Guide to the John Merle Coulter Papers 1845-1929
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Descriptive Summary

Identifier         ICU.SPCL.COULTER
Title              Coulter, John Merle. Papers
Date               1845-1929
Size               1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)
Repository         Special Collections Research Center
                  University of Chicago Library
                  1100 East 57th Street
                  Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract           John Merle Coulter (1851-1928), botanist and chair of the Botany
                  Department of the University of Chicago, 1896-1926. The Papers contain
                  the correspondence and personal papers of Coulter’s parents, relating mainly
                  to a brief missionary tour to China. The collection also includes letters and
                  school mementos, drafts of many of Coulter’s postwar lectures and articles,
                  and miscellaneous papers relating to his activities during the last five years of
                  his life.

Information on Use
Access             No restrictions

Citation           When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Coulter, John Merle.
                  Papers

Biographical Note  John Merle Coulter (1851-1928), was born in China to Presbyterian missionaries Moses and
                  Caroline Coulter. He received an AB (1870) and an AM (1873) from Hanover College, then
                  completed a PhD at Indiana State University in 1882.

                  Coulter served as Professor of Natural Sciences at Hanover College from 1874 to 1879 and
                  Professor of Biology at Wabash College from 1879 to 1891. From 1891 to 1893, he was
                  President of Indiana State University, then of Lake Forest College, from 1893-1896. In 1896, he
                  became Chair of the Botany Department at the University of Chicago, where he remained until
                  his retirement in 1925. In retirement, Coulter worked with the Boyce Thompson Institute for
                  Plant Research in Yonkers, New York.
In addition to his academic appointments, Coulter served as Assistant Geologist and Botanist for the Hayden Survey of what is now Yellowstone National Park (1872) and, in 1875, co-founded the Botanical Bulletin, soon renamed the Botanical Gazette. A staunch evolutionist and Presbyterian, he had a particular interest in the correlation of science and religion.

**Scope Note**

The John M. Coulter Papers contain the correspondence and personal papers of Coulter’s parents. These items relate mainly to the brief missionary tour of the Coulters at the Presbyterian Mission at Ningbo, China, which was terminated by Moses Coulter’s death in 1853. The collection also includes letters and school mementos, drafts of many of Coulter’s postwar lectures and articles, and miscellaneous papers relating to his activities during the last five years of his life. These activities included a trip to China and Japan in 1923, a project to write biographies for college students of important men of science, and the directorship of Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research at Yonkers, New York. The Collection is divided into two series.

**Related Resources**

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

**Subject Headings**

- Coulter, John Merle, 1851-1928
- Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories (U.S.)
- Yellowstone National Park
- Botanists
- Missionaries
- Missionaries -- China

**INVENTORY**

**Series I: Moses and Caroline Coulter Papers**

This series includes letters and personal papers evidently preserved by Mrs. Caroline E. Coulter. They relate mainly to the brief missionary tour of the Coulters at the Presbyterian Mission at Ningbo, China, which was terminated by Moses Coulter’s death in 1853. The highlight of this portion of the collection is a small group of letters written to Mrs. Coulter by friends still in Ningbo following her return to the United States in 1854 with her two small sons, John and Stanley (sometimes referred to as "Diddi" in the letters). These letters describe the continuing activities of the mission in the mid- and late 1850’s and early 1860’s and give some picture of the attitudes of the missionaries themselves.

**Box 1**

**Folder 1**

from New York to China kept by Caroline Coulter, 1849. 3) "The Battle," a poem by Moses Coulter, 1846.

**Box 1**

**Folder 2**
Diaries of Moses Coulter, Sept. 4, 1848-Jan. 1, 1849: Lettered "A" and "B".

**Box 1**

**Folder 3**
Will of Moses S. Coulter, Sept. 30, 1851.

**Box 1**

**Folder 4**
Letters to and from Moses S. Coulter.

**Box 1**

**Folder 5**
Fragment of a letter describing Moses Coulter’s last illness, c. 1853. (The letter is unsigned, but it appears to be in Caroline Coulter's hand.)

**Box 1**

**Folder 6**
Mr. and Mrs. H. V. Rankin. 15 letters, 1854-1861.

**Box 1**

**Folder 7**
Joseph K. Wright. 6 letters, 1853-1859.

**Box 1**

**Folder 8**
Mr. and Mrs. R. Q. Way. 9 letters, 1854-1870.

**Box 1**

**Folder 9**
Dr. and Mrs. D. B. McCartee. 8 letters, 1855-1874.

**Box 1**

**Folder 10**
Mrs. E. A. Goddard. 2 letters and one fragment, 1856-57.

**Box 1**

**Folder 11**
Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Hopper. 2 letters, 1859.

**Box 1**

**Folder 12**
Other missionary letters: Caroline A. Cobhold[?]. 1 letter, June 13, 1855. Unsigned. 1 letter, May 29, 1863.

**Box 1**

**Folder 13**
Jane Coulter to her daughter-in-law (Caroline) and her grandson, letters, 1853-1868.

**Box 1**

**Folder 14**
Postcards addressed to Caroline Coulter from John Coulter and members of his family. 18 cards, none dated.
John Coulter’s children to their grandmother, Caroline Coulter, none dated.

Box 1
Folder 16
Miscellaneous. 3 letters, 1 telegram.

Box 1
Folder 17
Letters by Caroline Coulter. 3.

Series II: Papers of John M. Coulter

This series comprises the principal portion of the collection is made up of letters and school mementos preserved by John M. Coulter’s mother and his mother-in-law, Anna M. Gaylord, drafts of many of Coulter’s postwar lectures and articles, and miscellaneous papers relating to his activities during the last five years of his life: a trip to China and Japan in 1923, a project to write biographies for college students of important men of science, and the directorship of Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research at Yonkers, New York.

Box 1
Folder 18
Letters addressed to John Coulter by friends of his mother and by relatives. 4 letters, 1859-76.

Box 1
Folder 19
John M. Coulter to Caroline E. Coulter. 9 letters, 1872-79. 1862-70.

Box 1
Folder 20
John M. Coulter to Caroline E. Coulter and Georgie Gaylord Coulter. 3 letters, 1879-84.

Box 1
Folder 21
John M. Coulter to Georgie Gaylord [Coulter]. 7 letters, 1872-73.

Box 1
Folder 22
John M. Coulter to Caroline E. Coulter. 11 letters, 1872-73.

Box 1
Folder 23
John Coulter to Caroline E. Coulter. 6 letters, May-June, 1903.

Box 1
Folder 24
John Coulter to Caroline E. Coulter. 9 letters, July-August, 1903.

Box 1
Folder 25

Box 1
Folder 26
Others in family to Caroline Coulter. 8 letters, June-Oct., 1903.

Box 1
Folder 27
Georgie Coulter to her mother, Anna M. Gaylord. 18 letters, May-Oct., 1903.

Box 1
Folder 28

Box 1
Folder 29
Other members of family to Caroline Coulter. 2 letters, Nov., 1905.

Box 1
Folder 30
Georgie Coulter to Anna M. Gaylord. 21 letters, 1905-06.

Box 1
Folder 31
John M. Coulter to Caroline E. Coulter. 3 letters.

Box 2
Folder 1
Compositions by John M. Coulter: "Lines dedicated to my mother on her 34th birthday, Mar. 24, 1862." "Description of Waveland Collegiate Institute." Feb., 1863.

Box 2
Folder 2
Student Notebook: English Literature.

Box 2
Folder 3
Reports of Standing: Hanover College, 1866, 1868, 1870 (5 reports)

Box 2
Folder 4

Box 2
Folder 5

Box 2
Folder 6
Notebooks (2). Notes made on European trips of 1903 and 1905. (Back of 1905-06 notebook contains cancelled draft of an article on Asa Gray.)

Box 2
Folder 7

Box 2
Folder 8

Box 2
Folder 9
Boyce Thompson Institute: Birthday greeting, Nov. 20, 1926, signed by members of staff. Copy of Contributions, Jan. 1, 1925.
Folder 10

Box 2
Folder 11
Notices.

Box 2
Folder 12

Box 2
Folder 13
Letters of sympathy.

Box 2
Folder 14
Coulter’s lapsed life insurance policy. Correspondence with Mutual Life Insurance, by Merle Coulter (son), Dec., 1928-Jan., 1929.

Box 2
Folder 15
Letter to Merle Coulter, concerning his share in estate.

Box 3
Folder 1
List of addresses and papers

Box 3
Folder 2
The Botanical Opportunity

Box 3
Folder 3
Botany as a National Asset

Box 3
Folder 4
Development of Botany in the United States

Box 3
Folder 5
The Evolution of Botanical Research

Box 3
Folder 6
The Evolution of Plants

Box 3
Folder 7
The Future of Botany

Box 3
Folder 8
The New Botany

Box 3
Folder 9
The Biological Background of Religious Education
Folder 10  
The Case for Religions
Box 3
Folder 11  
Christianity and Science
Box 3
Folder 12  
The Cooperation of Science and Religion
Box 3
Folder 13  
Evolution and Christianity (another version of folder 12)
Box 3
Folder 14  
Evolution and its Explanations (reprint from Christian Century, May 22, 1922.)
Box 3
Folder 15  
The History of Organic Evolution
Box 3
Folder 16  
The Meaning of Evolution
Box 3
Folder 17  
The Methods and Results of Science
Box 3
Folder 18  
The Need for Cooperation
Box 3
Folder 19  
Original Exploration of Yellowstone National Park
Box 3
Folder 20  
Our National Park
Box 3
Folder 21  
The Personal Faith of a Scientist
Box 3
Folder 22  
The Present Status of Organic Evolution
Box 3
Folder 23  
The Role of Science in Modern Civilization
Box 3
Folder 24  
The Science of Religion
Box 4
Folder 1
Welcoming talk: "It is a great pleasure to the Institute Staff to welcome this group of Chemists..."

Box 4
Folder 2
Welcoming talk: "It is a great pleasure to welcome this group of pathologists..."

Box 4
Folder 3
Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research

Box 4
Folder 4
Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research (another version)

Box 4
Folder 5
Research at the Boyce Thompson Institute

Box 4
Folder 6
Work of the Boyce Thompson Institute

Box 4
Folder 7
Correspondence: Otis Caldwell to John M. Coulter.

Box 4
Folder 8
Correspondence with scientists concerning source material for biographies.

Box 4
Folder 8.5
Writings, 1896-1916
• "The Botanical Outlook," 1895
• "The Embryo Sac and Embryo of Gnetum Gnemon," 1908
• "Evolutionary Tendencies among Gymnosperms," 1909
• "Inheritance Through Spores," 1916
• "Some College Fallacies," 1900

Box 4
Folder 9
Liberty Hyde Bailey, Ms of Coulter’s biography.

Box 4
Folder 10
Hugo De Vries, Ms of Coulter’s biography.

Box 4
Folder 11
Rafinesque, Ms of Coulter’s biography.

Box 4
Folder 12
The International Mission of Universities.

Box 4
Folder 13
The New Spirit.
Box 4
Folder 14
Book reviews for Science: General Botany by C. Stuart Gager Flora of the Panama Canal Zone by Paul C. Stanley.

Box 4
Folder 15

Box 4
Folder 16

Box 4
Folder 17

Box 4
Folder 18
Report: Winter Potatoes (about Dr. F. E. Denny)

Box 4
Folder 19
Daily Science News Bulletin, May 15, 1926 (notice of an article by Coulter in Science.)

Box 4
Folder 20
List of Books from the Library of John M. Coulter.

Box 4
Folder 21
Miscellaneous Newspaper Clippings.

Box 4
Folder 22
Miscellaneous Photographs.

Box 4
Folder 23
Part of a letter, unaddressed and unsigned (8 pages, unnumbered) describing "a short visit to Pootoo." (Probably to Caroline Coulter).

Box 4
Folder 24
Letter: C. F. Cowan to Leila Garritt, with Photograph (unidentified).

Box 4
Folder 25
Miscellaneous fragments and sheets: most in JMC’s hand, but back of one drawing bears note with signature M.S.C.