George Bird Grinnell Papers



Guide to the Scholarly Resources
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by
Diane E. Kaplan

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Introduction

George Bird Grinnell was born in Brooklyn, New York, on September 20, 1849, to George Blake Grinnell and Helen (Lansing) Grinnell. His first introduction to natural history came after his family moved to the Audubon Park area of New York City and he attended school held by the widow of naturalist John James Audubon. His education continued at Churchill's Military School in Sing Sing (Ossining), New York, and at Yale University, from which he graduated in 1870.

Following graduation, Grinnell joined an expedition headed by Othniel Charles Marsh, the Peabody Museum paleontologist. That fossil-collecting expedition was his first trip to the western United States and introduced Grinnell to the Pawnee Indians. Although he tried working in his father's banker's office in 1871, his interest in nature and the Plains Indians was too strong, and in 1872 he accompanied the Pawnees on a buffalo hunt. This was the first of many summer visits to the Pawnee and other tribes. Over many years he developed personal friendships with tribal chiefs and was considered an authority on the Blackfeet, Cheyennes, and the Pawnees.

Grinnell returned to Yale in 1874 to begin postgraduate study and to serve as assistant in osteology at the Peabody Museum. While he studied for his Ph.D. degree under Professor March—earning it in 1880—he served as naturalist on the 1874 Black Hills expedition of General George A. Custer and on the 1875 Yellowstone Park expedition of Colonel William Ludlow. In 1876, while still at Yale, Grinnell accepted a position as natural history editor of Forest and Stream. He did so well at the sportsmen's magazine that in 1880 he was named editor in chief and became its principal owner. Under Grinnell's leadership the magazine gained in stature and was recognized for its contributions by well-known naturalists. During the same period, Grinnell served as corresponding secretary and trustee

of the New York Zoological Society and in 1899 accompanied Edward Harriman on his expedition to Alaska.

In 1887, Grinnell and others joined Theodore Roosevelt in founding the Boone and Crockett Club, an organization of sportsmen and conservationists devoted to the protection of wildlife. He became president of the club in 1918 and served in that position until 1927. He was instrumental in the establishment of two other conservationist groups-the Audubon Society in 1886 and the American Game Association in 1911. Grinnell also established the Audubon Society to address the threatened extinction, posed by uncontrolled hunting, of species such as the Carolina parakeet and the passenger pigeon. After 1900 the National Association of Audubon Societies contributed to the effort, achieved with the passage of H.R. 3321 in 1913, to end the U.S. participation in the international trade in wild bird feathers for women's hats. Following Grinnell's efforts to establish national parks, he was elected president of the National Parks Association in 1925. He was instrumental in the fight to forbid the killing of game in national parks and was the primary leader in the creation of Glacier National Park. A glacier in that park is named for him.

Grinnell published throughout his lifetime including, The Cheyenne Indians (1889), Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales (1889), Blackfoot Lodge Tales (1892), Punishment of Stingy & Other Indian Stories (1901), The Indians of Today (1911), and By Cheyenne Campfires (1926).

On August 21, 1902, nearly fifty-three years old, he married Elizabeth Kirby (Curtis) Williams, a widow from Boston. There were no children. He died on April 11, 1938 and is buried in New York City.

Scope and Content

The George Bird Grinnell Papers consist of letterpress copybooks, correspondence, subject files, and other papers documenting the life and work of George Bird Grinnell, particularly his pioneering efforts in the American conservation movement. The papers highlight Grinnell's interest in wildlife preservation and the American West and its Indians and his role as a prolific author of books and articles on these subjects. While the papers date from 1859, they contain relatively little material from Grinnell's family, childhood, student days, years teaching at Yale, and first years with Forest and Stream. The bulk of the material represents Grinnell's career from his midthirties until the end of his life.

The George Bird Grinnell Papers are organized in two series:

- I. LETTERBOOKS, 1886-1929
- II. CORRESPONDENCE, SUBJECT FILES, AND OTHER PAPERS, 1859-1939

Series I, which is the larger of the two, contains copies of Grinnell's outgoing letters, in the form of letter-press copybooks. These include Grinnell's personal letter-press copybooks from 1886-1929, as well as scattered editorial and business letterbooks for *Forest and Stream* from 1895-1905. Series II includes incoming letters to Grinnell as well as topical files, photographs, copies of Grinnell's writings, notebooks, clippings, and other papers relating to Grinnell's life.

The letterbooks in Series I include thirty-eight volumes containing copies of Grinnell's outgoing letters. A few of the letters in these letterbooks are handwritten copies of outgoing letters, but the vast majority of the copies were created by wetting the original letter and pressing it against the thin tissue pages. In the process of making such a copy, letters were often blurred, smudged, and crumbled. Poorly

made copies are faint and many are illegible. The fragile pages in the volumes have been wrinkled and torn.

The letters in each volume are arranged in chronological order. An index at the beginning of each volume provides access to these letters by recipient. The personal letterbooks contain letters to numerous individuals and organizations active in conserving natural resources, preserving American wildlife, and protecting the rights and welfare of native Americans. Additional letters concern the history and literature of the American West.

Recipients of Grinnell's letters include government officials, politicians, Indian agents, and colleagues from various organizations in the conservation movement. The letterbooks contain frequent letters to Edward Salisbury Dana, George Gould, Madison Grant, Charles Hallock, Ripley Hitchcock, William Hornaday, Joseph Kipp, Francis E. Leupp, Othniel C. Marsh, Frank and Luther North, Theodore Roosevelt, James W. Schultz, Charles Sheldon, George Shiras, III, Owen Wister, and A. J. Woodcock. Grinnell also wrote to the many Indian leaders and chiefs whom he had met in his western travels including Bear Chief, Bull Calf, and Tall Bull.

Grinnell's letters also record the founding, development, administration, and policy disputes of several organizations associated with the conservation of the American West and its Indian population and with the preservation of game animals and other forms of wildlife. Letters to officers and members of the American Game Protective and Propagation Association, the Indian Rights Association, the National Audubon Society, and the National Parks Association are relevant to those researching the history of these organizations. Letters to officials in the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs and Department of Interior contain discussions of government policy on these issues.

The letterbooks for Forest and Stream are far less inclusive than the volumes of personal letters; they do not cover the entire period of Grinnell's editorship. The vol-

umes labelled editorial (1895-1896, 1901-1902) contain copies of letters relating to the policy, content, and development of the journal, while those labelled as business (1900-1905) contain material relating to the financial operations of the publication.

The papers in Series II are arranged in three sections: Correspondence, Subject Files, and Other Papers. Correspondence and Subject Files both include incoming letters as well as unbound letters written by Grinnell. Grinnell filed many substantive letters in files relating to topics of interest. In total, however, the quantity of incoming letters is minute in proportion to the number of letters in the letterbooks. It is obvious from examining drafts of writings and sheets of notes that Grinnell used some of his incoming letters by drafting on the back sides. That alone, however, does not explain the vast difference in quantity. The files represent only a very selective view of Grinnell's entire career, but they highlight some of his most important contributions.

The Correspondence section begins with several folders of letters arranged in chronological order. These letters are of a fairly general nature and seldom are there more than one or two letters from any particular individual. The correspondence following is more substantive and is arranged according to correspondent's name. The listing for this material also includes cross-references to correspondence from the same individual, which is filed in the subject files.

The listing of correspondence filed by correspondent name includes many names previously cited as recipients of Grinnell's letters. Included are several men from the western United States such as T. E. Hofer, J. B. Monroe, the North Brothers, and A. C. Stohr, who wrote to Grinnell concerning his western travels and to keep him abreast of conditions in their states. John R. Eddy, who was in Montana as an agent of the United States Indian Service, wrote many letters concerning the condition of Indians in

his area. Other correspondents' letters concern the policies of various conservation organizations or legislation to protect land animals. Among these are John B. Burnham, William T. Hornady, William E. Mershon, Barrington Moore, Charles Sheldon, George Shiras, III, and Robert Sterling Yard.

Files also exist for correspondence received from conservation organizations such as the American Game Protective and Propagation Association, the National Association of Audubon Societies, and the National Parks Association and from publishers of Grinnell's books and book dealers interested in locating books of special interest to Grinnell. These files also include a few early letters by Grinnell to his parents and two letters from William Ludlow inviting Grinnell to join the ill-fated Custer expedition of 1876.

The Subject Files section includes letters, printed material, notes, photographs, and drafts and copies of Grinnell's writings arranged by topic. The folder titles are fairly general but often refer to a subject on which Grinnell wrote or an activity in which Grinnell was deeply involved. For example, several folders have titles relating to specific animals, such as "Birds," "Elk," or "Goat." These folders may include writings by Grinnell on the animal as well as background material and notes. Folders such as "Alaska game bill" or "Migratory bird legislation" focus more specifically on efforts to protect wildlife and may contain significant correspondence from individuals and organizations active in promoting protective legislation. Several files concern Grinnell's involvement in preserving national parks.

Files on "West" and "Indians," while quite general in scope, contain much correspondence from western acquaintances and from several Indian friends. Grinnell's writings on specific subjects can be found in files such as "Audubon family; Audubon Society," "Bent family; Bent's Old Fort," and "Sheldon, Charles" along with correspondence giving

background information on these subjects. Certain files, including "Fraser, George C.," "Marsh expedition," and "Marsh Island," also contain information on Grinnell's travels.

The section Other Papers includes material organized by type. The clippings, notes, writings, and photographs included in the section are similar to the materials in Subject Files but could not be classified to a single subject. Some of the material such as biographical data, certificates, and clippings about Grinnell is more personal than material in the subject files. Also included in this section is a typescript of a memoir which Grinnell wrote in 1915. The essay covers his life through the year 1883. Other material such as index cards and notebooks concerns many subjects. Drafts of Grinnell's writings, for which there was no other subject file, have been arranged in this section, as have bibliographies for Grinnell's books and articles in Forest and Stream. Similarly, photographs which could not be identified according to subject are included in this section. For both writings and photographs the listing includes references to folders in Subject Files which include additional records of this type.

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10	9	14	Personal	1904 Jul 12-
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20	1.0	0.4	D 1	1915 Jun 30
20	16	24	Personal	1915 Jul 1-
21	1.6	25	Damanal	1916 Apr 15
21	16	25	Personal	1916 Apr 17-
22	17	26	Personal	1917 Jan 22 1917 Jan 23-
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		27	Personal	1917 Oct 10 1917 Oct 11-
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				Dec 1-Dec 22
23	18	28	Personal	1917 Oct 31-
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24	18	29	Personal	1918 Oct 8-
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					1896 Oct 8
32	23	37	Forest and Stream:	editorial	
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33	24	38	Forest and Stream:	editorial	
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34	24	39	Forest and Stream:	editorial	 A property of the property of the
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35	25	40	General correspond		1875-1900
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		42	General correspond		1911-1915
		43	General correspond		1916-1919
		44	General correspond	Contract to the second	1920-1921
		45	General correspond		1922-1925
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		47	General correspond		1929
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37	27	87	Harper and Brothers	1910-1923
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		89	Hodge, F. W.	1911-1929,
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		90	Hofer, T. E. (Billy)	1905-1915
		91	Hofer, T. E. (Billy)	1916-1926
		92	Hofer, T. E. (Billy)	1927-1933,
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		93	Hornady, William T.	1890-1920,
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39	29	107	National Parks Association See also: Roll 40, Folder 138	1916-1929, n.d.
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Roll No.	Box No.	Folde No.	er	
44	35	191	Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales	1889-1890
		192	Publications by Grinnell, requests for and comments on	1889-1930
		193	Sheep	1873-1901
		194	Sheep	1911-1928,
			•	n.d.
		195	Sheldon, Charles See also: Roll 37,	1926-1934
			Folder 81; Roll 40,	
			Folders 139-140;	
			Roll 41, Folders 151-158	
		196	West	1890, 1902- 1915
		197	West	1916-1922
		198	West	1923-1929, n.d.
44	36	199	Wildfowl	1901-1925
		200	Wildfowl	1926-1930,
				n.d.
		x-ref	Wolf	
			See: Roll 40, Folder 146	
45	36	201	Wood, William	1911, 1921-
				1922, 1930
		202	Woodcock	1919-1926,
				n.d.
		203	Yale University	1868-1935
		204	Yellowstone National Park	1901-1919
			See also: Roll 36, Folder	
			50; Roll 40, Folder 131	

Roll No.	Box No.	Folde No.	PΓ	
45	36	205	Yellowstone National Park See also: Roll 36, Folder 50; Roll 40, Folder 131	1920
		206	Yellowstone National Park	1921-1929,
			See also: Roll 36, Folder 50; Roll 40, Folder 131	n.d.
			Other Papers	
		207	Accounts	1922-1926
		208	Bibliography, books	1930, 1933, n.d.
		209	Bibliography, Forest and Stream	n.d.
		210	Biographical data	n.d.
		211	Certificates	1906-1928,
			-	n.d.
		212	Clippings about George Bird Grinnell	1889-1894
		213	Clippings about George	1903-1930,
46	37		Bird Grinnell	n.d.
46	38		Index cards	n.d.
46	39	214	Index cards Memoirs	n.d.
10	37	215	Memoirs	1915
		216	Notebooks	1915
		210	NOICOOOKS	1888, 1920, 1922, n.d.
		217	Notebooks	n.d.
		218	Notebooks	n.d.
		219	Notebooks	n.d.
		220	Notes	n.d.
		221	Photographs	1916-1921,
				n.d.

	Box No.	Folde No.	r	
46	40		Photographs See also: Roll 40, Folders 136, 146; Roll 41, Folders 151-154; Roll 42, Folders 171, 173; Roll 43, Folders 174-178, 181, 185; Roll 44, Folders 194, 199-200; Roll 45, Folders 202, 204-206	n.d.
46	41	222	Poems and songs	1925, 1930, n.d.
		223	Writings: drafts See also: Roll 39, Folder 113; Roll 40, Folder 143; Roll 41, Folders 147, 153-158; Roll 42, Folders 164, 170-171; Roll 43, Folders 179, 181-183; Roll 44, Folders 193-195, 198-200; Roll 45, Folders 202, 204-206	1928, n.d.
		224	Writings: drafts	n.d.
		225	Writings: drafts	n.d.
47	42	226 227	Writings: printed copies Birds: collection catalogue of George Bird and Morton Grinnell, with unidentified financial records	
		228	Birds: "Manuscript Book" of George Bird and Morton Grinnell	1870
		229	Birds: ["Manuscript Book": draft]	ca. 1870