

Robert Millikan (top center) on the steps of Ryerson Laboratory, U. of Chicago, 1908. Other colleagues (L-R): A. A. Michelson, Carl Kinsey, Henry G. Gale

ROBERT A. MILLIKANOil Drop Experiment Notebooks

NOTEBOOK TWO: March-April 1912

PART 1 OF 3
From page 1 to page 29

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Abstract

Robert A. Millikan (1868-1953) began his experiments to measure the charge on the electron, e, in 1907. The experiments were performed in Ryerson Laboratory at the University of Chicago, where Millikan was professor of physics. For this work, and for work on the photoelectric effect, Millikan was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1923.

Millikan gives his own account of the electron charge determination in his published autobiography in the chapter titled "My Oil-Drop Venture (e)" (Robert A. Millikan, *The Autobiography of Robert A. Millikan*, New York, 1950). With the aid of graduate students Louis Begeman, Harvey Fletcher, and J. Y. Lee, Millikan devised the method of measuring the rate of fall of a single electrically charged oil drop under the forces of gravity and electricity. From 1909 until the spring of 1912, Millikan reports, he spent every available moment in the laboratory on his oil-drop experiment. His first comprehensive, though to some extent preliminary, results were published in September 1910 in the journal *Science* as "The Isolation of an Ion, a Precision Measurement of Its Charge, and the Correction of Stokes' Law," *Science* 32: 436-448. He soon became embroiled in a controversy with the Viennese physicist Felix Ehrenhaft, who claimed to have found much smaller electric charges. Millikan went back to work on a new

set of experiments. By the spring of 1912 he had collected the data for what he termed "the final, absolute determination of the numerical value of the electron" (*Autobiography*, p. 84). Results were published in August 1913 in "On the Elementary Electrical Charge and the Avogadro Constant," *Physical Review* 2: 109-43. This last, definitive set of experiments were recorded in the only two lab notebooks which Millikan preserved among his papers. These two notebooks are presented here in facsimile. They cover the period from October 1911 through April 1912 and contain what Millikan himself considered his conclusive, historic work on this problem.

For an analysis of Millikan's notebooks and a defense of his experimental method, see the article by David Goodstein, "In Defense of Robert Andrews Millikan," published in *American Scientist* 89/1 (Jan-Feb. 2001): 54. http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/num2/2001/1/in-defense-of-robert-andrews-millikan/1

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Preferred citation

Robert A. Millikan Oil Drop Experiment Notebooks. Lab Notes Online. California Institute of Technology Archives. Retrieved [supply date of retrieval] from the World Wide Web:

http://resolver.caltech.edu/CaltechLN:LN_Millikan_R_2

Contact information

Archives, California Institute of Technology Mail Code 015A-74 Pasadena, CA 91125

Phone: (626) 395-2704 Fax: (626) 793-8756

Email: archives@caltech.edu

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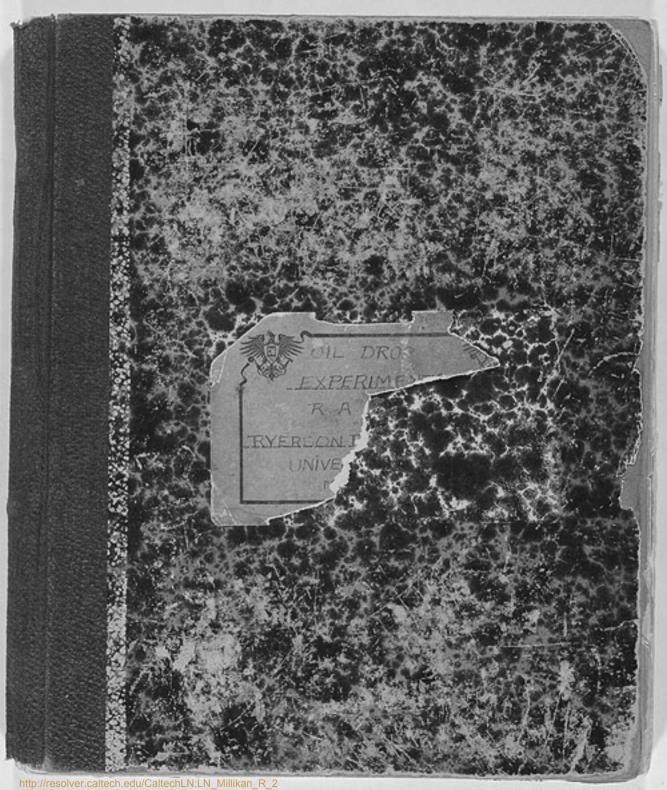
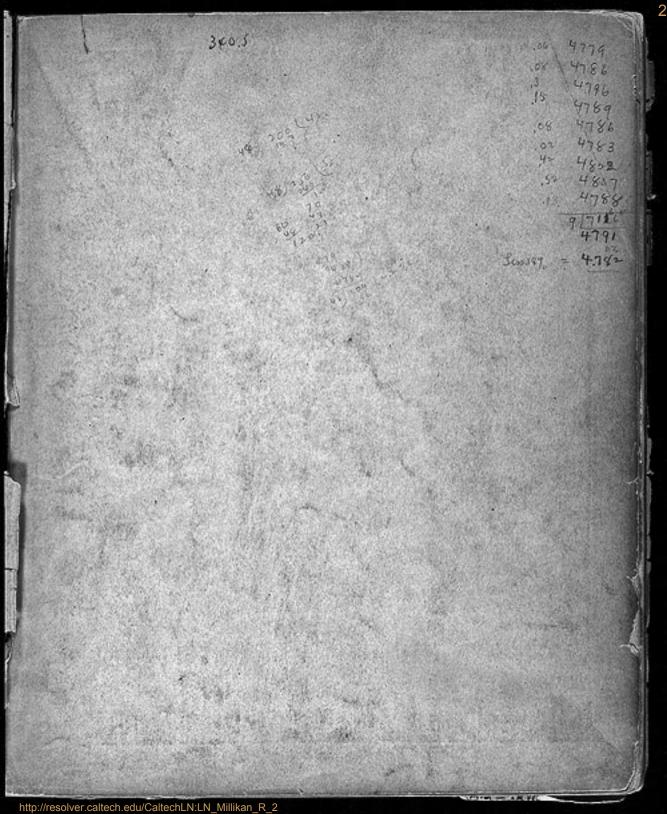
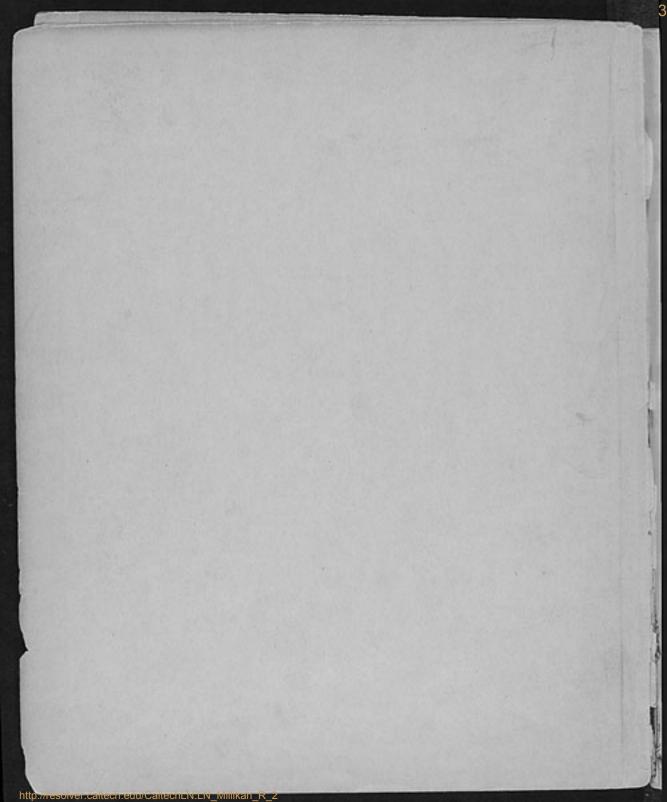


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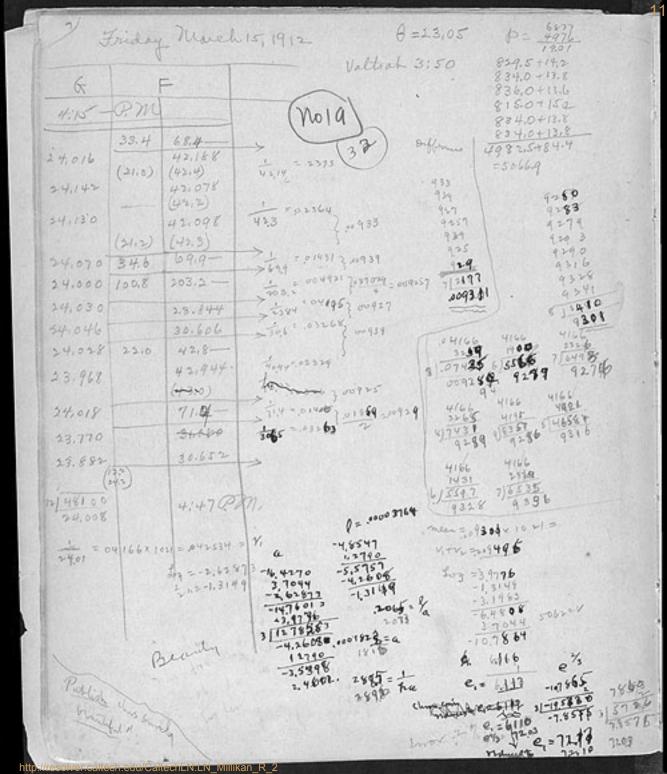
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http://resolver.caltech.edu/CaltechLN:LN Millikan R 2

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Wednesday, Was, 29 1912 p= 7555 417F 0=23.09 7552 4178 3374 Third absertation Valts at 5:40 830.5+14.2 5:48 835.0+13.6 836.0+13.6 815.5+15.2 G 834.0+13.8 02643: 7=003826 4984.0+84.3=8068.3 5. 660 4512-5.694 45,2-=020003 45:4-5.654 45.4 1769 5.652 45.4= 5.666 20,4-= 04402 1990 5.678 20.4-704 5.622 5.676 5-1624 20.530 8-656 5.656 18 5cm 20,578 5.900 9 5980 6:03 P.M. 5,653 5653 = .1769

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20 7563 Wednesday Mar. 20, 1912 8 = 23.06 4161 24.01 3402 Fourth Olisewation Volts at 6:05 830.5+14.2 6:27 P.M. 835.0+13.6 836,0+13.6 F a 815.5+ 15.2 8340+13.8 37. 912 832,0+140 25. 118 2512 = 03981 2 0508 501050 38,018 4983.0484.4=506714 37.928 19.686 Taff = 05079 3 31105 830,0+142 (38.0) 8320+14.0 832.0+14.0 38,200 16.168 1617 = .06/84) = 5518 = 01103 81510+1512 (38.2) 833,5+13,9 37.998 831,5+14,1 149.0 - +49 = .006711 3 01090 S 4974.0+85,4=5059.4 38.012 38.102 mean dy = . 01097 37.910 BIEV 671 1761 19415 717706 11.4188 33298 304080 1101 1101= 6'45 P.M. 1099 1047 made = 11,595 3801 meny 1097 + 1092 1 0483 x 1021 3801 = 02627 = 026820=4 V+12 - 10/205 Log - 2,4284 Emilel 209 = - 2,049 28 - front - 1 1 = - 6 21 42 -LIVE -1, 2142 -3 1983 -646175 5061x=V 3. 70 43 -10.7574 e3 7564 107589 e = 5720 3 -19.5178 -7.8379 e = 57.21 -7.8392 6884 When the faciliar way 6.906 e 5727 4.8547 6895 e = 5714 1.5316 .53331 -41599 16. 4270 7042 1423=3 Em 3% 4591 1429:5 -145603 Publish 147 I 30 14883 = # 1998 - ha

p = 35/7 36/9 Monday, Mar. 25 7/912-A-23.19 vietorat 3:30 Om. 837,5+13,5 3:42 P.M. 841.0+13.2 824.0+14.7 6 840,0113,2 841,5+13,2 26. 860 (Stot) 5020 3481.4251019 27.066 19.252 Duli 26.782 03723 5923 0 08 790 26.958 722 2524 16.292 8957 5).094457/6247 11. 360 27.142 . 89.87 008890 8924 39.424 4890 26. 874 ,008950 9000 3727 19.306 26.860 5/44 627 1645 7463 60.824 C/4 4 69 4 53 88 008925 8948 (60.8) (30.0) 5 007463 26. 906 134.0-64.6 8890 3723 375B 39. 670 .01778 - 008890 5924 5176 26.578 2540 39.728 626911/8899 6139 26,817 39,62 01802 - 009010 8947 ¥899 (19.6) 69样等 16. 632 39. 458 8899 (39.6) 6 5546 50722 67.4 008925 x1021 : 26.548 138,4-26,706 VITY = .00 91120 13/88774 Joy = - 3, 9596 100005 64473 V=50895 3,7067 3723 -10,74 06 -16 42 9009 1,5460 Log = 2.59999 3.706767-5,3084 -2,5804194 4,2478 550B 5 = - 1. 2899 14.7141016-1,0595 e, 55 0 8 3)-12.80 11 37 480 -4.267 42493 nduct to for 1, 5463 ,000 (451=4 Chan town 16:45:0 67,30 = e-5513 -3,8127 5460 . 2,1863 193.61 = ha 6-2550

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Duon. Mar. 25, 1912 Second Observation -4:44, Q.M. 34. 068 31.136 (16.0) (31.4) 83.0 151 DIVISION 744 76.6 30 77.4 41 53 91.0 1047 72 10.85 814 697.8-34. 062 86.382 (44.0) (86.7) 34.008 86.4-34, 148 5108 PM

contemporation to the second

p= 3990 3717 D= 23.18 19 Mon. Mar, 25, 1912 5:24 (Third Observator) 835.0+18.6 Valto at 5:08 PM. 830,5+142 835,0 + 13.6 82210+149 230.04 14.2 83 8 ot 13, 4 12.394 1990.5+83.2050743 12.448 121146 12, 45% 12,241 Deffermens 12,326 12,490 080234 1779 1 12,472 21,154 171.098154 5750 12, 488 24.282 ,005774 12. 456 24, 24% 080234 24,242 12. 466 02372 5800 6414 24: 152 121 514 157.086648 55.5-12:480 005476 12, 484 55.416 080234 0408 12, 442 81.3-5753 \$1.3 = .0/230 311-12-1414 10/13/24 12, 458 81.3-40,0 005781 005772 21.3-12.364 080234 (2/12) 0 1235 10.6) 16 092534 Chowly. 24,870 12:430 01805 23783 121 098261 (14.0) (12,6) 5772 24.194 105784 12.526 5774 24,304 550734 12,460 5789 4759 14,264 11 12/984 5783 12.444 5784 15,022 005784 121462 1784 155.9-5775 12.468 150×34 7/55% 551782 (554) 367 31797 4151 12. 598 W 16179 0057790 12. 498 24/10384 V. +V. = ,005773 x 1021=0058980 4.8547 6:00 P.M 1.5704 12,466 Log = - 3,77038 -5.284 8 -1,4566 - 2,4134-34 ·4.4248_ 100021 x x 1021 = 081894 = 4 -28693 -14 7317 - 3, 7707 Long = - 2 918385 .07248= 3/-11.273966 -6 4248 v 5050 17270:00 -4.4240,2655=a 111=-1,4568 Publish This are 17/3 -3, 9945 Emor 20,29 101,2 = ha 2.0058 minest del 1018 23

Fourt Clesewater 6:18 PM.	0 = 23,15 Veltat 6:00 P.M.	\$32.0 +14.0 \$17.0 +15.1 \$30.5 +14.2
8. 504 15. 490		8 16.0 + 15.2 8 21.5 + 14.8 8 3 4.0 + 13.8 495 1.0 + 67.1 = 5088.1
8,502 16,922 8,532 16,812 8,524 16,714	Volts at 6:28	829.5+14.2 809.5+15.6 829.5+14.2 814.0+18.3
8.324 16.914 >	whet I	8 19.0 + 14.9 8 3 0.5 + 14.1 49 3 2.0 + 88.3 = 5020.3
List at. 6:27	proposet to	
1223 45148 - 61 6534 - 61		

p= 39.19 777 Tuesday Mar. 26 th 1912 0 = 22.89 Fint Observation 837.0+13.5 Volts at 3:40 8M. 8415+13,2 841,5+132 821,5+14.8 1754 = 006878 11 840.5+13,2 38. 590 71.6 145,4-84010+12.2 {01095 38. 670 56,234 502 2.0181,1=51031 (28,4) 5617 = 01783 156,5] 55.768 38.458 02595 2595 25995 (17.63 38.376 01784 1995 188 34.04 02895 17.88 41 4379 515490 4378 3183 38.358 34.552 10985 .101095 1096 面 = .0/784 = 33 18 38. 530 65.956 1094 01108 men = \$10950 X1041 1594 32: 372 1543 91,3354 = V+V== 011185 1095 4:15 PM 38,479 Jug = -2,0483 1,2115 16427009 -4,8547 -cond 2, 1997 1001=026498 3,7073574 th 1,5856 6.4575 V=5098 Ag = 2.4230x 3.7074 14,558013 -4,1696 - 11=1.21 15I - 2,0440 88 -1.09 95 -10.7591 3)-12,5099 30 1257= 4 e 73 -4.1698 7701478 = a.1283 = 14 10,7500 1,5856 - 1478 =a 3/19,5038 -3,755233 14715 nduce to fire 2,2448 1457 = 1 = 17,65 -7.8343 chim lovie 6828 C,= 5,628 e = 5.621 36818 no26) 64.12 se% 19,7500 2) 195000 7.83 37 Hay Pulled 1 osy the how and

Tuesday War. 26 = 1912. 8=2300 Second Observation 836,0+13.1 Valts at 4:16 840,0+122 4:57 P.M. 840.0+127 Note: - Middle point 820.5+149 G 840.0+13.7 between plates should 839.5+12.3 9. 452 016.0178.8=50049 beat 10538-9.462 12,156 835.0+ 13.2 Volk at 5:31 20,842 9.476 83915+ 12-4 839.5+ 12.9 201856 9.486 80,0.0+14.9 26.338 9.454 839.0+123 26.200 Sins 839.0+12.8 9.474 50120+791=50117 26. 230 9,396 30. 206 9.470 822 35. 548 9974 9.450 (35.2) 23)11372 4957-35.606 9.516 54971 457 4444 76.2-38.2 9.452 75.4-9.434 37.6 29 13373 15.2-9.498 18,830 (19.0) 9.519 18,780 5.8.11 9.518 1883 32/15861 18.876 9,544 35.358 9.492 35,442 3858 35,478 2511 9.486 27/13361 9.544 121.9-4467 121.5macy teleperation 4983 WHOLH use of near . The my of next = V, the = 505058 5:30 (PM f. of -6- 10.3 The The west and word IT. It and Jon = -1.03232 2= -1,5166 e s Reserve This Frank Castal -10,7/33 5.151 1/1942 66 7,8084

A= 52,10 6675 8=22,94 5200 1470 Valts at 4:00 P.M. Observation 837.0+13.5 at 4:35 P.M. 84210+/311 840,5+13,2 Parentilis 251 1.5+39.8=2559.3 of of amerahaval 4 0 73 84 10.692 13,23/ 32/09749025/10664 10.658 24.712 13047 3044 10.664 76.860 110.612 27.034 9364 9354 1584 2193 10.618 27,130 3047 10.614 45, 836 3041 10,688 63.538 9384 9384 3119 63.6-10.616 32,4 41/125032/10959 63,4-10.606 3044 01544.003082 10.668 63.4-3118 3703 32-0-10,606 16.3 92 13 087 32.058 10.698 32,204 3044 3044 30.47 10.766 31.960 3050 30.47 (23.0) 45.570 10.662 3041 30 50 45.632 (23,2) 1200609 5 10.692 3645 30.44 3487 63,130 (32.0) 3488 3668 78.352 10.704 78.0-10.626 39.6 00915 3650 78.032 (35.6) 77.9) 10.708 274.3 10.574 70.6 - 1+2 dir = 3045 XION = 1034 M 11/12472 69,6 -314 div 69.2 - 5+6 dir 10.6565 1025 A 384 Lipzi= 4 = 095%1

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1 Wednesday, Mar. 27, 1912 £=1294 Second Ols. 5:50 RM. Vettat 525 BM 834.0+13.0 840,0+13,2 540.0+13.2 251400+40.2 Boother to last the 18.360 122.2 34.224 18, 362 4241.9 45.378 18.328 Voltsat 6:30 PM. 45.208 18. 444 15.574 18.442 832,5413,4 18.330 8 39,0+13,3 8385+1314 17.468 18.330 19:0+14.9 66.0-18.428 34,0 39,04133 66,020 181 390 (66.2) 4168-0+688 122.6-423618 18, 174 45.414 (45.6) 18.388 45,282 18.392 (453) 45.110 (4500) 18.240 006971 45.282 5/34893 (45,4) 5450 18,314 6978 121.6-2500 181324 61.6 11/7656 4/6266 121.4 121.2-6962 18.312 6971 5450 5450 16 5558 6963 1358 1515 6,30 PM, 6962 10 6965 17656 .18.3474 6965 6960 6962 15797 = .05450 X1021=055644 57323 -4 8547 1.1965 6965 3040-2,79542 -5, 65 42 3, 6271 -2115-137171 MAN = 6765 1/021=0071105 11-1294756 deg = -3.85191 1, 37271 2069 11965 -3, 19 83 -3.5183-3076 = ha -6.4229 V=4238 2. 48978 3088 20271 e 1/2 -10.79 58 -197153 c3. 7308

p= 33 0= 22.83 Thursday 28th 1912 Volts at 3:08 PM, 843.5+12.4 Frot Olo at 313 DM. 849,5+121 1693.0724.9 =1717.9 volts. G 88 45 29. 914 30,052 14,482 30.146 14,420 30.110 29, 942 42.246 005780 41,994 29. 926 (8hit) 42.2815 30,006 41.268 03 333 29, 980 421618 04532 005685 29.834 56.228 3333 29. 954 (5-86) 56,230 1776 32 4 7/5109 56.4 1 53 m2 E 5645 56,176 29.916 (28.6) 705677 5677 82,878 5694 (82.9) (87.3) (83.2) 29,908 2333 5695 83.614 30.124 41331 10/5694 1760 29,894 110.6 for 5 small div 1419.696 18) 10253 (5695 Foy = -3,7635 29.978 4:03 PM. -1.26545 -3,19776 -6.22671 = V, = 03403 3, 23320 10.99351 Jug = - 2,5319 -164289 211=-1,26545 3.4733 - 253 19 6855. £ e, = 9.848 -1418 60 - 37635 -12.4215 4.1408 -10.46136 00013830a 3,2332 0.8779 7.69456 -310187 31-149868 49813 9578 ta -579312 = loyak 99,002 63 -1.7904 = log/c 7061 2096 = lig + \$ 1.6203= t -1,7424 a Beauty modes of 1-7926 -1.9564 aug 22. ,0006473 × 6 A = 9045

http://resolver.caitech.edu/CaltechLN:LN Millikan R 2