Edgar Alexander Mearns Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2012
Revised 2012 August

Contact information:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Additional search options available at:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms012101

LC Online Catalog record:
http://lccn.loc.gov/mm78032490

Prepared by Kate Stewart

Collection Summary

Title: Edgar Alexander Mearns Papers
Span Dates: 1864-1918
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1876-1916)
ID No.: MSS32490
Creator: Mearns, Edgar Alexander, 1856-1916
Extent: 5,850 items ; 18 containers plus 3 oversize ; 8.4 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Naturalist and U.S. Army surgeon. Correspondence, reports, printed matter, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous material chiefly relating to Mearns's activities as a collector of data on animal and plant life, on his participation in the Smithsonian African Expedition of 1909, and his duties and assignments as an army surgeon.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Mearns family.
Mearns, Edgar Alexander, 1856-1916.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.

Organizations
Smithsonian African Expedition (1909)
United States. Army--Medical care.

Subjects
Botany.
Natural history.
Scientific expeditions--Africa.
Zoology.

Places
Africa--Description and travel.
Africa--Discovery and exploration.

Occupations
Army surgeons.
Naturalists.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Edgar Alexander Mearns, naturalist and U.S. Army surgeon, were given to the Library of Congress by Charles W. Richmond, 1924-1926.

Processing History

The papers of Edgar Alexander Mearns were arranged and described in 1962 and 1978. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Transfers

Some photographs received with the Mearns Papers have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of these papers..

Other Repositories

A collecition of Edgar Alexander Mearns are also at the Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Edgar Alexander Mearns is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Edgar Alexander Mearns are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Edgar Alexander Mearns Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	*Event*
1856, Sept. 11	Born, Highland Falls, N.Y.
1881	Graduated, College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, N.Y. Married Ella Wittich
1883	Entered United States Army as assistant surgeon with rank of first lieutenant; assigned to duty at Fort Verde, Ariz.
1891	Appointed medical officer, Mexican United States International Boundary Commission
1892-1894	Explored boundary area from El Paso, Tex. to San Clemente Island, collecting flora and fauna in the region
1894-1903	Continued natural history investigations while stationed at Fort Myer, Va.; Fort Clark, Tex.; Fort Adams, R.I.; and Fort Yellowstone
1903-1907	Served two separate terms of duty in Philippine Islands
1909	Retired from army with rank of lieutenant colonel Naturalist, Smithsonian African Expedition, on invitation of Theodore Roosevelt
1911-1912	Visited Africa on a scientific expedition
1916, Nov. 1	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Edgar Alexander Mearns (1856-1916) span the years 1864-1918, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1876-1916. The collection consists primarily of correspondence, supplemented by reports, printed matter, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous material. The papers are organized into six series: Family Correspondence, General Correspondence, Military Correspondence, Special Correspondence, Miscellany, and Oversize.

The collection focuses on Mearns's career as a naturalist and army officer. Correspondence dealing with his activities as a collector of data on animal and plant life and as an army surgeon is scattered throughout the collection, but the Special Correspondence series mainly pertains to Mearns's scientific concerns whereas the Military Correspondence series deals with his army duties. The Miscellany includes reports, printed matter, and clippings relating to both scientific and military matters.

Mearns's private and family papers form the basis of the Family Correspondence series, and a large portion of the General Correspondence consists of letters from personal friends and colleagues. Both series also contain references to Mearns's scientific activities. A section of the Special Correspondence relating to the Smithsonian African expedition of 1909 includes several letters from Theodore Roosevelt.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- Family Correspondence, 1883-1910
- General Correspondence, 1864-1918
- Military Correspondence, 1880-1911
- Special Correspondence, circa 1877-1916
- Miscellany, circa 1880-1916
- Oversize, circa 1891-1898

Description of Series

Container	*Series*
BOX 1	**Family Correspondence, 1883-1910** Letters between Mearns and members of his family. Arranged chronologically by month.
BOX 2-9	**General Correspondence, 1864-1918** Primarily letters received by Mearns, supplemented by occasional letters sent. Arranged chronologically by month.
BOX 10-11	**Military Correspondence, 1880-1911** Letters sent and received by Mearns concerning his military duties, supplemented by miscellaneous orders and records. Arranged by type or topic.
BOX 12-15	**Special Correspondence, circa 1877-1916** Correspondence, related matter, and miscellaneous items concerning the Smithsonian African expedition of 1909. Arranged by name of person or subject.
BOX 16-18	**Miscellany, circa 1880-1916** Account book, reports, papers, articles, notices, lists, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material, with newspaper clippings filed at the end.
BOX OV 1-OV 3	**Oversize, circa 1891-1898** Oversize letterbook, scrapbook, and index to register of patients. Arranged and described according to the series and container from which the items were removed.

Container List

Container	*Contents*
BOX 1	**Family Correspondence, 1883-1910**
	Letters between Mearns and members of his family.
	Arranged chronologically by month.
BOX 1	1883-1919, undated
BOX 2-9	**General Correspondence, 1864-1918**
	Primarily letters received by Mearns, supplemented by occasional letters sent.
	Arranged chronologically by month.
BOX 2	1864-1880
BOX 3	1881-1884
BOX 4	1885-1891
BOX 5	1892-1898
BOX 6	1899-1900
BOX 7	1901-1903
BOX 8	1904-1908
BOX 9	1909-1918
BOX 10-11	**Military Correspondence, 1880-1911**
	Letters sent and received by Mearns concerning his military duties, supplemented by miscellaneous orders and records.
	Arranged by type or topic.
BOX 10	Chronological, 1880-1908, undated
BOX 11	Contract surgeon, 1898-1900
BOX 11	Expense account, George M. Barbour, 1907
BOX 11	Information slips, Mearns, 1906
BOX 11	Military messages, 1898
BOX 11	Muster roll and payroll, 1893-1894
BOX 11	Military records, 1891-1894
BOX 11	Special orders, 1884-1911
BOX 11	Wittich, Willis, 1900
BOX 12-15	**Special Correspondence, circa 1877-1916**
	Correspondence, related matter, and miscellaneous items concerning the Smithsonian African expedition of 1909.
	Arranged by name of person or subject.
BOX 12	African expedition, 1908-1911, undated
BOX 13	Allen, J. A., 1877-1916
BOX 13	Anthony, A. W., 1886-1898
BOX 13	Botanical and ornithological, 1903-1907

Container	*Contents*
BOX 14	Dunham, W. R., 1909
BOX 14	Earliest military history, 1882-1883
BOX 14	Hunting trip, 1887
BOX 14	Mule litter, description of, 1887-1888
BOX 14	Newport Hospital, 1899-1902
BOX 14	Permit to visit Bulls Island, S.C., 1911
BOX 14	Regarding International Boundary Commission
BOX 14	General
BOX 14	1890-1893
BOX 15	1893-1895
BOX 15	Mearns, Edgar Alexander
BOX 15	Correspondence, 1891-1893
BOX 15	Special orders, 1891-1895
BOX 15	Report of vital statistics, Department of Cuba, 1901
BOX 15	Scientific association, Philippine
BOX 15	Scientific information
BOX 15	Smithsonian African Expedition, 1909 *See Container 12*, African expedition
BOX 15	Zerega, Louis A. di
BOX 16-18	**Miscellany, circa 1880-1916**
	Account book, reports, papers, articles, notices, lists, and printed matter.
	Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material, with newspaper clippings filed at the end.
BOX 16	Account books
BOX 16	Acknowledgments
BOX 16	Articles and poems by Mearns
BOX 16	Blank forms and instruction sheet, military
BOX 16	Blueprint of bridge
BOX 16	Calling cards
BOX 16	Cliff dwellings
BOX 16	District of Columbia Medical Society, notices
BOX 16	Entertainment
BOX 16	Inaugural thesis
BOX 16	Index to register of patients, International Boundary Commission, circa 1891-1894 *See Oversize*
BOX 16	Letterbooks, 1898 *See Oversize*
BOX 16	Linnaean Society
BOX 16	Dues receipts
BOX 16	Notices
BOX 16	Membership certificates
BOX 16	Meeting
BOX 16	Notebooks
BOX 16	Personnel returns
BOX 16	Printed matter
BOX 17	Printed matter
BOX 17	Purchase order books

Container	*Contents*
BOX 17	Records
BOX 17	Reports
BOX 17	Scrapbook, Spanish-American War *See Oversize*
BOX 17	Supply and equipment lists
BOX 17	West China Religious Tract Society
BOX 18	Yellowstone National Park
BOX 18	Newspaper clippings, chiefly 1909 Smithsonian African expedition
BOX OV 1-OV 3	**Oversize, circa 1891-1898**
	Oversize letterbook, scrapbook, and index to register of patients.
	Arranged and described according to the series and container from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Miscellany
BOX OV 1	Letterbooks, 1898 (Container 16)
BOX OV 2	Index to register of patients, International Boundary Commission, circa 1891-1894 (Container 16)
BOX OV 3	Scrapbook, Spanish-American War, 1898 (Container 17)