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# The Joseph Riley Archive: collection description

*Special Collections, J.B. Priestley Library*

**Reference code**

GB 0532 RIJ.

**Title**

The Joseph Riley Archive.

**Dates**

1889-1910.

**Level of description**

Fonds.

**Extent**

0.12 metres.

**Name of creator**

Joseph Riley, 1838-1926, industrialist and Methodist preacher.

**Biographical history**

Joseph Riley was born in 1838 in Bradford Moor in the West Riding of Yorkshire, fifth of eight children in a poor family. His working life began aged seven, when he took employment with a rope-maker, followed by coal mining and factory work. After studying at night school and the Mechanics' Institute, he found work in the printing trade in several firms in Bradford. In 1857, he joined the Methodist Church, "the most momentous event in my life's history", later becoming a local preacher on the Bradford and other circuits. However, he decided not to become a minister because he had already become engaged to Hannah Jowett, whom he married in 1862. They had two sons, Herbert and Willie. Finding the printing trade did not offer scope for his ambition, Riley returned to manufacturing as a clerk and book-keeper at Walker's Mill in New Leeds, later as a manager at firms in Briarfield and Drighlington. He then went into partnership with his father-in-law Mr Jowett. Hannah having died in 1868, Riley re-married in 1872, to Mary Mann, with whom he had nine children. The Jowett partnership was dissolved in 1874

over a dispute about accounting and Riley formed a new partnership at Cleckheaton with Benjamin Musgrave. This was unsuccessful because of lack of local skills and inflated wool prices. Riley went back to work for Jowett as an employee; however, business irregularities led to the liquidation of the firm. Riley then set up on his own, later in partnership with his brother Sam, as stuff merchants "Riley Brothers", with a cloth warehouse at Cheapside in Bradford. The firm prospered; the family moved to Frizinghall and later to Baildon, and in 1889 back to Bradford. Riley, having bought his sons a "magic lantern", realised that the growing popularity of this type of entertainment could form a worthwhile business selling and loaning equipment and slides. Willie, to whom the stuff trade did not appeal, was put in charge of this business, which proved highly successful; his brothers Arnold and Bernard later joined it. However, Riley Brothers over-extended in the United States and suffered from increasing competition. Almost all Riley's stuff trade was with the Near East: the massacre of the Armenians completely destroyed his business and led to Riley's bankruptcy in 1902. The lantern slide business continued under Willie until the First World War. After Mary's death in 1910, Riley wrote his autobiography in seven weeks. He believed his misfortunes - the bankruptcy and Mary's painful death - to be punishment for refusing to enter the ministry. He died in 1926.

### ***Immediate source of acquisition***

Donated by J.L. Riley, Joseph Riley's grandson, in 2008.

### ***Scope and content***

Manuscripts of Journal, an autobiography written by Riley in 1910, and of his Eastern Journey to Constantinople in 1889, probably written shortly afterwards. Manuscript notes on Constantinople, by Torcom, the Armenian interpreter who helped Riley during his trip. Transcripts by J.L. Riley, with notes and biographical information, in hard copy and digital form. "Notes of journey from Bradford to Constantinople by the Orient Express from Paris by way of Vienna-Belgrade-Sophia-Philipopulo-Adrianople &c. and from there to Smyrna by way of Dardanelles and the Greek Archipelago and with a visit to Ephesus and the district of the 7 Churches, returning by way of Chio to the Pireas and Athens and a visit to Corinth ancient and modern Patras, to Corfu and Brindisi by sea, thence by rail to Naples, Rome, Milan, Switzerland, Basle to Calais and from there by sea to Dover, from thence to London and back to Bradford."

### ***Accruals***

Further accruals are expected.

### ***Access conditions***

Available to researchers, by appointment. Access to archive material is subject to preservation requirements and must also conform to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act and any other appropriate legislation.

### **Copyright/conditions governing reproduction**

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### **Language of material**

English.

### **Physical characteristics**

The manuscripts are fragile, therefore readers will be encouraged to use the transcripts wherever possible.

### **Finding aids**

Unpublished handlist.

### **Publication note**

W. Riley's autobiography, "Sunset reflections" (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1957), made extensive use of his father's "Journal".

"By gaslight in winter: a Victorian family history through the magic lantern" compiled by Colin Gordon (London: Elm Tree, 1980) tells the story of Riley Brothers, illustrated with many images of the lantern slides.

### **Related units of description**

Special Collections at the University of Bradford is to receive the Archive of popular Yorkshire author, Willie "William" Riley, second son of Joseph Riley and uncle of J.L. Riley. Special Collections already holds a large collection of his published works.

### **Archivist's note**

Described by Alison Cullingford.

### **Rules or conventions**

ISAD(G) 2nd ed.

### **Date(s) of description**

November 2008.

## **INDEXING**

### ***Persons***

Riley, Joseph.

Riley, W.

### ***Organisations***

Riley Bros.

### ***Subjects***

Bradford (West Yorkshire, England) – History.

England – Social life and customs – Slides.

Europe – Description and travel – 1875-1900.

Istanbul (Turkey) – Description and travel.

Lantern slides.

Methodists – England – West Yorkshire – Bradford.

Slides (Photography).

Wool trade and industry – England – West Yorkshire – Bradford.

Woollen and worsted manufacture – England – West Yorkshire – Bradford.

Woollen goods industry -- England – West Yorkshire – Bradford.