

John D. Whiting Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2024

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2005085237>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms008123>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2008
Revised 2023 December

Collection Summary

Title: John D. Whiting Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1890-1970

Bulk Dates: 1904-1964

ID No.: MSS85237

Creator: Whiting, John D. (John David), 1882-1951

Extent: 950 items

Extent: 19 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 8.3 linear feet

Extent: 41 digital files (0.36 GB)

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2005085237>

Summary: Businessman, photographer, author, cultural tour guide, and embassy and intelligence officer. Correspondence, diaries, photographs, notebooks, reports, printed matter, and other papers pertaining to Whiting's life as a prominent member of the American Colony in Jerusalem and the American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Department.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Spafford, Anna T., 1842-1923.

Spafford, Jacob.

Vester, Bertha Spafford, 1878-1968.

Whiting family--Correspondence.

Whiting family.

Whiting, Alice Brauch.

Whiting, Edmund Wilson.

Whiting, Grace Spafford.

Whiting, John D. (John David), 1882-1951.

Organizations

American Colony (Jerusalem)

American Colony (Jerusalem). Photo Department.

Fr. Vester & Co.

Great Britain. Army--Intelligence specialists.

Subjects

Americans--Jerusalem.

Arab-Israeli conflict--1948-1967.

Christian communities--Jerusalem.

Communal living--Jerusalem.

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Jerusalem.

Historic sites--Middle East.

Industries--Middle East.

Industries--Palestine.

Locusts--Middle East.

Missionaries--Jerusalem.

Missionaries--United States.

Photography--Middle East.

World War, 1914-1918--Jerusalem.

World War, 1914-1918--Military intelligence--Great Britain.

Places

Hezekiah's Tunnel (Jerusalem)
Jerusalem--Commerce.
Jerusalem--History.
Middle East--Antiquities.
Middle East--Commerce.
Middle East--Description and travel.
Middle East--History.
Palestine--Commerce.
Palestine--Foreign relations--United States.
Palestine--History.
United States--Foreign relations--Palestine.

Titles

National geographic magazine.

Occupations

Authors.
Businessmen.
Intelligence officers.
Photographers.
Tour guides.

Acquisition Information

The papers of John D. Whiting were given to the Library of Congress by Wendy Whiting Blome and John F. Whiting in 2005-2006. Additions were given by Wendy Whiting Blome and John F. Whiting in 2017 and 2021.

Processing History

The papers of John D. Whiting were arranged and described in 2006 by Laura J. Kells. The register was revised in 2008. The finding aid was updated in 2023 by Maria Farmer as part of a division-wide remediation project by the Inclusive Description Working Group. An addition was processed in 2023 by Chelsea Liu.

Digital files were received as part of an addition to the John D. Whiting Papers on a USB drive, which was assigned a unique digital ID number. Use the digital ID number to request access copies of the files. A description of the standard processes taken on all born digital records can be found in the Processing History Note: Born Digital Collection Material at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.digital>.

Transfers

Some photographs and photograph albums have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the John D. Whiting Papers. Patrons are encouraged to contact the Prints and Photographs Division in advance of a research visit.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the American Colony in Jerusalem Collection (see <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010123>) and the papers of G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson (see <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010210>).

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of John D. Whiting in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division for further information.

Access and Restrictions

Restrictions apply governing the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning these restrictions.

Technical Requirements

Digital photographs were created by the donor in August 2021. The photographs are Raw JPEG Streams with .jpg extensions. A reference proof sheet is in Adobe PDF 1.6 format with a .pdf extension. Neither format requires specialized tools to view and can be opened with a standard file viewer.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number or digital ID number, John D. Whiting Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

John D. Whiting

Date	Event
1882, June 10	Born, Jerusalem, Palestine (Ottoman Empire)
1903-1904	Salesman and bookkeeper, Wingrave and MacNaughton Co., Chicago, Ill.
1904-1948	Partner and business manager, Fr. Vester and Co., American Colony Store, Jerusalem
1908-circa 1915	Deputy consul of the United States for Jerusalem
1909	Married Grace Spafford (died 1964)
1918	Undercover intelligence officer, General Headquarters Advance Field Intelligence, British Army
1951, Oct. 3	Died, Jerusalem

Grace Spafford Whiting

Date	Event
1881, Jan. 18	Born, Chicago, Ill.
1881	Moved to Palestine with parents Horatio Gates Spafford and Anna Lawson Spafford and sister Bertha Spafford
1909	Married John D. Whiting (died 1951)
1910	Birth of son, Spafford Whiting (died 1982)
1912	Birth of son, David Whiting (died 1972)
1914	Birth of daughter, Grace Bertha Whiting (died 1915)
1918	Birth of son, Edmund Wilson Whiting (died 1975)
1951	Traveled to United States to visit children
1964	Died, Jerusalem

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John David Whiting (1882-1951) span the years 1890-1970, with the bulk of the material dating from 1904 to 1964. They document his life and career as a member and leader of the American Colony in Jerusalem, a Christian utopian community founded in 1881. Whiting, the first child born at the American Colony, married Grace Spafford, fellow American Colony in Jerusalem member and daughter of the American Colony leaders, Horatio and Anna Spafford, and, aside from a few periods abroad, raised a family and resided at the American Colony until his death. He was a business manager and artifact dealer with the colony's enterprise, Fr. Vester and Co., also known as the American Colony Store. Over the years he guided religious pilgrims, archaeologists, and other tourists on cultural tours to ancient historic sites in the Middle East. Whiting was a photographer with the American Colony Photo Department, and he published articles on the Holy Land and the Middle East in *National Geographic*. His intimate knowledge of the region also led to service as deputy United States consul for Jerusalem and to his military intelligence work during World War I. The material in this collection has been arranged into diaries, family correspondence, film catalogs and caption lists, general correspondence, photographs, subject file, and miscellany, followed by an addition.

Whiting's diaries span the years 1905-1941 but do not cover the entire period. Many focus on Whiting's travels and provide details of his guided trips to ancient sites in the Middle East that he conducted throughout these years. The earliest diaries describe the use of horses and camels for these excursions and those from the 1930s tell of travel by car and airplane. His 1912 diary recounts a trip to London where Whiting sold antiquities and photographs by the American Colony Photo Department. The journal for 1918 focuses on the intelligence work Whiting carried out in the region for the British Army from September to November. In addition to the daily accounts, the book contains notes for his intelligence reports. Diaries from the 1930s and 1940 provide the most detail about Whiting's home life.

The family correspondence section, 1946-1951, focuses on events in the lives of the next generation of the Whiting family, but it also describes the dangerous situation in Jerusalem and its effects on the American Colony during the last years of Whiting's life. This correspondence chronicles the move by Edmund Wilson Whiting, John Whiting and Grace Spafford Whiting's youngest son, and his wife, Alice ("Sally") Brauch Whiting, from the United States to Jerusalem, to live at the American Colony in August 1947, at what proved to be the beginning of the Arab-Israeli War. The major portion of the letters are from Alice to her parents in Iowa describing her life at the American Colony, the increasing tensions in Jerusalem, the birth and illness of their first child, and their return to the United States in early 1948. Letters from John Whiting and Grace Spafford Whiting describe acts of hostility and terrorism in Jerusalem and John's declining health.

Film catalogs and caption lists, 1929-1950, provide negative numbers and captions for photographs Whiting took during his trips. Many of these catalogs and caption lists relate to his "Diaries in Photos" that are housed in the Prints and Photographs Division. These albums contain captioned scenes of Petra, the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, and Cappadocia, as well as shrines, mosques, tombs, and holy or sacred spots in Palestine, Turkey, Syria, Gaza, Lebanon, and other areas to which he traveled. The "Diaries in Photos" complement his written diaries of the trips.

In the general correspondence, 1903-1920, letters sent and received by Whiting provide details about his personal life and business enterprises. Arranged chronologically, these letters chronicle two periods separated by a gap during the years of World War I when the American Colony received no postal service. Correspondents in the early years include Americans who had visited the American Colony and lecturers who purchased American Colony photographs and lantern slides of sites in the Holy Land for their presentations. Some of Whiting's letters contain lengthy accounts of his trips. There is very little correspondence after 1911 until 1918, but a few typed copies of letters from the United States in 1916 provide accounts of funds raised to support American Colony relief activities during the war. The largest group of letters dates from 1919 and documents Whiting's efforts to reestablish contact with friends and business contacts. The letters include his lengthy accounts of wartime conditions and American Colony activities during World War I. A letter from 17 July 1919 is particularly informative.

A section of photographs includes pictures of family members and scenes depicting American Colony life and an album documenting the locust plague of 1915. Another portion of photographs is housed in the Prints and Photographs Division, including twenty-seven albums depicting family and American Colony life, events in World War I and the early British Mandate era, and scenes of the people and places of the Middle East, many of the images produced by Lewis Larsson, Eric G. Matson, and other American Colony Photograph Department photographers. Also housed in the Prints and Photographs Division are Whiting's "Diaries in Photos" from his travels in the 1930s.

Among the subject files are published volumes of the *National Geographic* containing articles by Whiting and photographs by him and other American Colony photographers as well as his correspondence with the magazine. Included in material relating to his service as deputy United States consul for Jerusalem are his reports on industry and commerce in the region. Grace Spafford Whiting's commonplace book, "Things To Be Remembered," contains lists of deaths of American Colony residents from 1885 to 1962. Many of the entries also include cause of death and place of burial. Also enclosed in this book is a description by Jacob Spafford, adopted son of Anna Spafford and Horatio Spafford, of his discovery of the inscription in Hezekiah's Siloam tunnel as a boy, and John D. Whiting's curfew pass issued by the Palestine police in 1936.

The 2023 Addition is primarily comprised of forty watercolor paintings of flowers of the Holy Land made between 1940 and 1955 by Grace Spafford Whiting, teacher, artist, social welfare advocate, and American Colony in Jerusalem member. Fifteen paintings were previously mounted for exhibit and annotated with plate numbers. Digital photographs of all forty paintings created by the donor are included in the collection. The photographs do not capture the illustrations and notations on both sides of the paintings and are only provided for reference purposes.

Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material, followed by an addition.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Diaries
BOX 1	1905-1918 (7 folders)
BOX 1	1934-1935 (4 folders)
BOX 2	1938-1941 (3 folders)
BOX R 3	Family correspondence, 1946-1951, undated (5 folders)
BOX 4	Film catalogs and caption lists
BOX 4	Caption lists
BOX 4	"Diaries in Photos," 1934-1939
BOX 4	Miscellaneous, 1934-1935, undated
BOX 4	Film catalogs
BOX 4	"Kodachrome and contax," 1929, 1940, 1950
BOX 4	Vol. 1, nos. 1-1900, 1934-1938
BOX 4	Vol. 2, nos. 1901-2664, 1938-1950
BOX 4	General correspondence
BOX 4	1903-1909 (6 folders)
BOX 5	1910-1918 (10 folders)
BOX 5	1919
BOX 5	Jan.-May (4 folders)
BOX 6	June-Dec. (6 folders)
BOX 6	1920, 1944, undated (3 folders)
BOX 6	Photographs
BOX 6	American Colony in Jerusalem
BOX 6	Buildings, 1997, undated
BOX 6	Daily life, 1900, 1917-1924, 1934-1935, undated (2 folders)
BOX 7	Artifacts and antiquities, undated
BOX 7	Bedouin, Arab, Turkish life, 1933, undated
BOX 7	Family <i>For additional material see Container 6, Daily life</i>
BOX 7	Lind, Anna Grace Vester (niece), 1922, undated
BOX 7	Spafford, Anna (mother-in-law), circa 1910, undated
BOX 7	Spafford, Jacob, undated
BOX 7	Vester, Bertha Spafford (sister-in-law), 1937, 1949, undated
BOX 7	Whiting, David (son), 1935, 1965, undated
BOX 7	Whiting, Edmund Wilson (son)

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 7	Miscellaneous, undated
BOX 7	World War II, Royal Canadian Air Force
BOX 7	India and Tibet, 1945, undated
BOX 7	Miscellaneous, 1945, undated
BOX 7	Whiting, Grace Spafford (wife), 1911, 1958-1964, undated
BOX 7	Whiting, John D., 1911, 1923, undated
BOX 7	Guided trips and other travel, 1934-1935, undated (2 folders)
BOX 8	Locust plague album, photographs by Lewis Larsson, 1915
BOX 9	Miscellaneous, 1938, 1964, undated
BOX 9	Municipal elections, Jerusalem, Palestine, 1934
BOX 9	Portraits, 1909, 1957, undated
BOX 9	Religious groups, 1890, 1928?, undated
BOX 9	Samuel, Herbert Louis
BOX 9	At signing ceremony, undated
BOX 9	With Edmund Henry Hynman Allenby and Emir Abdullah Ibn Hussein, undated
BOX 9	Tel Aviv, Palestine, 1936-1938
BOX 9	Wartime scenes, circa 1918, 1945, undated
BOX 9	Weddings, 1949, undated
BOX 9	Subject file
BOX 9	Military Intelligence work, 1918-1919, undated <i>For additional material see Container 1, 1918</i>
BOX 9	<i>National Geographic</i>
BOX 9	Correspondence, 1910-1911, 1918-1919
BOX 9	Published vols.
BOX 9	1913
BOX 10	1914
BOX 10	1915 (1 vol.)
BOX 11	(1 vol.)
BOX 11	1917-1918 (2 vols.)
BOX 12	1920, 1926 (2 vols.)
BOX 13	1927-1929 (2 vols.)
BOX 14	1935-1937 (2 vols.)
BOX 15	1938-1939 (3 vols.)
BOX 16	1940
BOX 16	Pro-Jerusalem Society, 1919-1920, undated
BOX 16	United States Consulate, Jerusalem
BOX 16	Appointment as deputy consul, 1908
BOX 16	Consular reports, 1909-1915, undated (3 folders)
BOX 16	Miscellany, 1908-1910, undated
BOX 17	Whiting, Grace Spafford
BOX 17	Charms and amulets

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 17	Article
BOX 17	Correspondence, 1960-1961
BOX 17	Texts, 1961, undated
BOX 17	Catalog and notes, undated
BOX 17	Miscellany, undated
BOX 17	Miscellany, 1924-1928, 1938, 1960
BOX 17	“Things to Be Remembered,” commonplace book, 1925-1963, undated (2 folders)
BOX 17	Miscellany
BOX 17	Financial papers, 1916-1919, 1944, undated
BOX 17	Letter asking for independence of Arabs, in Turkish, photostatic copy, undated
BOX 17	Lists, minutes, and notes, 1912-1913, 1919-1922, undated
BOX 17	Memorabilia, 1921, 1928, undated
BOX 17	Printed matter, 1919, 1962-1970
BOX 18	Souvenir album, photographs and flowers of the Holy Land, undated
BOX 19	2023 Addition
BOX 19	Whiting, Grace Spafford
BOX 19	Illustrated notecard, undated
BOX OV 1	Paintings, flowers of the Holy Land, 1931-1955, undated (12 folders)
DF	Paintings, flowers of the Holy Land, 1931-1955, undated Digital ID: mss85237_235_001
BOX 19	Whiting, John D.
BOX 19	Bible from Jacob E. Spafford, 1903-1909