

Wax Seal Impressions from Switzerland and Germany collection, circa 1300-1799

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Wax Seal Impressions from Switzerland and Germany collection, circa 1300-1799

Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 366

Extent: .75 cubic feet (2 boxes)

Abstract: Consists of 246 individual wax seal impressions primarily from Switzerland and Germany.

Language: Materials in Latin and German.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Wax Seal Impressions from Switzerland and Germany collection, MSS 366, Archives and Manuscript Dept., Pitts Theology Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by Sarah Ward and Brandon Wason, 2015.

Collection Description

Historical Note

The collection consists of 246 wax seal impressions dating from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries. Originally from Switzerland (e.g., Bern, Basel, Zurich, Appenzel) and Germany (e.g., Prussia, Baden), these seals were used to authenticate documents, charters, and other correspondence during this time period. To create the impression, a matrix is cast (usually made of metal, ivory, or stone) with the negative image on the end. Impressions were originally

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made with the matrix on a medium of pure beeswax, however, during the eleventh century experimentation with pigments began and the compositions of the mediums were altered in order to create a harder wax and a sharper image. The medium for the impression became an amalgamation of substances (usually a mixture of beeswax with resin, clay, or soft metals), which differed per country. While clearer images were created, the seals themselves became more brittle, ultimately causing cracks to form. The sizes and shapes of the seals also varied, with royal and noble seals steadily increasing in diameter.

Scope and Content Note

The seal impressions in this collection range from 1 to 8 centimeters and come in three shapes: round, square, and oblong. They are organized based off the individual or family that they represent, with multiple stamps for the same person grouped together. For the unmarked seals, whose origin is uncertain, they are arranged by shape, and then further arranged by diameter (beginning with 1 centimeter and increasing per half centimeter up until 6 centimeters in diameter, with an 8 centimeter seal as the largest.). Most prominently represented in the collection are seal impressions from Johann Puliant of Eptingen, Hans Jakob Holzhalb, Johannes Staehelin, Savirin, Falkner, Burckhard, and Meissner.

Arrangement Note

Arranged by name associated with the seal or by size of the seal.

