

William C. Farabee American Section records

0079

Finding aid prepared by Bryce Little Jody Rodgers.

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University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

12/3/2015

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Farabee, William Curtis, b. 1865-d. 1925
Title	William C. Farabee American Section records
Call number	0079
Date [bulk]	1912-1925
Date [inclusive]	1912-1936
Extent	0.2 linear foot
Language	English
Abstract	William Curtis Farabee was a Harvard educated geneticist and ethnologist who served the Penn Museum as a researcher and curator. During his expeditions to South America, he detailed the cultural diversity of the Arawak and Carib peoples. Farabee's time as curator of the American Section of the museum resulted in five folders of correspondence and notes dating mostly from 1915 to 1925.

Biography/History

The American Section was established at the beginning of the Museum, with the original museum name being the "Museum of American Archaeology." Preliminary steps were taken in 1886 with the

appointment of Daniel Garrison Brinton as Professor of American Linguistics and Archaeology within the Religious Studies Department of the University. In 1888 Brinton organized the University Archaeological Association, a group of scholars and laymen interested in archaeology and ethnology. The Museum was officially established in November 1889, with Charles C. Abbott appointed its first curator, several small collections being brought together in College Hall.

Stewart Culin was also present at the start of the museum, serving as Director and Curator of the Department of Ethnology. He greatly expanded the holdings of the museum. Culin left for the Brooklyn Museum in 1907.

With Culin's departure, the size of the collections demanded a swift replacement. The choice would almost certainly have fallen on William Farabee, a Harvard student of Sara Yorke Stevenson's old friend Dr. Putnam, but Farabee declined in favor of a Harvard instructorship.

William Farabee returned to the Museum when offered the leadership of the Amazon Expedition in 1912, which he initially refused but eventually accepted in 1913, along with the curatorship. Farabee served as Acting Director in 1917 in addition to the curatorship.

During World War I Farabee was a captain in the Intelligence Corps of the U.S. Army and was personally selected by President Woodrow Wilson as chief ethnographer of the American Peace Commission negotiating the Treaty of Versailles. He was charged with drawing up the cultural maps of the world. In 1921, President Warren Harding sent him as a special diplomatic envoy to Peru.

William Curtis Farabee was born in Spartansburg, Pennsylvania in 1865. He achieved his B.A. from Waynesburg College then attended Harvard University, receiving his Ph.D. in 1903. Farabee was only the second student to attain a degree in Physical Anthropology at Harvard. He studied under William E. Castle. His dissertation dealt with digital (finger) malformations in humans, confirming the work of geneticist Gregor Mendel in the previous century.

Farabee's passions were genetics and the ethnology of indigenous people. He visited South America in three expeditions, traveling to remote areas in the Amazon basin. He often was the first man of European background seen by the native population. Farabee recorded the cultural diversity of the people and obtained objects for the Penn Museum collection.

Farabee detailed his findings in books; *The Central Arawaks* and *The Central Caribs*.

William Curtis Farabee succumbed at the age of 60 to a recurring bout with dysentery contracted in the jungle.

Scope and Contents

William Curtis Farabee, a Harvard educated geneticist and ethnologist served the Penn Museum as a researcher and curator. During his expeditions to South America, he detailed the cultural diversity of the Arawak and Carib peoples.

This collection marks his time as a curator of the American Section. It consists of five folders of correspondence and notes divided into North American, Meso American and South American curatorial business, mainly questions on the value of collections or objects and offers of sale.

Administrative Information

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Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Boas, Franz, 1858-1942
- Culin, Stewart, 1858-1929
- Farabee, William Curtis, b. 1865-d. 1925
- Gordon, G. B. (George Byron), 1870-1927

SUBJECT(S)

- Arawak Indians
- Carib Indians
- Ethnology

Collection Inventory

CORRESPONDENCE AND NOTES, 1912-1936.

	Box
North American curatorial.	1
Meso American curatorial.	1
South American curatorial (1 of 3).	1
South American curatorial (2 of 3).	1
South American curatorial (3 of 3).	1
Notes on ethnology and migration in the New World.	1