Theodore Roosevelt correspondence, 1871-1937

American Museum of Natural History
Special Collections-Library
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024
COLLECTION INFORMATION

Repository:
American Museum of Natural History, Special Collections-Library
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024

Collection: Theodore Roosevelt correspondence

Creator: Roosevelt, Theodore; Chapman, Frank M. (Frank Michler), 1864-1945; Osborn, Henry Fairfield, 1857-1935

Inclusive Dates: 1871-1937

Call Numbers: MSS .R6673- R6675

Extent: 1 linear foot (3 boxes)

Physical Description: Collection consists of original documents, including those that are handwritten and/or signed by Roosevelt and others. Also included are photocopied documents, typed carbon copies, and cards.

Condition: Some documents, such as the original correspondence are extremely fragile, however they have been sleeved. A majority of the documents are in good condition.


Revised by/Date:
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), the 26th President of the U.S. (1901-1909), was a passionate conservationist and supporter of the American Museum of Natural History. Not only was his father a founding member of the museum, but Roosevelt himself undertook numerous collecting expeditions on its behalf. Despite being born in the heart of New York City, he was an ardent naturalist who enjoyed hunting, taxidermy and the study of biology from a young age. These interests fueled his friendships with notable museum employees Frank M. Chapman and Henry Fairfield Osborn, and were his motivation for the creation of the National Parks system during his presidency as well. The New York State Roosevelt Memorial Hall, including a permanent exhibition on his life, opened at the museum in 1936.

SCOPE AND CONTENT
This collection consists of three boxes of correspondence (typed carbon copies, photocopies and originals) between Roosevelt and various individuals. The majority of the letters are between Roosevelt and Frank M. Chapman (AMNH ornithologist) or Henry Fairfield Osborn (geologist, paleontologist, and AMNH President) whom Roosevelt was particularly friendly. The correspondence generally covers topics related to the men’s shared interests in the different fields of natural history, as well as the planning of expeditions (Roosevelt to the Amazon to collect specimens for the museum), discussions of articles, books and essays (both their own and those of others), and invitations to meet and interact socially. Other topics include their discussions of the ‘Nature Fakers’ literary controversy of the early twentieth century, Roosevelt’s interest in species coloration patterns, and more generally, the American Museum of Natural History. This collection also features a number of letters written by Roosevelt during his Amazonian expedition of 1913-1914.

Box 1, MSS .R6673- This box contains carbon copies of correspondence between Roosevelt and Frank M. Chapman from 1899-1916. Also, despite the box’s title, other letters to Henry Fairfield Osborn and Abbott R. Thayer of Monadnok, New Hampshire, are included here. There are two copies of each letter in the folder.

Box 2, MSS .R6674- This box contains photocopies of original Roosevelt family correspondence between the years of 1874 and 1937. The first two folders are photocopies of the original correspondence between Chapman and Roosevelt, however there are additional letters at the end of the second folder not included in Box #1. The third folder contains photocopies of original letters from Roosevelt to various people, as well as correspondence to or from other members of the Roosevelt family. The fourth and fifth folders contain photocopies of original correspondence between Roosevelt and Osborn. Also included in this box are summaries of each letter, as well as short biographical sketches of the individuals discussed.

Box 3, MSS .R6675- This box contains the original copies of all the letters described above. There is a mixture of typed and handwritten correspondence, many featuring Roosevelt’s signature. The final two folders consist of undated and miscellaneous materials. The folder labeled “undated” features mainly correspondence from Mrs. Edith Kermit Roosevelt (TR widow) to Frank M. Chapman. Also included are a letter from Theodore Roosevelt Jr. to Frank M. Chapman, a letter to Arthur von Brissen from Edith Kermit Roosevelt’s secretary, the second page of a letter to A.v.B. (most likely Arthur von Brissen) from Roosevelt, and a letter to Mrs.
Henry F. Osborn from an unknown person. The miscellaneous file includes an 1917 Christmas card that is unsigned and an undated pamphlet titled “Appropriate Words to Popular Tunes,” songs about Roosevelt, parodied by Wallace Irwin and George S. Chappell.

**SOURCE OF ACQUISITION**
The letters from Roosevelt to Arthur von Brissen were found in 1950 under a floor board in an old house slated for demolition in Brooklyn Heights. They were given to the AMNH by Jacob Kaufman and his son, Alan, 231-11 129th Avenue, Laurelton NY, 11414. In transmitting the letters, Mr. Kaufman said he believed that von Brissen was associated with the construction of the Panama Canal. The date on which he gave the letters to the museum is not known.

**RELATED MATERIAL**
Copies of correspondence from this collection can be found in Theodore Roosevelt Memorial and Exhibitions, circa 1899-1984. Call number MSS .R6671.

**ACCESS CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS**
Requests to use the collection should be made in advance to the Senior Special Collections Librarian, who may be contacted at 212-769-5420 or at speccol@amnh.org

**PREFERRED CITATION**

**PEOPLE AND SUBJECTS**
Edith Roosevelt: TR’s second wife
Ethel Roosevelt Derby: TR Daughter
Theodore Roosevelt Jr.: TR Son
Kermit Roosevelt: TR Son
Albert Bickmore: Naturalist and founder of AMNH
Arthur von Brissen: Corresponded with TR, believed to have worked on the construction of the Panama Canal.
Abbott R. Thayer
John H. Winser
William Loeb Jr.

Roosevelt-Rondon Scientific Exploration (AMNH sponsored Amazonian Expedition)
‘Nature Fakers’ Literary Controversy
CONTAINER LIST

Series I: Theodore Roosevelt Correspondence, 1899-1916 (MSS .R6673)
This series consists of typed carbon copies of correspondence typed from the original documents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Copies of Letters to Frank M. Chapman. 1899-1916.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Series II: Theodore Roosevelt Correspondence, 1871-1937 (MSS .R6674)
This series consists of photocopies of original correspondence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Photocopied correspondence with Frank M. Chapman, letters 1-22. 1899-1911.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Photocopied correspondence with Frank M. Chapman, letters 23-54. 1911-1918.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Photocopied Miscellaneous Correspondence, Letters 1-25. 1871-1928.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Series III: Theodore Roosevelt and His Family: Correspondence and Related Papers, 1871-1937 (MSS .R6675)
This series consists of original correspondence, including handwritten and signed documents by Roosevelt and others. Includes an item-level index of signed originals filed with the collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Correspondence: Albert Bickmore , TR Sr., Frank M. Chapman, John H. Winser. 1871-1899.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman. 1900.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn. 1901.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Correspondence: Arthur von Brissen. 1904.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Correspondence: Arthur von Brissen.1906.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman, Waldron DeWitt Miller. 1907.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman, Henry F. Osborn. May-July 1908.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, Frank M. Chapman. August 1908.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Telegraph to TR from Henry F. Osborn,1909.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman. 1912.

Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman, Henry F. Osborn. 1913.

Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, J.D. Kimball, Frank M. Chapman, Mrs. Henry F. Osborn. 1914.

Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman, Henry F. Osborn. 1915.

Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, Cover of Scribner’s Magazine with article by TR, Laissez-passer for Frank M. Chapman from TR, 1916.

Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, Frank M. Chapman. 1917.

Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, Frank M. Chapman. 1918.

Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, TR Jr. 1919.

Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, TR Jr. 1921.

Correspondence: Henry F. Osborn, Anna Cowles Roosevelt (TR sister). 1922.

Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman, TR Jr. 1924.

Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman, Edith Kermit Roosevelt (TR widow). 1927.

Printed Program for TR birthday festival. 1928.

Correspondence: Frank M. Chapman, Edith Kermit Roosevelt. 1937.

Correspondence. undated.

Miscellaneous. undated.