

W J McGee Papers

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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Collection Summary

Title: W J McGee Papers

Span Dates: 1880-1916

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1885-1905)

ID No.: MSS32128

Creator: McGee, W J, 1853-1912

Extent: 7,000 items ; 31 containers plus 1 oversize ; 12.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Summary: Geologist, anthropologist, and hydrologist. Correspondence, letterbooks, speeches, articles, scientific papers, lectures, notes, geological notebooks, scrapbooks, bibliographical notes, and memorabilia relating chiefly to McGee's career as a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey and as an ethnologist in charge of the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution. Includes correspondence when he was director of the anthropological and historical exhibit of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.

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

Boas, Franz, 1858-1942--Correspondence.

Call, Richard Ellsworth, 1856-1917--Correspondence.

Colby, Frank Moore, 1865-1925--Correspondence.

Hay, Robert, 1835-1895--Correspondence.

Hayward, Florence, 1865- --Correspondence.

Hill, Robert Thomas, 1858-1941--Correspondence.

Johnson, Jerome F.--Correspondence.

Johnson, Lawrence C.--Correspondence.

Johnson, Willard D.--Correspondence.

Langley, S. P. (Samuel Pierpont), 1834-1906--Correspondence.

McCowan, Samuel M.--Correspondence.

McGee, W J, 1853-1912.

Skiff, F. J. V. (Frederick James Volney), 1851-1921--Correspondence.

Starr, Frederick, 1858-1933--Correspondence.

Williams, George Huntington, 1856-1894--Correspondence.

Williams, Henry Shaler, 1847-1918--Correspondence.

Organizations

Geological Survey (U.S.)

International Geographical Congress.

Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904 : Saint Louis, Mo.)

Saint Louis Public Museum.

Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of American Ethnology.

Subjects

Anthropology--Exhibitions.

Anthropology.

Coastal plains.

Ethnology--United States.

Exhibitions--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Geography--Congresses.

Geography.

Geological surveys--Atlantic Coast (U.S.)

Geology--Atlantic Coast (U.S.)
Geology--United States.
History--Exhibitions.
History.
Museums--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Places

United States--Surveys.

Occupations

Anthropologists.
Ethnologists.
Geologists.
Hydrologists.
Scientists.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of W J McGee, geologist, anthropologist, and hydrologist, were given to the Library of Congress by his wife, Anita Newcomb McGee, between the years 1915-1950.

Processing History

The papers of W J McGee were arranged and described in 1962. The collection was expanded and revised in 2012.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of W J McGee 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, W J McGee Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1853, Apr. 17	Born near Farley, Iowa
1878-1882	Made surveys of the geology of Iowa
1883	Joined the United States Geological Survey
1883-1894	Surveyed the geology of the Atlantic Coastal Plain
1888	Married Anita Newcomb (died 1940)
1893	Became anthropologist in charge, Bureau of American Ethnology

- 1903-1904 In charge of the anthropological and historical exhibit, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Mo.
Appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to the Inland Waterways Commission
Appointed by the secretary of agriculture to take charge of the study of the water resources of the United States.
- 1912, Sept. 4 Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of W J McGee (1853-1912) include correspondence, letterbooks, speeches, articles, and lectures, notes, notebooks, scrapbooks, bibliographical notes, and memorabilia spanning the years 1880-1916, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1885-1905. Included are numerous copies of McGee's letters. The focus is on his career as geologist with the United States Geological Survey and ethnologist in charge in the Bureau of American Ethnology. At the geological survey he was given charge of the branch dealing with the geology of the Atlantic Coastal Plain, and during 1883-1894 he conducted important studies in this area. The collection is organized into seven series: [General Correspondence](#), [Special Correspondence](#), [Letterbooks](#), [Articles and Notes](#), [Miscellany](#), [Scrapbooks](#), and [Oversize](#).

The [Special Correspondence](#) consists of copies of letters sent when McGee was director of the anthropological and historical exhibit of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in Saint Louis in 1904. Also documented in the collection is his work as director of the Saint Louis Public Museum and his role in 1904 as chairman of the committee of the International Geographical Congress in Washington, D.C.

Principal correspondents are Franz Boas, Richard Ellsworth Call, Frank Moore Colby, Robert Hay, Florence Hayward, Robert Thomas Hill, Jerome F. Johnson, Lawrence C. Johnson, Willard D. Johnson, S. P. Langley, Samuel M. McCowan, F. J. V. Skiff, Frederick Starr, George Huntington Williams, and Henry Shaler Williams.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in seven series:

- [General Correspondence, 1880-1916](#)
- [Special Correspondence, 1903-1904](#)
- [Letterbooks, 1885-1907](#)
- [Articles and Notes, 1885-1910](#)
- [Miscellany, 1890-1910](#)
- [Scrapbooks, 1889-1912](#)
- [Oversize, 1903-1905](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-13	<u>General Correspondence, 1880-1916</u> Letters sent and received. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 14-20	<u>Special Correspondence, 1903-1904</u> Correspondence relating to the anthropological and historical exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, Mo. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 21-26	<u>Letterbooks, 1885-1907</u> Copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically by first date of volume.
BOX 27-29	<u>Articles and Notes, 1885-1910</u> Printed, typewritten and handwritten copies of speeches, articles, remarks and press releases; also ethnological notebooks. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 30	<u>Miscellany, 1890-1910</u> News clippings, calling cards, invitations, and unidentified items.
BOX 31	<u>Scrapbooks, 1889-1912</u> Clippings and memorabilia mounted in scrapbooks. Arranged by volume.
BOX OV 1	<u>Oversize, 1903-1905</u> Scrapbook relating to Louisiana Purchase Exhibition and the establishment of a western expansion museum in Saint Louis. Described according to the series and container from which it was removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-13	General Correspondence, 1880-1916 Letters sent and received. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 1	A-B
BOX 2	C-D
BOX 3	E-Gi
BOX 4	Go-Haw
BOX 5	Hay-He
BOX 6	Hi-I
BOX 7	J-Le
BOX 8	Li-Ma
BOX 9	Me-Pl
BOX 10	Po-R
BOX 11	Sa-Sl
BOX 12	Sm-V
BOX 13	W-Z
BOX 14-20	Special Correspondence, 1903-1904 Correspondence relating to the anthropological and historical exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, Mo. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 14	1903
BOX 15	1903-1904
BOX 16	1903-1904
BOX 17	1903-1904
BOX 18	1904
BOX 19	1904
BOX 20	1904
BOX 21-26	Letterbooks, 1885-1907 Copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically by first date of volume.
BOX 21	1885, Jan.-1887, Jan.
BOX 22	1887, Jan.-1888, Nov.
BOX 23	1888, May-1891, Mar.
BOX 24	1891, Oct.-1893, June
BOX 25	1905, Sept.-1906, Mar

Letterbooks, 1885-1907

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 26	1906, Apr.-1907, Apr.
BOX 27-29	Articles and Notes, 1885-1910 Printed, typewritten and handwritten copies of speeches, articles, remarks and press releases; also ethnological notebooks. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 27	Articles concerning anthropology, the Seriland Expedition of 1895, and bibliographical notes
BOX 28	Papers concerning the Bureau of Ethnology and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, Mo.
BOX 29	Notebooks used during geological and ethnological surveys
BOX 30	Miscellany, 1890-1910 News clippings, calling cards, invitations, and unidentified items.
BOX 30	Bills and receipts, news clippings, calling cards, and invitations, 1890-1910
BOX 31	Scrapbooks, 1889-1912 Clippings and memorabilia mounted in scrapbooks. Arranged by volume.
BOX 31	News clippings and memorabilia
BOX 31	General, 1889-1912
BOX 31	Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, Mo., 1903-1905 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX OV 1	Oversize, 1903-1905 Scrapbook relating to Louisiana Purchase Exhibition and the establishment of a western expansion museum in Saint Louis. Described according to the series and container from which it was removed.
BOX OV 1	Scrapbooks
BOX OV 1	News clippings and memorabilia
BOX OV 1	Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, Mo., 1903-1905 (Container 31)