

Florence Bascom papers

1980-01

Finding aid prepared by Courtney Smerz, Melissa Torquato.

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Bryn Mawr College

2011 February 5

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Summary Information

Repository	Bryn Mawr College
Creator	Bascom, F. (Florence), 1862-1945
Title	Florence Bascom papers
Call number	1980-01
Date [inclusive]	1883-1938
Extent	5.5 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Florence Bascom (1862-1945) was a noted American geologist, specializing in petrography. She attended the University of Wisconsin, receiving her BA degree in 1882 and her MA degree in 1884, and was the first woman to be granted a PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 1893. From 1895 to 1928, Bascom taught at Bryn Mawr College, where she established the Geology Department. In 1896, she became the first woman appointed to the United States Geological Survey. The Florence Bascom papers, 1862-1938, offer evidence of Bascom's career as a regarded geologist and petrographer, particularly her tenure with the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The papers allude to many of Bascom's geological interests and projects, but do not seem to offer comprehensive documentation of any. Her work for the USGS is by far the best represented of all her efforts. The collection is divided into five series: Correspondence, 1897-1937," "Research, 1892-1930" "Travel journal, 1883-1885," "United States Geological Survey, 1898-1938" and "Dorothy Wyckhoff papers, 1934-1936." Researchers should be aware that there is much overlap between the series.</p>

Cite as:

Florence Bascom papers, 1883-1938, Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.

Biography/History

Florence Bascom (1862-1945) was a noted American geologist, specializing in petrography. She attended the University of Wisconsin, receiving her BA degree in 1882 and her MA degree in 1884, and was the first woman to be granted a PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 1893. From 1895 to 1928, Bascom taught at Bryn Mawr College, where she established the Geology Department. In 1896, she became the first woman appointed to the United States Geological Survey.

Bascom was born in Williamstown, Massachusetts, where her father, John Bascom, was a professor at Williams College. The family moved to Madison, Wisconsin, when John Bascom became the president of the University of Wisconsin. Florence Bascom studied geology at the University of Wisconsin, earning her BA in 1882 and her MA in 1884. She taught briefly at Rockford College in Illinois, before heading to Baltimore to study geology at Johns Hopkins University. In 1893, Bascom became the first woman to earn a PhD from that university. Following her studies at Johns Hopkins, from 1893 to 1895, she taught at Ohio State University.

In 1895, Bascom began her tenure as geology professor at Bryn Mawr College. Her initial courses proved so popular that, under Bascom's direction, the Geology Department and geology major were almost immediately instituted. Both the major and the department were demoted to elective status briefly, when the president of Bryn Mawr, M. Carey Thomas, deemed them unnecessary. As a result Bascom resigned, returning only after the department and major were reinstated. Bascom became a full professor in 1906 and continued to teach and conduct research at Bryn Mawr until 1928.

Bascom was the first woman to be appointed to the United States Geological Survey in 1896. Coming on at first as an assistant, she was later promoted to Geologist and assigned the part of the Piedmont Plateau that fell in Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Her research culminated in the United States Geological Survey Folios, *Philadelphia* (1909), *Trenton* (1909), *Elkton-Wilmington* (1920); and in Bulletins for *Quakerstown-Doyletown* (1931) and *Honeybrook-Pheonixville* (1938).

Florence Bascom was the first woman fellow of the Geological Society of America. In 1924 she became councilor and in 1930 Vice President of that organization. From 1896 to 1905, she was the editor of *The American Geologist*. She was also a member of the National Academy of the National Research Council and the Geophysical Union and other scientific societies.

Having returned to Williamstown, Massachusetts to live with her sister, Florence Bascom died on June 18, 1945. She never married and had no children.

Bibliography

Ogilvie, Ida H. "Florence Bascom: 1862-1945." *Science* vol. 102 (1945): 320-321.

"Florence Bascom, Geologist, was 82." *New York Times*. June 20, 1945.

Scope and Contents

The Florence Bascom papers, 1862-1938, offer evidence of Bascom's career as a regarded geologist and petrographer, particularly her tenure with the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The papers allude to many of Bascom's geological interests and projects, but do not seem to offer comprehensive documentation of any. Her work for the USGS is by far the best represented of all her efforts. The collection is divided into five series: "Correspondence, 1897-1937," "Research, 1892-1930" "Travel journal, 1883-1885," "United States Geological Survey, 1898-1938" and "Dorothy Wyckhoff papers, 1934-1936." Researchers should be aware that there is much overlap between the series.

The "Correspondence" series houses incoming and outgoing letters, dating from 1897 to 1937. Almost if not all of the letters pertain to Bascom's professional activities, particularly her work for the United States Geological Survey, and more generally her work as a petrographer. There are two groups of correspondence presented here. The first set is a small sample of files arranged alphabetically by a geological subject. The second set of correspondence is considerably less orderly. Files of general correspondence, with occasional reference made to a particular person or subject, are arranged chronologically by the earliest date represented in each file. Please note that files overlap significantly in terms of date and subject matter, and interested researchers should peruse the entire set.

In the second series, "Research," researchers will find small and random samples of records evidencing Bascom's personal research, as well as her contributions to other larger projects. For example, researchers will find a notebook entitled "South Mountain, Blue Ridge Summit," which was the subject of Bascom's dissertation at Johns Hopkins University. There are files containing field notes and analysis of collected geological samples, as well as files pertaining to Bascom's work for the Delaware Bridge Commission in 1921 and Ward's Natural Science Establishment circa 1895. The series is broken down into four subseries: "General work files," "Notebooks," "Manuscripts and other notes" and "Specimen Analysis." Researchers are advised to review the folder titles for further information.

The "Travel Journal" series houses one journal maintained by Bascom during her journey from Madison, Wisconsin to the Dakota Territory around 1883-1885. The journal contains a bibliography; her impressions and experiences with the Native Americans; and general observation and commentary. No mention is made of geological formations.

The most robust part of the collection comprises the fourth series, "United States Geological Survey." A majority of the papers found here pertain specifically to Bascom's field work conducted under the

auspices of the USGS. There are field notebooks, which record measurements and general observations made during her various expeditions; petrographic data; photographs of sites visited; and topographical maps - all of which pertain to more-or-less the same geographic regions. A number of the files containing petrographic data and photographs allude to their inclusion in some unidentified publication.

The last series, "Dorothy Wickoff papers" dates from 1934 to 1936. The three files of correspondence housed here are predominantly laboratory analytical notes regarding the USGS survey of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Correspondence is between Wickoff and Howard Meyerhoff.

Administrative Information

Bryn Mawr College

2011 February 5

Finding aid prepared by Courtney Smerz, Melissa Torquato.

Sponsor

The processing of this collection was made possible through a training session "Archives for Non-Archivists" hosted by the Council on Library and Information Resources.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Archives with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce the material.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Transferred from the Geology Department and Science Library, 1995.

Processing Information note

The processing of this collection was made possible through a training session "Archives for Non-Archivists" hosted by the Council on Library and Information Resources.

This collection is minimally processed to the folder level.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Geological Survey (U.S.).

Form/Genre(s)

- Correspondence.
- Diaries.
- Geological maps
- Photographs.

Geographic Name(s)

- Maryland
- New Jersey
- Pennsylvania

Subject(s)

- Geology
- Petrology

Correspondence

Collection Inventory

Correspondence, 1897-1937.

	Box	Folder
Scientific correspondence, 1896-1931.	11	1
Hydrology, including Hayes, USGS, Walcott, Fuller, 1903-1906.	1	1
Hydrology for Trenton Folio, 1897-1904.	1	2
Hydrology, including correspondence, W.G. Collins, 1909-1922.	1	3
Economic Geology, West Conshohocken, Ehret quarries, 1904-1919.	1	4
Economic Geology, Oldham Granite, Warner Limestone Notes for folio on economic geology, 1908-1921.	1	5
Iron, graphite, lead, zinc, chrome. French Creek, 1911-1936.	1	6
Maryland Geological Survey. Edward B. Matthews, Shattuck re Cecil Co., Maps, Baltimore Co., 1900-1913.	1	7
General correspondence, 1897-1932.	1	8
General correspondence, 1901-1932.	1	9
General correspondence, 1902-1933.	1	10
General correspondence, 1902-1936.	1	11
General correspondence, 1903-1935.	1	12

Research

General correspondence, 1905-1933.	1	13
General correspondence (with Edgar Wherry), 1900-1936.	1	14
General correspondence (regarding nomenclature), 1912-1936.	1	15
General correspondence (regarding quadrangles), 1913-1936.	2	1
General correspondence, 1916-1936.	2	2
General correspondence, 1917-1936.	2	3
General correspondence, 1918-1926.	2	4
General correspondence, 1919-1920.	2	5
General correspondence, 1920-1934.	2	6
General correspondence, 1921-1937.	2	7
General correspondence (regarding petrology), 1926.	2	8
General correspondence (including paper on petrology), 1927.	2	9
General correspondence, 1929-1936.	2	10

Research, 1892-1930. 11 boxes.

General work files, 1894-1930.

	Box	Folder
Bibliography of Cecil County, Maryland, undated.	11	10

Notebooks

Chemical analysis of specimens, 1895, 1912, undated.	3	1
Chemical analysis of specimens, undated.	3	2
Chemistry notes, 1912.	3	3
Delaware Bridge Commission ([blueprints with information regarding river sediment]), 1921.	3	4
Draft of unidentified book, undated.	3	5
Draft of "Guidebook for Appalachian Excursion...", 1922-1930.	3	6
Monthly reports to the United States Geological Survey, 1895-1917.	3	7
Variation diagrams and related notes, undated.	3	8
Ward's Natural Science Establishment (re the creation of relief maps), 1894-1925.	3	9
Miscellaneous notes, undated.	3	10

Notebooks.

	Box	Folder
Biology, undated.	4	1
"South Mountain, Blue Ridge Summit" (the subject of Bascom's dissertation at Johns Hopkins University), 1892-1911.	4	2
"Specimens 1-263", 1895-1896.	4	3
"Wilmington Quadrangle, XV", 1909-1918.	4	4

Manuscripts and notes

Manuscripts and notes.

	Box	Folder
The Igneous Complex of the PA-MD...Provinces, undated.	4	5
Igneous Rock Analyses, undated.	4	6
The Metabasalts (typescript & holograph), undated.	4	7
Pre-Cambrian Igneous Rocks...(typescript draft, copy), undated.	4	8
Descriptive notes: T.D. Rand Collection, 1896-1897.	4	9
Descriptive Notes & Chemical Analysis of Specimens, undated.	4	10
Specimen Analysis, undated.	Box	Folder
	4	11
	5	1-4

Travel Journal, 1883-1885.

	Box	Folder
Dakota Notebook, 1883-1885.	5	5

United States Geological Survey, 1898-1938.**Field Notebooks, 1898-1938.**

	Box	Folder
Notebooks II & III (Jenkinstown, PA), 1898-1900.	5	6

Petrographic Data

Notebooks IV (Philadelphia) & V (Cecil County), 1900-1904.	5	7
Notebooks VI & VII (Cecil County), 1900-1913.	5	8
Notebooks VIII (West Chester) & IX (Trenton), 1902-1904.	6	1
Notebooks X (Coatesville) & XI (Phoenixville), 1905-1908.	6	2
Notebook XII (Phoenixville), 1908.	6	3
Notebooks XIII and XIV (Honeybrook), 1908-1909.	6	4
Notebooks XIX (Doylestown) & XX (Quakertown), 1915-1920.	6	5
Notebook XXI (Quakertown-Doylestown), 1924.	6	6
Notebooks XXII (West Chester) & XXIII (Coatesville), 1916-1917.	6	7
Notebooks XXIV (Honeybrook-Phoenixville), 1923-1936.	7	1
Gravel Study, 1930-1931.	7	2
Honeybrook-Phoenixville Petrographic Study, 1937-1938.	7	3

Petrographic Data.

	Box	Folder
Reading-Boyertown, undated.	7	4
Reading-Boyertown, undated.	7	5
Coatesville-West Chester, undated.	7	6
Neponset Valley (includes correspondence), 1898, 1902, 1912, undated.	7	7

Photographs

Neponset Valley, 1912-1916, undated.	7	8
Quakertown-Doylestown, undated.	7	9
Van Count Island, undated.	7	10
Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, undated.	11	2
Maryland and Pennsylvania, undated.	11	3

Photographs.

	Box	Folder
Illustrations, undated.	7	11
Illustrations (includes glass plate negatives), 1923, undated.	11	4-5
Lantern Slides (PA) & Correspondence, 1923.	7	12
Delaware Water Gap, 1891, 1899, undated.	8	1
Honeybrook Quadrangle, by E.H. Watson, undated.	8	2
Maine and Pennsylvania, undated.	8	3-4
Pennsylvania, 1898, 1905, undated.	8	5-10
[Pennsylvania] negatives, undated.	8	11-12
Pennsylvania Peneplains, undated.	8	13-14
Philadelphia and Yellowstone, undated.	8	15
Unknown sites (glass plates), undated.	8	16-19

Maps

Unknown sites and Pheonixville, undated.	8	20
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Karenfels negatives, undated.	8	21
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Maps.

	Box	Folder
Mapped Area Descriptions: Quarries, undated.	8	22
Elevations and Cross-Sections: Delaware and Pennsylvania, undated.	9	1-2
Topographic map: Asbury Park, 1901.	9	3
Topographic map: Bayside, New Jersey and Delaware, 1902.	9	4
Topographic map: Bordentown, Pennsylvania, 1898.	9	5
Topographic map: Burlington, New Jersey, 1898.	9	6
Topographic map: Cassville, New Jersey, 1900.	9	7
Topographic map: Chester, Pennsylvania, undated.	9	8
Chester, Pennsylvania, undated.	11	6
Topographic map: Chester County, Pennsylvania-Delaware, 1880, 1901.	9	9
Topographic map: Coatesville Quadrangle (2 copies), 1909 May, undated.	9	10-11
Topographic map: Doylestown Quadrangle, Pennsylvania-New Jersey, 1897, 1908.	9	12
Topographic map: Eastern Massachusetts, 1877, undated.	9	13

Maps

Topographic map: Germantown, Pennsylvania Quadrangle, undated.	11	7
Topographic map: Glasboro, 1898.	9	14
Topographic map: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, undated.	9	15
Topographic map: Honeybrook, Pennsylvania, undated.	10	1
Topographic map: Lancaster and Lebanon, Pennsylvania (soil), 1900-1901.	10	2
Topographic map: Lower Cecil County, undated.	11	8
Topographic map: Maryland from Mason Dixon to Chesapeake Bay, undated.	10	3
Topographic map: Montgomery County, Pennsylvania and Trenton, New Jersey (soil), 1894, 1902.	10	4
Topographic map: Mt. Holly, Pennsylvania, 1898.	10	5
Topographic map: New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1901.	10	6
Topographic map: New Jersey and Delaware, 1898.	10	7
Topographic map: New Jersey-Delaware Wilmington Quadrangle and New Jersey-Pennsylvania Bordentown Quadrangle, 1898, 1906.	10	8
Topographic map: New York-New Jersey, 1901.	10	9
Topographic map: Pemberton, New Jersey, undated.	11	9
Topographic map: Pennsylvania-New Jersey West Chester Quadrangle, 1898, 1904.	10	10

Dorothy Wyckoff papers

Topographic map: Philadelphia and surrounding vicinity, 1894.	10	11
Topographic map: Philadelphia Belt, undated.	10	12
Topographic map: Princeton, New Jersey, 1899.	10	13-14
Topographic map: South Mountain County, undated.	10	15

Dorothy Wyckoff papers, 1934-1936.

	Box	Folder
Correspondence and Specimen Analysis A1-150, 1934.	10	16
Correspondence, 1935-1936.	10	17
Correspondence, 1936.	10	18