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William Penn Brooks Papers

1863-1939 (*Bulk:* 1863-1896)

3 boxes (1.5 linear ft.)
Call no.: RG 3/1 Brooks

Abstract

Brooks entered the Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1871 and graduated in 1875. In 1877, he accepted an invitation from the Japanese government to continue the work begun by Clark to establish the Sapporo Agricultural School. His papers consist of correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, an account book, and translations. The letters describe in rich detail life in Japan from the perspective of an American teacher trained in agriculture.

Access

The collection is open for research.

Language:

English

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Background on William Penn Brooks

William Penn Brooks was born in South Scituate, Massachusetts in November of 1851. He entered the Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1871 and graduated with high honors in 1875. During his undergraduate years he participated in Dr. William Smith Clark's famous experiments on plant physiology. Brooks remained at Massachusetts Agricultural College as a graduate student in chemistry and botany. During this time, Brooks accepted an invitation from the Japanese government to go to Sapporo to teach. Brooks arrived in Japan in January 1877 to continue the work begun by Clark to establish the Sapporo Agricultural School. Immediately after his arrival he began to deliver lectures on agricultural science and took charge of the directorship of the experimental fields. Brooks worked at the Sapporo Agricultural School for twelve years, four of which he served as the college president. Along with his teaching, Brooks made a great number of contributions as an agricultural advisor for the Sapporo provincial government. He introduced onions, corn, beans, forage and other plants to Japan.

In 1882, Brooks returned to America and married Miss Eva Bancroft Hall. They lived in Sapporo for seven years during which time they had two children. Their daughter, Rachel Bancroft Brooks, married Mr. George Drew in 1907. Their son, Sumner Cushing Brooks, married Matilda Moldenhauer while they were both students at Harvard.

Brooks returned to America with his family in October 1888. On leaving Japan, the government bestowed on him the Fourth Order of Merit and the Cordon of the Rising Sun. In 1920, the Minister of Education in Japan conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Agriculture.

In 1889, Brooks was appointed professor of agriculture at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, at the same time he began to serve as an engineer at the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station. During this time he introduced soybeans to the United States. In August 1896, Brooks went to Germany with his family and studied at Halle for one year where he received his doctorate. After his return from Germany, Brooks became interested mainly in experimental enterprises. In 1906 he became director of the Station and he remained connected with the college soley as a lecturer. Brooks was an advisor to the Station until 1921. His contributions to agriculture have been mainly published as reports of the schools, the Experiment Station, the state agricultural department, and the societies to which he was connected. Brooks also authored a textbook in three volumes entitled *Agriculture* and a collection of his lectures were published under the title *Science as Applied to Agriculture*. In 1932, Massachusetts Agricultural College granted Brooks an honorary degree of

Doctor of Agriculture.

In 1924 Brooks's wife died; three years later he married Mrs. Grace Holden. Brooks cultivated his own garden in Amherst where he lived until his death on March 8, 1938 at the age of eighty-seven. In a letter written to one of his students Kingo Miyabe he wrote: "I was born in November, 1851, and to my pleasure I am still living in good health. I can still drive the automobile myself and do all the work in my garden. Nothing gives me more pleasure than cultivating vegetables, fruit-trees, and flowering plants and it is this work that is keeping me in such sound health. Now I have twenty odd kinds of hybrid tea roses and they have been in blossom since the middle of June."

Contents of Collection

The William Penn Brooks Papers consists of correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, an account book, and translations. The collection is arranged in three series: Correspondence, Biographical and Historical, and Photographs. The majority of letters are from William Brooks to his sister Rebecca Brooks during the period of time when he was teaching in Sapporo, Japan. The time span of the letters range from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, and describe in rich detail life in Japan from the perspective of an American teacher trained in agriculture.

Organization of the Collection

This collection is organized into three series:

- Series 1. Correspondence, 1868-1938
- Series 2. Biographical and Historical, 1878-1939
- Series 3. Photographs, 1881-1887

Series descriptions

Series 1. Correspondence 1868-1938

Brooks's reflections on botany in Sapporo and on his teaching tenure at Sapporo Agricultural School can be found in his letters to his sister Rebecca. These letters frequently refer to Rebecca's failing health and in them William Brooks offers advice to his sister regarding her well-being. It remains unclear what was the cause of Rebecca's poor health, but there are mentions of digestive problems and the need for good nourishment and fresh air. Another topic documented in these letters is the description of life in Japan, including such details as the noise made by frogs, which were numerous in Sapporo, the construction of houses, and the organization of Japanese households. According to Brooks, the Japanese took down the walls of their houses during the day so that the inner arrangement of their houses was displayed. One letter refers to kite flying as a national past time and another letter describes Japanese theater as always based on an historical narrative. Brooks is attentive to plant life and the different kinds of food which are available in Sapporo.

In the letters of Eva Brooks to William's sisters Rebecca and Martha, she writes of her domestic duties such as milking the cow, making butter, and a taking trip to various cities of Japan with her daughter Rachel. She itemizes the objects that she bought on this trip in order to bring them back to Massachusetts upon the completion of William's tenure at Sapporo Agricultural School.

Series 2. Biographical and Historical 1878-1939

Contains an account book, probably kept by Eva Brooks, dated 1896 to 1923, with pages 16-25 and 46-49 removed. Other materials in this series are newspaper clippings, translations, the biographical sketches of Brooks and the Baron Shosuke Sato, a map of Hokkaido University, a Japanese poem translated into English by Brooks's students, and a salary receipt for Brooks's work at the Experiment Station.

Series 3. Photographs 1881-1887

The photographs consist of portraits of staff and graduating students from three classes at Sapporo Agricultural College as well as scenes of Japan and Massachusetts.

Collection inventory

Series 1. Correspondence 1868-1938

Incoming letters, card	1871-1887, 1918, undated	Box 1: 1
Outgoing letter: Sam Brooks	1888 June	Box 1: 2
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1885 July,1878 Apr, undated	Box 1: 3
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1868 Nov	Box 1: 4
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1872 Oct-1873 Feb	Box 1: 5
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1877 Jan-Dec (Contains some oversize items)	Box 1, 3: 6, 1
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1878 Mar-Dec (Contains some oversize items)	Box 1, 3: 7, 1
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1879 Apr-Dec	Box 1: 8
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1880 Mar-1881 Feb	Box 1: 9
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1881 Mar-Nov	Box 1: 10
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1882 Apr-June	Box 1, 3: 11, 1
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1883 Jan-May	Box 1, 3: 12, 1
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1883 July-Dec	Box 1: 13
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1884 Feb-Nov	Box 1: 14
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1885 Feb-1886 Feb	Box 1: 15
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1888 Jan-Dec	Box 1: 16
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1889 Jan-Aug	Box 1: 17
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1890 Sept-1891 Oct	Box 1: 18
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1894 Dec-1895 Dec	Box 1: 19
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1896 May-1897 Dec	Box 1: 20
Outgoing letters: Rebecca Brooks	1898 Dec-1899 May	Box 1: 21
Letter: Kinya Machimura to Samuel Brooks	1938 June	Box 1: 22
Letters: Eva Brooks to Martha Brooks and Rebecca Brooks	1887 Mar, undated	Box 1: 23
Letter: Rachel Brooks to Rebecca Brooks	1890	Box 1: 24
Letters: Unknown correspondents	1882 Nov, 1885 Feb, undated	

Series 2. Biographical and Historical	1878-1939	
Account Book	1896-1923	Box 2: 1
Alpha Bits, published by Phi Sigma, Kappa	1936 May	Box 2: 2
Biographical sketch of Brooks in Experiment Station Record	1938 May	Box 2: 3
Biographical sketch and notice of death of Baron Shosuke Sato	1939 June	Box 2: 4
Book cover: Eva B. Hall	1878 Jan	Box 2: 5
Map of Hokkaido University	1956	Box 2: 6
Newspaper clippings	1863 June, 1884 Dec, 1885 Feb, 1905 June, undated	Box 2: 7
Poem (Japanese with English translation)	1888 Oct	Box 2: 9
Printed material (Japanese)	undated	Box 2: 10
Salary receipt for Brooks's work at the Experiment Station	1918 Oct	Box 2: 11
Stamp from Japan	undated	Box 2: 12
Translations	1884 Dec, 1885 Feb, undated	Box 3: 4

Series 3. Photographs	1881-1887	
Portrait of an unidentified woman	ca. 1860-1870	Box 2: 13
Portrait of an unidentified man	ca. 1860-1870	Box 2: 14
Mountain scene	ca. 1870-1880	Box 3: 3
Bridge scene	ca. 1870-1880	Box 3: 3
Street scene	ca. 1870-1880	Box 3: 3
Street scene	1877	Box 3: 3
Horse	1879	Box 3: 3
Servants	1879	Box 3: 3
House	ca. 1880-1900	Box 2: 15
Hotel	1881	Box 3: 3
Staff and graduates Sapporo Agricultural College	1881	Box 3: 5
Staff and graduates Sapporo Agricultural College	1884	Box 3: 5
Staff and graduates Sapporo Agricultural College	1887	Box 3: 5
Published portrait of William Penn Brooks	undated	Box 2: 16

Administrative information

Provenance

Donated by Ben and Emily Drew and Cynthia Redman in October of 2004. Ben Drew and Cynthia Redman are descendants of William Penn Brooks.

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Gugler, December 2004.

Related Material

For material related to the history of the Massachusetts Agricultural College and the Sapporo Agricultural College, see:

- William Smith Clark Papers, 1814-2003

For material related to 19th century Japan, see:

- Benjamin Smith Lyman Papers, 1831-1921 (bulk 1851-1915)

Bibliography

The following is a list of sources consulted during the preparation of this finding aid.

- Maki, John M. *William Smith Clark: A Yankee in Hokkaido*. Hokkaido University Press, Hokkaido, Japan, 1996.
- Miyabe, Kingo: "A Brief Biography of the Late Dr. Willliam Penn Brooks."
- Rand, Frank Prentice. *Yesterdays at Massachusetts State College*. The Associate Alumni Massachusetts State College, Massachusetts, 1933.

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Cite as: William Penn Brooks Papers (RG 3/1 Brooks). Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Search terms

Subjects

- Agricultural colleges--Japan--History.
- Hokkaido (Japan)--History.
- Japan--Description and travel.
- Japan--History--1868-
- Sapporo-shi (Japan)--History.

Names

- Brooks, William Penn, 1851-
- Clark, William Smith, 1826-1886.
- Hokkaido Daigaku.
- Massachusetts Agricultural College--History.
- Massachusetts State Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Sapporo Nogakko--History.

Genre terms

- Correspondence (letters)
- Photographs.