

# **Theodoor de Booy Sierra de Perija expedition records**

1122

**Finding aid prepared by Jody Rodgers.**

---

Last updated on March 02, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

November 2009

---

## Table of Contents

---

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	6
Collection Inventory.....	7
Correspondence and linguistic data.....	7
Photographs.....	7

---

## Summary Information

---

<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Booy, Theodoor Hendrik Nikolaas de, 1882-1919
<b>Title</b>	Theodoor de Booy Sierra de Perija expedition records
<b>Call number</b>	1122
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1916-1919
<b>Extent</b>	0.13 linear foot (the collection consists of two folders of correspondence and linguistic material and two folders of photographs in an archival box. the lantern slide collection from the expedition is in the photographic section)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	Theodoor deBooy, a native of the Netherlands, immigrated to the United States in 1906, becoming a citizen in 1916. Trained neither as an archaeologist nor anthropologist, he nevertheless traveled independently to the Bahamas in 1911 to study the Caicos group of islands and, in 1912, published his "Lucayan Remains on the Caicos Islands." From that time on, de Booy dedicated himself to the field of archaeology. The collection includes correspondence with George Byron Gordon, Director of the Penn Museum, a catalog of artifacts, photographs, a bibliography of the region, and lists of his lantern slides, how they should be colored, and how used in publication by the Museum.

**Cite as:**

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. Theodoor de Booy Sierra de Perija expedition records. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date accessed].

---

## Biography/History

---

Theodoor de Booy, a native of Hellevoetsluis, the Netherlands, was the son of Vice-Admiral C.J.G. de Booy and Mary Hobson de Booy. Born in 1882 and educated at the Royal Naval Institute of Holland, de Booy immigrated to the United States in 1906 and gained his United States citizenship in 1916. De Booy married Elizabeth Hamilton Smith of Louisville, Kentucky and resided in New York City and Yonkers, New York.

De Booy made independent trips to the Bahamas in 1911 to study the Caicos group of islands and, in 1912, published his "Lucayan Remains on the Caicos Islands." From that time on, de Booy dedicated himself to the field of archaeology. De Booy joined The Heye Museum, now The Museum of the American Indian, initially as a field explorer for the West Indies. As a part of this work, de Booy traveled to Jamaica, the Bahamas, Santo Domingo, Cuba, the Island of Margarita, Venezuela, and Trinidad. De Booy accomplished some work for the University Museum while in Trinidad in 1915. By 1916, he had made three trips to Santo Domingo and Martinique.

Biographical information differs on whether de Booy severed his ties with The Heye Museum before his trip to Venezuela for the University Museum, however, in 1916 de Booy undertook a six week trip to the Sierra de Perija region of Venezuela, primarily an ethnographic and geographical investigation of the area and the Macao Indians, a Motilone group of natives. This mountainous region of Venezuela close to the border with Colombia was previously unknown and thought to be inhabited by a savage tribe that maintained the mountain regions free of white exploration and inhabitants.

De Booy traded for artifacts, gathered data on the native language, and took photographs of the people and the region. He communicated extensively with the Director of the University Museum, George Byron Gordon, and was frank in his hopes that his work would result in a full-time position with the University Museum. De Booy's "The People of the Mist" was published in the Museum Journal in 1918 as well as in The Geographical Review of the American Geographical Society. Upon his return, de Booy lectured about the trip, accompanied by a lantern slide presentation at the University Museum as well as in New York City. The position with the University Museum did not materialize and de Booy's letters reflect his disappointment and need for self promotion.

Theodoor de Booy was working on a book about the expedition at the time of his death, a victim of the influenza epidemic of 1919. His obituary in The New York Times revealed that de Booy contributed 4000 specimens to The Museum of the American Indian. He published monographs on the "pre-Columbian history of the Antilles" as well as "The Newly Acquired Virgin Lands of the United States and the British Virgin Islands." De Booy maintained membership in the American Anthropological Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and The Order of the Liberator of Venezuela.

---

## Scope and Contents

---

Theodoor de Booy, a native of The Netherlands, immigrated to the United States in 1906 and became a citizen in 1916. He began his career as an independent explorer of the islands in The Bahamas in 1911 and 1912 and did some work for the University Museum before joining the Heye Museum, now The Museum of the American Indian, in New York as a field explorer. deBooy traveled extensively in the area of the West Indies for the Heye Museum but by 1918 he planned a trip to the Perija mountain region of Venezuela under the auspices of The American Geographic Society and the University Museum. de Booy hoped that his work would gain him a full-time position at the University Museum.

The Sierra de Perija mountains of Venezuela, close to the border with Colombia, were previously unexplored before deBooy's expedition. He spent six weeks investigating the ethnology of the Macao Indians, a Motilone tribe. de Booy traded for a collection of artifacts, recorded their language, and took numerous photographs of the people. The Museum Journal and the Geographical Review each published his account, "The People of the Mist" and deBooy was working on a book about his trip when he succumbed to influenza in 1919.

The collection consists of four folders in an archival box and lantern slides in the photographic section. Two folders pertain to correspondence and de Booy's lists and vocabulary guides and linguistic data. Photographs are contained in the remaining two folders.

The correspondence is almost exclusively with George Byron Gordon, Director of the University Museum. The letters are in chronological order dating from 1/22/1916 to 1/27/1919, just a few weeks before de Booy's death. de Booy wrote several letters a week to the Museum. The collection includes three requests from Elizabeth de Booy for prompt payment of her husband's monthly salary in June and July, without specifying the year. Among the collection of correspondence are three letters to George Gordon from The Caribbean Petroleum Company that address the problem of getting a shipment of artifacts from this expedition to the United States. A single letter to George Gordon from George H. Pepper of The Museum of the American Indian, offers the University Museum the lantern slide collection of de Booy.

Along with the correspondence are several lists compiled by de Booy that accompanied his letters to Dr. Gordon. A four page "Catalog of Archaeological Specimens Collected at Pueblo Viejo" is not dated. A copy of this list is also in the folder. An informational "Bibliography of Regions East and West of Sierra de Perija" is nine pages of information about the region and the lore of the Motilone tribe. Six pages detail the "Color Scheme for Lantern Slides" with some small drawings and notes. A "List of the de Booy Lantern Slides" by site and signed by de Booy is four pages long. de Booy also sent a list of "Photographs to be used with Article on the Sierra de Perija."

Other written materials include five loose pages of vocabulary that are undated and in de Booy's hand and a small notebook dated 1/22 and labeled "Macoa (Motilan) Vocabulary, Sierra de Perija, Venezuela. Gathered by Theodoor de Booy, probably 1918." The words are organized alphabetically. The back cover of the notebook contains a note from J. Alden Mason, 10/2/56.

Two folders of photographs are placed in the photographic archives. The pictures are of various sizes and there are many duplicates. All have negative numbers on the reverse side. Many of the pictures have written notes by de Booy. The subjects are mostly Motilan men, women, and children engaged in everyday activities or at festival time. There are a few photographs of their lodgings and of the geography of the area.

---

## Administrative Information

---

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

November 2009

Finding aid prepared by Jody Rodgers.

### **Use Restrictions**

Although many items from the archives are in the public domain, copyright may be retained by the authors of items in these papers, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law. The user is fully responsible for compliance with relevant copyright law.

---

## **Controlled Access Headings**

---

### **FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Correspondence
- Photographs

### **PERSONAL NAME(S)**

- Booy, Theodoor Hendrik Nikolaas de, 1882-1919
- Gordon, G. B. (George Byron), 1870-1927

### **SUBJECT(S)**

- Anthropological linguistics
- Anthropology
- Ethnology
- Ethnology--Indigenous peoples

## **Collection Inventory**

---

**CORRESPONDENCE AND LINGUISTIC DATA.**

---

**PHOTOGRAPHS.**