

Henry J. Biddle papers, circa 1862-1928

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1862-1928
Title	Henry J. Biddle papers
Dates	circa 1862-1928 (inclusive) 1862 1928
Quantity	6.5 linear feet, (12 containers)
Collection Number	Ax 645
Summary	Henry J. Biddle (1862-1928) was an engineer and an amateur botanist. The collection consists of diaries, trip logs, account books, correspondence, manuscripts, sketch and survey maps, and photograph prints and albums.
Repository	University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives. UO Libraries--SPC, 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 Fax: 541-346-3485 spcarref@uoregon.edu
Access Restrictions	Collection is open to the public. Collection must be used in Special Collections & University Archives Reading Room.
Additional Reference Guides	Paper finding aid with additional information is available in Special Collections & University Archives.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for production of this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Historical Note

Henry Jonathan Biddle (1862-1928) was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1862. He was a member of the prominent Biddle family of Philadelphia, and the son of Maj. Henry J. Biddle (1817-1862), who died the year Henry was born, from wounds suffered in the Battle of Newmarket Crossroads. Maj. Biddle's widow, Mary Deborah Baird Biddle (?-1900), endowed a college in his memory in Charlotte, North Carolina. (The institution endures but was later renamed Johnson C. Smith University; a Biddle Hall still stands on campus.).

Biddle was the youngest of five children. Oldest brother Jonathan Williams Biddle (1855-1877) was a lieutenant in Company K, 7th Cavalry and was killed in the conflict against the Nez Perce in 1877. Spencer Fullerton Baird Biddle (-1887), the third child, served in the Navy. Henry had two sisters, Lydia Macfunn Biddle (-1896) and Christine Williams Biddle. In 1887 he married Helene Rudolph in

Germany. The couple produced two children, Rebecca Baird Biddle (1888-?) and Spencer Biddle (1890-). Spencer accompanied his father on some of the expeditions.

The Biddle family became prominent during the Revolutionary War, and have been active in banking, statesmanship, and military service. Two noted relatives of Henry may have helped to inspire him. Nicholas Biddle (1786-1844) served as the primary editor for the first edition of the journals of Lewis and Clark. Spencer Fullerton Baird (1797-1887), namesake of Henry's brother, was a naturalist and prolific ornithologist mentored by Audubon. At the age of 27 he was appointed assistant secretary of the nascent Smithsonian Institution, and then Secretary (director) 1878-1887.

Henry J. Biddle was educated at Sheffield School and Yale University, and received a degree in geology in 1885 from the Kaiserlich Bergakademie in Freiburg, Germany. Trained as a mining engineer and geologist, he was also a naturalist and a botanist, and worked for the Smithsonian for a time. In the 1880s he was employed with the US Geological Survey in the Southeast and the Northwest. In 1881 he was informally attached to John Wesley Powell's survey of the Zuni Pueblos. Biddle settled in the Northwest, first in Lakeview and then in Portland, Oregon, finally establishing an estate near Vancouver.

In 1912 he retired to pursue botanical studies and promote conservation. He was a friend and traveling companion of Louis Forniquet Henderson (1853-1952), professor of botany at the University of Oregon 1893-1906 and curator of the UO Herbarium. Biddle also traveled with noted Portlanders, physician Rodney Glisan and botanist Martin Gorman (1853-1926). Biddle toured in Alaska and throughout the mountains and deserts of the Northwest. He may also have been involved in establishing Crater Lake as a national monument.

In 1915 Henry Biddle reputedly paid \$1 to acquire Castle Rock from Charles E. Ladd. Both men were concerned that this landmark on the Columbia Gorge, first described by Lewis & Clark in 1805 as Beacon Rock, be preserved from developers. Biddle helped convince the United States Board of Geographic Names to restore the name in 1916. An avid hiker and engineer, Biddle designed and constructed a trail to the top of the rock between October 1915 and April 1918. Biddle Butte is a nearby landmark, also owned by and named for Biddle. (Reproduction of 1916 article about trip to Biddle's Butte.) Henry Biddle died in 1928, and his children gave Beacon Rock to the state of Washington as a public park in 1932.

Content Description

The collection consists of diaries, trip logs, account books, correspondence, manuscripts, sketch and survey maps, and photograph prints and albums.

There are sixteen volumes of diaries, trip logs, and account books, 1879-1927. Diaries and trip logs include accounts of travel to Europe, southern Appalachians, Southern Oregon, Alaska, an exploration of Oregon's water resources, and hunting and fishing trips in Oregon, Alaska, Washington, and Idaho. Account books include a farm account book for "Tannenheim," and an account book of liens, securities, and real estate.

One section of correspondence is mostly letters from Biddle to his mother, 1879-1911.

Incoming correspondence is filed by sender's last name and includes 800 letters from friends and family, 1870-1894. One section is about Biddle's employment as a special agent collecting mine information in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, 1888.

Another set of incoming correspondence is filed by sender's last name and includes eighty-one letters, 1879-1890.

Manuscripts are filed by title and topics include botany, Dakota's Black Hills, and the Zulu war. Drawings and watercolors of English scenery, western wildflowers, and a sketch book are also included here. There is also a folder of mementos and printed material.

The Biddle and Baird Family papers include correspondence organized by family member, 1815-1887.

An addendum contains sketch and survey maps of land in Georgia (1775-1796), a will (1720), correspondence (1780-1946), and additional items of the Biddle and Baird family papers including correspondence (1797-1925), and documents such as a list of revolutionary war letters, and land and rent inquiries.

Photographs consist of seven albums documenting expeditions by auto and by pack train, in Oregon, Idaho, Washington, and Alaskan wilderness areas. Another album and assorted prints document the Columbia Gorge landmark of Beacon Rock that belonged to Biddle, and his construction of a hiking trail up its steep terrain.

The albums were compiled by Biddle and some are annotated. The collection is notable for documenting spectacular wilderness areas of the Northwest in the early 1900s, for use of an automobile for touring in the rugged landscape, and for construction of the Beacon Rock path. Most of the photographs are by Biddle; five by Weister showing a climbing party appear in the Beacon Rock album. Notable family images are a portrait of Maj. Henry J. Biddle (1817-1862) and one of Lt. Jonathan Williams Biddle (1855-1877) in uniform, Mary D. Biddle, and an unidentified male Biddle from the 19th century.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

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If a researcher finds sensitive personal information in a collection, please bring it to the attention of the reading room staff.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Henry J. Biddle papers, Ax 645, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

Henry J. Biddle papers, circa 1862-1928
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv30789>

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Material within this collection may have little to no intellectual or physical arrangement. Any arrangement may have derived from the records' creators or custodians. It may be necessary to look in multiple places for the same types of materials.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Mrs. Spencer Biddle in 1970-1971.

Processing Note

Photographs processed by Normandy S. Helmer, October 2005.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Material within this collection is minimally arranged. Any arrangement is either derived from the records' creators or custodians or from staff at the time of initial processing. It may be necessary to look in multiple places for the same types of materials.

Related Materials

The Biddle family is extensive and has been influential since the Revolutionary War. Major collections of Biddle papers are held by the University of Delaware and by Swarthmore.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Papers, circa 1862-1928

3.5 linear feet

Photographs (PH181), circa 1860s-1925

3.0 linear feet

Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1862-1928

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box		
1	PH181_01: The Invasion of Salem. [Album of military encampment in Salem, including dinner in a tent and campfire scenes. Biddle is an officer. "Compliments of the artist."] 1 album (photographic prints) 6 x 8.5 inches	1897

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	
2	PH181_02: [Album of automobile trip through Eastern Oregon, with scenes of Columbia Gorge and Crater Lake. "Postal Souvenirs" binding.] 1 album (photographic prints) Crater Lake, Klamath Marsh, Williamson River?, trip through Eastern Oregon. See logs, Box 1 (mss. Coll) [Note, source unidentified.] 6 x 8.5 inches Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	1910 c
3	PH181_03: [Album of views of Biddle homes (int. & ext.) in Washington; Columbia Gorge; early Portland; mine; and construction of Biddle's Butte road (clipping enclosed.) Edgewood & Lakeview.] 1 album (photographic prints) 8 x 10 inches Columbia Grove, H.J. Biddle house, Edgewood, Lakeview, early Portland, 1890. [Note, source unidentified.] Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	1897
4	PH181_04: [Album of hunting trip to Alaska (Wrangell, Stikeen River, Telegraph Harbor) with hunting camps, bag of moose and caribou, and scenery. "Souvenir Postals" binder.] 1 album (photographic prints) 6 x 8.5 inches Alaska, Wrangell, up the Stikine River to Telegraph Hbr 1912; Hunting trip 1912? See log in box 1; H.J. Biddle & Spencer, guide, packer & cook. [Note, source unidentified.] Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	1912
5	PH181_05: [Album of scenic views of Three-Finger Jack, Mt. Jefferson, Warm Springs, Ketchum, Wasco Lake, Suttle Lake, Blue Lake.] 1 album (photographic prints) 10 x 13 inches Mt. Jefferson 7/20/19; Wasco Lake; Three Finger Jack 8/20; Box Canyon, Warm Springs, 10/20; Galena Summit, North Ketchum, Idaho, 10/28/20; Suttle Lake and Blue Lake, 5/30/21. [Note, Source unknown.] Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	1919-1921
6	PH181_06: Mt. St. Helens, 1922. [Album of scenic images of Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Hood landscape, Three Sisters, hikers and camping, Palm Springs, Merrill Lake.] 1 album (photographic prints) 10 x 13 inches	1922-1925

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	Sisters & Mt. St. Helens, 1922; Mt. St. Helens 7/23; Mt. Hood, Paradise [???] 8/10/1923; Kalama River; Merrill Lake, WA 9/8/1923; Spen, Paul Vial [?], Mt. Howe; Umpqua River & Cape Salisbury. [Note, source unknown.] Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	
7	PH181_07: [Album of scenic views of Crater Lake and vicinity, and Palm Springs desert with saguaro cacti. Some images duplicated in other albums.] 1 album (photographic prints) 7 x 12 inches Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	1922-1925
8	PH181_08: [Album of postcards and photos of Beacon Rock, including construction of Biddle's engineered hiking path to top. Five Weister photos show group climbing, probably Mazamas.] 1 album (photographic prints) 10 x 13 inches Beacon or Castle Rock is a Gorge landmark that Biddle purchased to preserve. He engineered a hiking path to the top. Now a state park of Washington. Biddle is descended from Lewis & Clark editor, Nicholas Biddle, and he campaigned to restore the name appl Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	1917
9	PH181_09: [Biddle family photos, including Civil War General Henry J. Biddle, and 7th Cavalry officer J. Williams Biddle, and three views of sculptured bust of a young girl.] 1.0 mixed 10 x 13 inches Multiple photographers	1917
9	PH181_10: [Three views of Beacon Rock with Biddle's inked marks showing route of hiking path he constructed to summit, and envelope with his naotes and diagram.] 1.0 photographic print 10 x 13 inches Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1817-1862	1917
9	PH181_11: [39 images of Beacon Rock and Biddle's hiking trail. Many are duplicates of images in the album; three are commercial colored postcards. One view from Oregon side of river by Broc.] 1.0 mixed 10 x 13 inches Multiple photographers	1917

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Mountain driving--Photographs

Trails--Washington (State)--Design and construction--Photographs

Personal Names :

Biddle, Henry Jonathan, 1862-1928

Weister, George M., 1862-1922

Family Names :

Bedell family--Photographs

Geographical Names :

Beacon Rock (Wash.)--Photographs

Northwest, Pacific--Photographs

Form or Genre Terms :

Correspondence

Landscape photographs--Northwest, Pacific--1860-1925

Photographic prints--Washington (State)--1860-1925

Finding aid prepared by Tanya Parlet.

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