 1897.

His areas of interest and research included work in abdominal surgery, plastic surgery, animal experimentation, intestine and bone diseases, microscopic diagnosis, and first aid on the battlefield. His experience with military surgery inspired his research on gunshot wounds, including the use of hydrogen gas to determine perforation of intestines.

COLLECTION OVERVIEW:

Surgeon Nicholas Senn's papers include biographical information, correspondence, writings, and pictures. Biographical information includes biographical sketches, obituaries, and several articles written about Senn and his work. Correspondence includes letters to, from, and about Senn. Writings include articles and addresses mostly written by Senn on a variety of medical topics, including abdominal surgery, plastic surgery, animal experimentation, intestine and bone diseases, microscopic diagnosis, and first aid on the battlefield. His experience with military surgery led to research on gunshot wounds, including the use of hydrogen gas to determine perforation of intestines. Pictures include reprints of photographs from the 1880s to early 1900s of Senn, Senn with others, and buildings, such as Rush Medical College and Senn Hall.

ARRANGEMENT OF SERIES:

1. Biographical information, 1899-2001 and undated
2. Correspondence, 1890-1996 and undated
3. Writings, 1877-1904 and undated
4. Pictures, 1880s-1900s

ITEMS SEPARATED:

Pictures related to or used in Lichtenstein's article.
Other Senn pictures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION:

Series 1. Biographical Information, 1899-2001 and undated

About 40 items
Scope Content: Biographical information includes biographical sketches, obituaries, and several articles written about Senn and his work. Manuel E. Lichtenstein's 1961 and 1963 articles about Senn and his contributions to medicine include his notes. Lichtenstein's notes include drafts, biographies, bibliographies, and articles written by or about Senn.

BOX 1

Biographical information, sketches, obituaries, 1899-2001 and undated
Bibliographies
"Nicholas Senn as a Teacher," by Frank Billings, 1908
Nicholas Senn, an Appreciation, by S. M. Wylie, 1908 (Accession Number in RushCat 3428)
"Nicholas Senn," memorial tributes, [1908?]
"Nicholas Senn, Master Surgeon, Pathologist and Teacher: Biographical Sketch, with a Complete Bibliography of his Writings," by Ella Maude Salmonsen, 1933

"Nicholas Senn's Work in Experimental Surgery and Surgical Pathology, and its Influence on the Surgery of his Time," by Arthur Dean Bevan, 1935
"Nicholas Senn, M.D.," by Manuel E. Lichtenstein, 1961 and 1963
Lichtenstein's Notes on Senn, 1960s (3 folders)
"The Development of Academic Surgery in Chicago," by Frederick Kittle, 1968

BOX 2

"Nicholas Senn," in *Senn Journal, a publication of the medical staff of Lutheran Hospital of Milwaukee*, 1970
"Nicholas Senn of Milwaukee and Chicago: His Contributions to Plastic Surgery," by Paul Natvig, 1977

Series 2. Correspondence, 1890-1996 and undated

17 items
Arrangement: chronological
Scope Content: Correspondence includes letters to, from, and about Senn. Correspondence between Senn and the president of Rush Medical College, E. L. Holmes, relates to Senn's resignation from the Chair of Principles of Surgery and Surgical Pathology, 1890. Later letters relate to Senn and his legacy at Rush.

Correspondence, 1890-1996 and undated

Series 3. Writings, 1877-1904 and undated

About 100 items
Arrangement: chronological
Scope Content: Writings include articles, addresses, and books mostly written by Senn on a variety of medical topics, including abdominal surgery, plastic surgery, animal experimentation, intestine and bone diseases, microscopic diagnosis, and first aid on the battlefield. His experience with military surgery led to research on gunshot wounds, including the use of hydrogen gas to determine perforation of intestines. One piece written by A. C. Girard is a compilation of letters he wrote to Senn. An 1894 syllabus of surgery courses written by Senn is also included. Researchers should note that Senn's original spelling of medical conditions and other terms have been retained and the accepted spelling may have changed over time. Some books are in Rush University Medical Center's library's catalog, RushCat. Researchers can search these books' accession numbers in RushCat for further bibliographical information.

"Response to the Toast: 'Legislation for a Higher Medical Standard,'" in *Chicago Medical College Alumni Association*, 1877
"A Contribution to a Knowledge of Fracture of the Rim of the Acetabulum, Based on the Reports of Twenty-Seven Cases and Experiments on the Cadaver," 1880
"The Pathology and Treatment of Epulis," 1880
"Spontaneous Osteo-Myclitis of the Long Bones," 1880

“Recent Progress in Surgery,” 1881
“The Pathology and Morbid Anatomy of Tubercle,” 1883
“On Branchial Cysts of the Neck,” 1884
“An Experimental and Clinical Study of Air-Embolism,” 1885
“Periostitis,” 1886
“The Present Status of Abdominal Surgery,” 1886
The Surgery of the Pancreas, by Nicholas Senn, 1886 (Accession Number in Rush Cat 2243)
“The Surgery of the Pancreas as based upon Experiments and Clinical Researches,” 1886
“Surgical Lesions of the Brain and its Envelopes,” 1886
“Tetanus,” 1886
“Biology of Tumors,” 1887
“Four Months Among the Surgeons of Europe, being a series of letters to Dr. Christopher Fenger,” 1887

BOX 3

“Pyaemia,” 1887
“An Experimental Contribution to Intestinal Surgery,” 1888
“Inflation of the Stomach with Hydrogen Gas in the Diagnosis of Wounds and Perforations of this Organ,” 1888
“Rectal Insufflation of Hydrogen Gas: An Infallible Test in the Diagnosis of Visceral Injury of the Gastro-Intestinal Canal in Penetrating Wounds of the Abdomen,” 1888
The Surgical Treatment of Intestinal Obstruction, by Nicholas Senn, [1888] (Accession Number in RushCat 4224)
Experimental Surgery, by Nicholas Senn, 1889 (Accession Number in RushCat 2251)
Intestinal Surgery, by Nicholas Senn, 1889 (Accession Number in RushCat 2254)
“A Plea in Favor of Early Laparotomy for Catarrhal and Ulcerative Appendicitis,” 1889

BOX 4

Surgical Bacteriology, by Nicholas Senn, 1889 (Accession Number in RushCat 2256)
“Surgical Treatment of Volvulus,” 1889
“Excision of the Rectum for Malignant Disease,” [1880s]
“Diagnosis and Operative Treatment of Gunshot Wounds of the Stomach and Intestines,” 1890
Principles of Surgery, 1st ed., by Nicholas Senn, 1890
“Two Cases of Resection of the Caecum for Carcinoma,” 1890
“The Chair of Surgery in Rush Medical College,” 1891

BOX 5

Surgical Bacteriology, 2nd ed., by Nicholas Senn, 1891 (Accession Number in RushCat 2238)
“The Surgical Treatment of Pyloric Stenosis,” 1891

“An Experimental Inquiry Concerning Elastic Construction as a Haemostatic Measure,” 1892
Tuberculosis of Bones and Joints, by Nicholas Senn, 1892 (Accession Number in RushCat 2249)
“Bloodless Amputation at the Hip-Joint by a New Method,” 1893
“Enterorrhapy; Its History, Technique and Present Status,” 1893
“Laparo-Hysterectomy: Its Indications and Technique,” 1893
“A New Method of Direct Fixation of the Fragments in Compound and Ununited Fractures,” 1893
“Some Further Remarks on Elastic Constriction as a Haemostatic Measure,” 1893
“Supra-Pubic Cystotomy in Two Stages,” 1893
“Surgical Clinic,” 1893
“Abdominal Surgery on the Battle-field,” 1894

BOX 6

Collected Papers, by Nicholas Senn, [1894?] (Accession Number in RushCat 2241)
Privately bound collection of reprints, pamphlets, and other previously published material.
“The Etiology, Pathology, and Treatment of Intestinal Fistula and Artificial Anus,” 1894
“Five Letters from Europe to Professor Nicholas Senn,” by A. C. Girard, 1894
“Syllabus of Lectures on the Practice of Surgery,” 1894
Syllabus of Lectures on the Practice of Surgery, by Nicholas Senn, 1894 (Accession Number in RushCat 2260)
“Conservative Surgery on the Battlefield and First Aid to the Wounded,” 1895
“The Early History of Vaginal Hysterectomy,” 1895

BOX 7

The Pathology and Surgical Treatment of Tumors, by Nicholas Senn, 1895
“Pompeian Surgery and Surgical Instruments,” 1895
Principles of Surgery, 2nd ed., by Nicholas Senn, 1895 (Accession Number in RushCat 2245)
“Technique of New Method of Abdominal Hysterectomy,” 1895
“The Treatment of Malignant Tumors by the Toxins of the Streptococcus,” 1895
“On Some of the Limits of the Art of Surgery,” 1896
“Classification and Surgical Treatment of Acute Peritonitis,” 1897

BOX 8

“Military Surgery in Greece and Turkey,” 1897
“The American Medical Association; Its Past, Present and Future,” presidential address, 1897
Tuberculosis of the Genito-Urinary Organs, Male and Female, by Nicholas Senn, 1897 (Accession Number in RushCat 2250)
“Army Hospitals,” 1898

"The Etiology and Classification of Cystitis," [1898?]
"Intestinal Tuberculosis," 1898
"The Modern Treatment of Gunshot Wounds in Military Practice," 1898
"A New Incision for Arthrectomy, Resection and for Reduction of Irreducible Dislocation of the Shoulder-joint," 1898
"On the Frequency of Varicocele and the Limitations of Operative Treatment for this Affection," 1898
"Excision of High Rectal Carcinoma without Sacral Resection," 1899
"1. The Qualifications and Duties of the Military Surgeon. 2. The Invasion of Porto Rico from a Medical Standpoint. 3. Typhoid Fever in the Porto Rico Campaign. 4. The Returning Army. 5. The National Cry. 6. Our Relief Societies," 1899
"A Thunder-Storm before Santiago de Cuba," 1899
War Correspondence (Hispano-American War) letters from Dr. Nicholas Senn, by Nicholas Senn, 1899

BOX 9

Surgical Monographs, Vol. 1, by Nicholas Senn, 1886-1896 (Accession Number in RushCat 2765) These are offprints and pamphlets bound together after publication.

BOX 10

Surgical Monographs, Vol. 2, by Nicholas Senn, 1883-1886 (Accession Number in RushCat 2239) These are offprints and pamphlets bound together after publication.

BOX 11

Surgical Monographs, Vol. 3, by Nicholas Senn, 1883-1887. These are offprints and pamphlets bound together after publication.

BOX 12

Medico-Surgical Aspects of the Spanish-American War, by Nicholas Senn, 1900 (Accession Number in RushCat 1189)
"The Physician as a Scientist," 1900
"Restitution of the Continuity of the Tibia by Transplantation of the Patella into an Extensive Osteomyelitic Defect," 1900
"The Present Status of the Carcinoma Question," 1901

BOX 13

Principles of Surgery, 3rd ed., by Nicholas Senn, 1901
Surgical Technic, by Friedrich von Esmarch and E. Kowalzig, edited by Nicholas Senn, 1901 (Accession Number in RushCat 3364)

BOX 14

"Life and Work of the Late Professor Christian Fenger," 1902
"Malignant Disease of the Parotid and Regional Lymphatic Glands; Pathological Condition of the Tarsometatarsal Joint…," 1902
"Osteomyelitis of the Upper Shaft of the Femur; Appendicitis with Ulcerative Caecitis…," 1902
"The Purse-String Suture in Gastrorraphy for Gunshot Wounds: An Experimental Contribution," 1902
"Case of Splenomedullary Leukaemia Successfully Treated by the Use of the Rontgen Ray," 1903
"First Dressing on the Battlefield," 1903
Surgical Notes from Four Countries and the West Indies, by Nicholas Senn, 1903 (Accession Number in RushCat 2258)
"The Surgical Treatment of Traumatic Hemorrhage of the Spleen," 1903

BOX 15

Our National Recreation Parks, by Nicholas Senn, 1904 (Accession Number in RushCat 3567)
"Tahiti from a Medical Standpoint," 1904
Around the World via India: a Medical Tour, by Nicholas Senn, 1905 (Accession Number in RushCat 2252)

BOX 16

Tahiti: The Island Paradise, by Nicholas Senn, 1906 (Accession Number in RushCat 2261)
"Experimental Researches on Cicatrization in Bloodvessels after Ligature," [undated]
"Intra-Peritoneal Myo-Fibroma of the Rectum Weighing Twelve Pounds Successfully Removed by Laparotomy," [undated]

Series 4. Pictures, 1880s-1900s and undated

About 15 items
Scope Content: Pictures include reprints and negatives of photographs of Senn, Christian Fenger, Senn at work, Senn with others, and pictures of buildings. These reprints and negatives presumably belonged to Manuel E. Lichtenstein, who wrote an article on Senn in 1961 and 1963 which used some of these pictures. His articles and notes can be found in Series 1. These are reprints of pictures taken during the 1880s to early 1900s.

BOX 17

Pictures of Individuals, including Senn and Christian Fenger
Pictures of Groups, including Senn at work and Senn with other doctors
Pictures of Buildings, including Rush Medical College, Senn Hall, St. Joseph's Hospital, and a Cook County Hospital Operating Room.

Negatives