

W. L. McAtee Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2010

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Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm82031849>

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Prepared by Michael Spangler with the assistance of Susie Moody

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2011

Collection Summary

Title: W. L. McAtee Papers

Span Dates: 1803-1963

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1900-1960)

ID No.: MSS31849

Creator: McAtee, W. L. (Waldo Lee), 1883-1962

Extent: 40,000 items

Extent: 116 containers

Extent: 46.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm82031849>

Summary: Biologist and ornithologist. Correspondence, research and writings, field notes and notebooks, poetry, prose, reviews, and other avocational writings, calendars, diaries, memorabilia, scrapbook, wills, and printed matter chiefly documenting McAtee's career as a biologist and ornithologist at the United States Bureau of Biological Survey and its successor, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and as curator of Hemiptera at the Smithsonian Institution.

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

Banta, Arthur M. (Arthur Mangun), 1877-1946--Correspondence.

Beal, F. E. L. (Foster Ellenborough Lascelles), 1840-1916--Correspondence.

Bloch, Donald Beaty, -1984--Correspondence.

Buchanan, Lee L. (Lee La Forest), 1893- --Correspondence.

Chapman, Frank M. (Frank Michler), 1864-1945--Correspondence.

Combs, Josiah Henry, 1886-1960--Correspondence.

Darwin, Charles, 1809-1882.

Fisher, A. K. (Albert Kenrick), 1856-1948--Correspondence.

Gabrielson, Ira Noel, 1889- --Correspondence.

Holt, Ernest G.--Correspondence.

Hood, J. Douglas (Joseph Douglas), 1889-1966--Correspondence.

Kinsey, Alfred C. (Alfred Charles), 1894-1956--Correspondence.

Lloyd, Hoyes--Correspondence.

Malleis, Harry--Correspondence.

Malloch, John Russell, 1875- --Correspondence.

McAtee family--Correspondence.

McAtee, W. L. (Waldo Lee), 1883-1962.

Mencken, H. L. (Henry Louis), 1880-1956--Correspondence.

Preble, Edward Alexander, 1871-1957--Correspondence.

Shoemaker, Henry W., 1880-1958.--Correspondence.

Stoddard, Herbert L.--Correspondence.

Terres, John K.--Correspondence.

Wade, Joseph Sanford, 1880- --Correspondence.

Warnick, Florence--Correspondence.

Wood, Casey A. (Casey Albert), 1856-1942--Correspondence.

Organizations

Smithsonian Institution.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

United States. Bureau of Biological Survey.

Subjects

Animals--Washington (D.C.)
Birds--Food.
Botanists--Autographs.
Entomologists--Autographs.
Evolution (Biology)
Hemiptera.
Insects--Washington (D.C.)
Mammalogists--Autographs.
Natural history--Washington (D.C.)
Natural selection.
Ornithologists--Autographs.
Ornithology.
Plants--Washington (D.C.)
Scientists.

Occupations

Biologists.
Ornithologists.

Provenance

The papers of W. L. McAtee, biologist and ornithologist, were given to the Library of Congress by McAtee between 1942 and 1956. Additional material was received from John K. Torres in 1963, Marie Halun Bloch in 1989, and Robert McAtee in 1991.

Processing History

The McAtee Papers were processed in 1996. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of W. L. McAtee 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. L. McAtee Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1883, Jan. 21	Born, Jalapa, Grant County, Ind.
1903	Assistant biological expert, Division of Biological Survey, Agriculture Department

1904	A.B., Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.
1904-1916	Assistant biologist, Bureau of Biological Survey, Agriculture Department
1906	A.M., biology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. Married Fannie Eldridge Lawson (divorced 1939)
1916-1921	Assistant biologist in charge of economic ornithology, Bureau of Biological Survey, Agriculture Department
1918	Published, <i>A Sketch of the Natural History of the District of Columbia</i> (Washington, D.C.: [Press of H. L. and J. B. McQueen]. 142 pp.)
1920-1947	Acting curator of Hemiptera, National Museum, Smithsonian Institution
1921-1934	Assistant biologist in charge of food habits research, Bureau of Biological Survey, Agriculture Department
1934-1940	Technical advisor, office of the chief, Bureau of Biological Survey, Agriculture Department
1937-1942	Editor, <i>Journal of Wildlife Management</i>
1939	Published <i>Wildfowl Food Plants</i> (Ames, Iowa: Collegiate Press, Inc. 141 pp.)
1940-1947	Technical advisor, Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior Department
1956	Published privately <i>A Review of the Nearctic Viburnum</i> (Chapel Hill, N.C. 125 pp.)
1962, Jan. 7	Died, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Waldo Lee McAtee (1883-1962) span the years 1803-1963, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1900-1960. The collection covers the full extent of McAtee's professional career at the Bureau of Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture and its successor agency the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of Interior. He was noted especially for his research on the food habits of birds. Series within the collection include [Correspondence](#), [Research and Writings File](#), [Handwriting Collection](#), and [Miscellany](#).

The [Correspondence File](#) includes letters exchanged with numerous professional colleagues in various scientific fields and reflects McAtee's wide-ranging interests in ornithology, entomology, botany, and conservation. Prominent and frequent correspondents include Arthur Mangun Banta, F. E. L. Beal, Donald Beaty Bloch, Lee L. Buchanan, Frank M. Chapman, Josiah Henry Combs, A. K. Fisher, Ira Noel Gabrielson, Ernest G. Holt, J. Douglas Hood, Alfred C. Kinsey, Hoyes Lloyd, Harry Malleis, H. L. Mencken, John Russell Malloch, Edward Alexander Preble, Henry W. Shoemaker, Herbert L. Stoddard, John K. Terres, Joseph Snford Wade, Florence Warnick, and Casey A. Wood. The file also contains correspondence with family members including McAtee's wife, Fannie E. McAtee, his brother, Morris McAtee, and his son, Robert B. McAtee.

The [Research and Writings File](#) contains McAtee's notes and background resources for his professional writings. Drafts and printed copies of his writings are rarely present since McAtee donated a large collection of his writings to the Rare Book Collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The files reflect the intersection of McAtee's major studies in ornithology, entomology, and botany. His focus on the feeding habits of birds sparked his studies and writings on insects and plants, and he served as curator of Hemiptera at the Smithsonian Institution for twenty-seven years.

Among the highlights of the [Research and Writings File](#) is a large group of material related to his observations of wildlife, insects, and flora in and around the District of Columbia which he used for his book, *A Sketch of the Natural History of the District of Columbia*. Also notable is a large group of notes and background material pertaining to evolution as well as to an unpublished manuscript titled "A Critique of Darwin." After thirty years of study in the food habits of birds and other topics, McAtee became convinced that Darwin's theory of natural selection was flawed. In an application to a publisher in 1947, McAtee wrote "Average, not fittest or superlative, individuals survive, so the process provides no motor for evolution; the moving force must be sought elsewhere than in the 'struggle for existence.'" Other significant files relate to McAtee's biographical notes on prominent scientists, a large collection of field trip notes, and a manuscript and notes for his privately published *A Review of the Nearctic Viburnum*.

In the 1940s McAtee collected [handwriting](#) samples of ornithologists, botanists, mammalogists, entomologists and other groups. His collection consists of fragments of correspondence, receipts, notes, envelopes, and other sources for examples of handwriting.

The Miscellany series includes records of the Bureau of Biological Survey containing correspondence, field reports, office memoranda, and a report on the early years of the bureau. Also included is a group of miscellaneous avocational writings by McAtee consisting of poetry, prose, reviews, and other works which, in many instances, were privately printed by McAtee. Calendars, diaries, memorabilia, a scrapbook, wills, and printed matter are also contained in the Miscellany.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged in four series:

- Correspondence, 1884-1962
- Research and Writings File, 1803-1963
- Handwriting Collection, 1847-1945
- Miscellany, 1881-1961

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-44	<p><u>Correspondence, 1884-1962</u></p> <p>Correspondence received and sent. Arranged as received into two groups: Set I includes material dated through 1929; Set II includes material from 1930 and thereafter. Arranged alphabetically within each set and chronologically thereunder.</p>
BOX 45-91	<p><u>Research and Writings File, 1803-1963</u></p> <p>Notes, drafts, printed matter, correspondence, and other background material. Arranged alphabetically by title or topic and chronologically therein.</p>
BOX 92-101	<p><u>Handwriting Collection, 1847-1945</u></p> <p>Correspondence, notes, and memorabilia. Arranged alphabetically by scientific field or subject and by name of person therein.</p>
BOX 102-116	<p><u>Miscellany, 1881-1961</u></p> <p>Records of the Bureau of Biological Survey, miscellaneous avocational writings by McAtee, calendars, memorabilia, diaries, scrapbook, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by topic and chronologically therein.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-44	Correspondence, 1884-1962 Correspondence received and sent. Arranged as received into two groups: Set I includes material dated through 1929; Set II includes material from 1930 and thereafter. Arranged alphabetically within each set and chronologically thereunder.
BOX 1	Set I, 1884-1929, undated Adams, Charles C., 1912-1927 Alexander, Charles P., 1915-1927 "A" miscellaneous, 1903-1929, undated (2 folders) Baker, Charles Fuller, 1923-1927, undated Ball, Elmer Darwin, 1917-1928 Banks, Nathan, 1917-1929 Banta, Arthur Mangun, 1904-1925 (2 folders) Barber, Harry Gardner, 1913-1929
BOX 2	Beal, Foster Ellenborough Lascelles and Mary Louise, 1903-1917, undated Bergroth, Ernest Evald, 1919-1924 Britain, W. H., 1918-1927 "B" miscellaneous, 1900-1929, undated (5 folders)
BOX 3	Chapman, Frank M., 1911-1926 China, W. E., 1922-1928 Collinge, Walter E., 1913-1929, undated "C" miscellaneous, 1900-191929, undated (3 folders) Davis, William T., 1912-1929 Deane, Ruthven, 1906-1929 Dozier, H. L., 1926-1929
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Research and Writings File, 1803-1963

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- Notes and background material for
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