

JOHN BURRUSS MCGEHEE PAPERS

Mss. 1111, 1156, 1157

Inventory

Compiled by
Luana Henderson

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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SUMMARY

- Size.** 18.5 linear feet, 64 volumes
- Geographic locations.** West Feliciana Parish, La.; Wilkinson County, Miss.; Arkansas, Alabama
- Inclusive dates.** 1816-1951
- Bulk dates.** 1890-1919, 1930-1940
- Language.** English
- Summary.** Correspondence, business records, and printed items reflect the business ventures in agriculture, railroads, and real estate of John Burruss McGehee and his father, Judge Edward McGehee and his son, James Stewart McGehee. Personal papers and photographs provide a family history and the genealogy of the McGehee and Stewart families.
- Restrictions on access.** Volume 64 (letter book) is restricted due to fragility. Access requires the permission of a curator.
- Related collections.** John C. Burruss Family Papers, Mss. 1514, 2296
James Stewart McGehee Family Papers, Mss. 2302, 2789
James Stewart McGehee Collection, Mss. 326
Centenary College of Louisiana Document, Mss. 133
Abram Feltus Barrow Family Papers, Mss. 3696, 3745
Robert H. Ryland Papers, Mss. 827, 848, 889
- Copyright.** For those materials not in the public domain, the descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. Copyright law retain copyright.
- Citation.** John Burruss McGehee Papers, Mss. 1111, 1156, 1157, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
- Stack locations.** 8:3-12; P:5-6; OS:Mc

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Judge Edward McGehee was a wealthy planter and distinguished judge of Woodville, Mississippi. He was largely responsible for the building of the West Feliciana Railroad, which ran from Woodville to Bayou Sara. The railroad later became part of the Illinois Central system. Judge McGehee owned Bowling Green Plantation near Woodville. The plantation spread across several thousand acres and included a textile factory. In 1860, Edward McGehee owned more than 800 slaves, several plantations, and over 23,000 acres. Although he supported the Union in the Civil War, his factory provided clothing for the Confederate Army. As a result, Union troops burned down Bowling Green plantation house in 1864. In an 1867 letter, Judge McGehee describes the incident, and his son, J. Burruss McGehee, provides an account of the events of that day in a 1903 narrative. Edward McGehee married Mary Hines Burruss (1812-1873) in 1829. They had several children; among them was John Burruss McGehee, who became one of the largest plantation owners of West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, and Augusta Eugenia (1854-1882). Judge McGehee died October 1, 1880 in Woodville, Miss.

John Burruss McGehee was the owner of large plantations in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana and Wilkinson County, Mississippi, and he owned land and rented properties in several other southern states. He was a prominent resident of West Feliciana Parish and an active member of the Episcopal Church, exercising great influence in local and state politics. He served as a captain in the Louisiana Cavalry of the Confederate Army during the Civil War and he served in the Louisiana legislature after the war. He also served as president of the West Feliciana Railroad. The railroad became part of the Louisville, New Orleans & Texas Railroad in 1888, and part of the Illinois Central System in 1892 when the LNO&T consolidated with the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad.

After the Civil War, he resumed planting, but abandoned the one crop agricultural system. He experimented with grasses for the restoration of wasteland and he developed rust proof oats. He was the first farmer in the Mississippi Valley to grow lespedeza on a large scale for the commercial market. In addition to producing lespedeza at his Woodlawn Plantation in West Feliciana, he produced several other crops including cotton. He also bred livestock for sale. As a highly respected member in the agriculture community, he often spoke at agricultural conferences on modern farming practices.

In 1859, J. Burruss McGehee married Catherine Elizabeth Stewart. They had one son, James Stewart McGehee (1860-1945). J. Burruss McGehee died February 11, 1913. His son, James Stewart, continued as a planter in West Feliciana Parish and Wilkinson County, and as a businessman of St. Louis, Missouri.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains the papers of John Burruss McGehee, his father, Judge Edward McGehee and his son, James Stewart McGehee. The correspondence and financial papers of John Burruss McGehee comprise most of the collection. They relate to business dealings in land acquisition, farming, the sale of agricultural products, particularly lespedeza seed and the breeding of livestock. Some material relates to the West Feliciana Railroad. Printed items include newspapers and clippings, ephemera, and choir music, broadsides, pamphlets and reports. Newspaper clippings include articles and letters published by J. Burruss McGehee. Material also documents property transactions in West Feliciana Parish, La., and in Wilkinson and Jefferson Counties, Miss., including Woodlawn and Bowling Green Plantations.

There are also personal papers in the collection. They are composed mostly of genealogical material and photographs that provide a family history and the genealogy of the McGehee and Stewart families, and the related Kennard and Snowden families. Personal papers also contain writings that include the speeches and papers on agricultural practices that John Burruss McGehee presented at conferences.

LIST OF SERIES AND SUBSERIES

- Series I. Correspondence, 1840-1944.**
- Series II. Business Records, 1816-1951, undated.**
Subseries 1. General Papers and Legal Documents, 1816-1940, undated.
Subseries 2. Financial Papers, 1858-1951, undated.
- Series III. Personal Papers, 1865, 1880-1942, undated.**
Subseries 1. Family Papers and Genealogy, 1865, 1880-1925, undated.
Subseries 2. Writings and Speeches, 1886-1916, undated.
- Series IV. Printed Items, 1839-1942, undated.**
Subseries 1. Newspapers and Clippings, 1887-1936, undated.
Subseries 2. General Printed Items, 1839-1936, undated.
Subseries 3. Ephemera, 1868, 1880-1942, undated.
- Series V. Photographs, 1882-1945, undated.**

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I. Correspondence, 1840-1944, undated.

This series relates mostly to the business dealings of J. Burruss McGehee, and his son James Stewart McGehee, with personal correspondence and the letters of Edward McGehee. Letters pertain to the acquisition of property and land in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Arkansas, as well as the sale of seed and livestock.

Early letters refer to slaves that cannot be sold (April 30, 1840) and to a slave deed of trust (September 6, 1841). J. Burruss McGehee writes to his wife during the Civil War that it is impossible to sell cotton at Woodlawn Plantation because General George B. Hodge will not grant a permit (January 23, 1865). He comments on the cotton trade, the expectation of peace, Abraham Lincoln, and the friendly reception accorded to the Confederate commissioners, Robert Hunter and Stephen Campbell at the White House (February 2, 1865). He also writes that he is sending "Jim" back home, and to keep him locked up day and night. If the opportunity arises, "Jim" may be sold for \$250 in gold or Louisiana money (February 3, 1865).

A letter from Edward McGehee tells of the destruction of Bowling Green Plantation in October of 1864. His letter describes the theft of his property, the burning of his plantation house, the attack inflicted on him by African American troops (March 6, 1867). A letter from J. Burruss McGehee to Sheriff John M. Nibling of West Feliciana instructs the sheriff to release Henry Clay, a freedman, and see to it that Clay starts out for home (April 6, 1868). A letter from John H. Kennard comments on the political situation in Louisiana (November 24, 1874). Alex McKay writing from Laurel Hill reports on a Scotsman interested in employment (July 3, 26, 1886), and George Munro mentions inducements to attract Scottish immigrants, (Dec. 25, 1886).

The majority of the correspondence from 1890 through to 1916 is that of J. Burruss McGehee. It reflects his business interests in real estate and agriculture. Correspondents include commission merchants, real estate agents, renters, insurers, farmers, merchants, and farm equipment vendors. Letters relate to the conveyance of property, crop production and sales, the cotton trade, rental property, tenant housing, property taxes, and the sale of lespedeza seed, as well as the sale and care of livestock.

Correspondents also include Mason Snowden, the nephew and ward of J. Burruss McGehee. Snowden's letters concern personal matters and plantation operations. As a youth, Snowden writes about student life at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Mississippi. He also reports on his violation of the rules and the disciplinary action taken against him. This poor behavior ultimately leads to his dismissal from the College (February, October-December 1892). In August of 1892 and after his dismissal from school in December, Snowden reports on plantation operations of Retreat Plantation in Mississippi. In addition, he comments on his own economic situation and family matters (1892-1916). Letters written between Mason Snowden and Stewart McGehee in October of 1916 discuss Mason's illness.

James Stewart McGehee's correspondence begins to appear in 1893. For the most part, his correspondence relates to business and family matters and includes a letter book (April 1900-

April 1902). Letters written in the 1930s pertain to catalog orders and purchases with the retailers Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck & Company. Notable is a letter from his cousin, George Stewart, in which he agrees that they should sever their relationship. A disagreement occurred over an incident at a party, in which George offended Stewart's wife (September 23, 1886). An account of the incident is found in Series III, subseries 2.

Peter Moller of Woodville, Mississippi describes the circumstances surrounding the death of a tenant farmer (Dec. 10, 1892). Another letter reports on the fine levied and the incarceration of George Smith for "whipping his wife" (April 25, 1892). The mother of Milton Tucker, a convicted murderer sentenced to death, writes to McGehee requesting his help. In his response, he explains why he cannot, and goes on to comment on the conditions in the penitentiary and the African American population (July-August 1893). He remarks on the difficulty in processing claims for black soldiers as opposed to white soldiers (March 15, 1898). Three letters to Stewart claim that state laws, which prohibit the sale of alcohol to blacks and whites on the same premises and also prohibit the sale of alcohol to women and minors, are not being observed (Dec. 19, 20, 1916).

Note: Many of the letters dated after 1914 are affixed to related letters. This group is arranged chronologically by the date of the top letter.

Several letters discuss the railroads (1870-1916). Railroad correspondence contains a letter to C. P. Neilson of Woodville, Mississippi, from R. T. Wilson, President of the Louisville, New Orleans & Texas Railway Company concerning a sale (Dec. 11, 1885). Wilson forwarded the letter to J. Burruss McGehee with his comments. Eugene Barrow, owner of Rosale Plantation in West Feliciana Parish, expresses his concerns in removing bricks from a wall in order to sell to McGehee, president of the West Feliciana Railroad Co. (April 13, 1886). George McGinnis, of the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad Co., shows interest in purchasing land from McGehee (March 31, April 2, 24, 1894).

Series II. Business Records, 1816-1951, undated.

Subseries 1. General Papers and Legal Documents, 1816-1940, undated.

This subseries relates to land acquisition, rental properties, succession and distribution of inherited assets, and the commercial sale of livestock and crops. Legal papers comprise a large part of this group. They include land conveyances, estate papers, powers of attorney, deeds, leases, indentures, stock certificates, insurance certificates, and court records. They relate to rental properties and the transfer of land located in West Feliciana Parish, La., Wilkinson County, Miss., Jefferson County, Ala., and Arkansas. They also relate to inheritance and debt. Early papers (1816-1870) consist of land documents, plats and maps in West Feliciana Parish, La., and Wilkinson County, Miss. The earliest one being a title transfer bond from John Montgomery to Charles Stewart for land to be obtained through a land grant (1816). In addition, early papers contain a land survey prepared by Samuel M. D. Clark for John L. Lobdell (July 14, 1827) and a deed transferring ownership of slaves from Walter S. Chew and Philomel Chew to Edward McGehee (March 1, 1841). A West Feliciana police jury document appoints J. Burruss McGehee overseer of the 11th Road District (August 5, 1865).

Later papers include the transfer of Bowling Green Plantation to Augusta Eugenia McGehee (November 6, 1880) and Colonel Richard H. Haile's plantation to J. Burruss McGehee (1884-

1885, 1887). Maps include those of Thompson Creek Plantation in Wilkinson County, Miss. (circa 1886) and Saint Francis County, Ark. (undated).

Stocks shares include those of the Agricultural and Live Stock Association of Wilkinson County, Mississippi, (1886-1887, 1895), Carrollton Railroad (1883), and Sewall Harbor and Channel Improvement Company, Ltd. (1895). They also include West Feliciana Railroad and other property in Mississippi recorded in 1870. Succession papers concern to the estates of Edward McGehee (1880-1887), Micajah McGehee (1881), Augusta Eugenia McGehee (1882), and James A. Stewart (1882-1884). Papers that pertain to railroads contain the appointments by the Board of Directors of the West Feliciana Railroad Company of B. H. Wailes (January 5, 1886, June 20, 22, 1886), and for J. Stewart McGehee (1886, 1887).

Additional material includes paste-ups, drafts for advertisements and price lists for products and livestock sold by Woodlawn Farms (undated), an audit report of the Marshall Hall Grain Company of St. Louis, Missouri (1926).

Subseries 2. Financial Papers, 1858-1951, undated.

Financial papers are comprised of invoices, statements of accounts, shipping and freight records, receipts, and undated lists of employees. Financial papers relate to the purchase of food, household goods, pharmaceutical supplies, and farm equipment and supplies. Financial papers also verify the re-payment of loans, receipts for cotton sales, as well as the sale of livestock, grains, and cotton and lespedeza seed. Also found is the payroll for Retreat Plantation (1892, undated). Manuscript volumes consist of account books, volumes 1-6 (1889-1904, undated), memorandum books, volumes 7-8 (1892, 1911-1915), time books, volumes 9-17 (1891-1941), and bank records, volumes 18-21 (1897-1927). The last item in the collection is an invoice from California Camellia Gardens (1951).

Series III. Personal Papers, 1865, 1880-1942, undated.

Subseries 1. Family Papers and Genealogy, 1865, 1880-1925, 1942, undated.

This subseries relates to the family history and genealogy of the McGehee and Stewart families. Materials include literary drafts, historical accounts, biographical sketches, (undated), genealogical charts and notes, as well as J. Burruss McGehee's loyalty oath to the United States (October 14, 1865). Drafts include *Short Historical and Genealogical Account of the Royal Family of Scotland, and the Name of Stewart* written by Duncan Stewart (1925) and *A Brief History of One Branch of the McGehee Family from 1771 to the Present*, a family history compiled by George T. McGehee. A narrative by J. Burruss McGehee describes the destruction of Bowling Green Plantation and the treatment inflicted on his parents by African American troops in October of 1864 (February 10, 1903). This subseries also contains two hand drawn maps of Bowling Green Plantation (undated). Manuscript volumes include a diet log/diary, volume 29 (1942) and a small notepad, volume 30 (1925).

Subseries 2. Writings and Speeches, 1886-1916, undated.

This group contains conference papers and articles mostly written by J. Burruss McGehee that discuss agriculture and agricultural methods. One article gives the history of the West Feliciana Railroad published in the *Illinois Central Magazine* in June 1916. The subseries also includes the personal account of James Stewart McGehee in which he reports on the behavior of his cousin

George Stewart at a dance in Woodville, Mississippi (September 27, 1886). J. Burruss McGehee details the events and financial issues which led to the dissolution of all business and personal relations with his father (1891).

Series IV. Printed Items, 1839-1942, undated.

Subseries 1. Newspapers and Clippings, 1887-1936, undated.

For the most part newspaper clippings relate to farming practices, livestock, and agricultural pests and diseases. Letters to the editor authored by J. Burruss McGehee discuss agricultural practices. Other articles pertain to the West Feliciana Railroad, health, politics, and race relations, and the execution of Milton Tucker (September 2, 1893). Of note is an article discussing the impropriety of a racially mixed teachers meeting in New Orleans (January 6, 1911), and another on race relations (undated). There are also advertisements for agricultural equipment and products, including grain, seed and livestock sold by Woodlawn Farms.

Newspapers include the *Woodville Republican* (December 17, 1898, June 15, 1901, March 3, May 2, July 18, 1903), the *Bayou Sara True Democrat* (September 8, 1894, December 17, 1898, November 7, 1903, January 13, 1903) and the *Jackson Daily News* (March), and *Florida Union* (July 7, 28, 1866). Of interest is the booklet *A Brief History of One Branch of the McGehee Family from 1771 to the Present* (1899, undated). Other newspapers found in this subseries relate to farming (1884-1914). *The Fellowship Forum* published by James S. Vance, a Ku Klux Klan sympathizer, is also present (July 14, 1928).

Note: A manuscript draft of *A Brief History of One Branch of the McGehee Family ...* can be found in Series III, subseries 1, Family Papers and Genealogy.

Subseries 2. General Printed Items, 1839-1936, undated.

General printed items consist of published choir music, broadsides, pamphlets, reports and an issue of the journal, *Modern Farming* (March 1914). This journal contains an article on J. Burruss McGehee, which was written by James Stewart McGehee. Pamphlets and reports relate to legislation on agriculture, and political speeches made before the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, there is a pamphlet on West Feliciana Parish printed in German (1907) and an undated circular describing the town of Woodville. A broadside of an article and map of the *Battle of New Orleans for Freedom, September 14, 1874*, is also present (undated). Another broadside describes Woodville, Miss. (undated).

A copy of *The Church Choir...*, by Joseph Muenscher is a collection of psalms and hymns arranged for the organ or pianoforte by (1839). (Note: this copy is missing its cover and the last sixty-six pages.) A copy *The New Golden Chain of Sabbath School Melodies* (1866) can also be found.

Subseries 3. Ephemera, 1868, 1880-1942, undated.

Ephemera includes conference programs, brochures, catalogs, price lists, as well as early 20th century advertisements for agricultural products and equipment, livestock, and health remedies. Additionally, there are business cards and invitations.

Series V. Photographs, 1882-1945, undated.

Photographs contain portraits of identified and unidentified individuals, photographic postcards of livestock, snapshots and card photographs of buildings and unidentified persons. Identified individuals include J. Burruss McGehee (1882, August 1901), Lucius McGehee (December 25, 1921), and Thomas Singer Bookstaver (1919, December 1929). There are photographs of Woodlawn Plantation fields and landscape scenes of Deer Lodge County, Montana. A card photograph of J. Burruss sitting in front of the “old Woodlawn Plantation ruins” (1895) and a snapshot of a locomotive (undated). Also found in this series is a photograph album with snapshots of unidentified people in woodland scenes, farm animals, and seed plants, volume 62 (1906-1928).

INDEX TERMS

Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found in the series indicated, as represented by their numbers.

Terms	Series, subseries
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Mississippi--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Personal narratives.	I
Mississippi--Social life and customs--19 th century.	I
New Orleans (La.)--Race relations--19 th century.	IV.3
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CONTAINER LIST

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	5	1-18 Correspondence, 1908 September-1909 July.
	6	1-23 Correspondence, 1909 August-1914.
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	15	1-25 Correspondence, 1930-1937 June.
	16	1-23 Correspondence, 1937 July-1944.
	17	1-30 Correspondence, before 1913, undated.
	18	- Vol. 63: Letter book, April 1900-April 1902.
P:5	--	Vol. 64 Letter book, circa 1890-1899. *RESTRICTED
Series II. Business Records, 1816-1951, undated.		
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	31	1 General papers and legal documents. Oversized material: 1838-1868.
		2 1876-1886.
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Subseries 2. Financial papers, 1858-1951, undated.		
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	20	1-61 Financial papers, 1890 January-1895 October.
8:9	21	1-51 Financial papers, 1895 November-1902 December.
	22	1-36 Financial papers, 1903-1909 February.
	23	1-36 Financial papers, 1909 March-1951, undated.
Time books, 1889-1945.		
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		2 Vol. 2: Time book, 1890-1891.
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<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder/ Volume</u>	<u>Contents with dates</u>		
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		6	Vol. 6: Time book, 1892-1893.		
				7	Vol. 7: Time book, 1892-1898.
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				11	Vol. 11: Time book, 1894.
				12	Vol. 12: Time book, 1894-1895.
				13	Vol. 13: Time book, 1895.
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				15	Vol. 15: Time book, 1896.
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				19	Vol. 19: Time book, 1901-1907.
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				23	Vol. 23: Time book, 1909-1911.
				24	Vol. 24: Time book, 1910-1913.
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				26	Vol. 26: Time book, 11932-1934.
				27	Vol. 27: Time book, 1937-1938.
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	--	Vol. 41	Account book-Ledger, 1851-1860		
8:10	24	40	Vol. 42: Account book, 1889-1894.		
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<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder/Volume</u>	<u>Contents with dates</u>	
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		45	Vol. 46: Bank record book, 1880-1882.	
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P:5	33	Vol. 48	Cashbook. Accounts with Scott McGehee, Canal Bank of New Orleans; West Feliciana Railroad & Co., repairs to brick school house, 1879-1882.	
		Vol. 49	Cashbook. Accounts with Canal Bank of New Orleans; West Feliciana Railroad & Co; also includes copy of last will and testament, 1883-1886.	
8:10	24	46	Vol. 50: Cashbook. Accounts with Estate of Mason Snowden; Canal Bank of New Orleans; and Union National Bank, 1888-1894	
P:5	33	47	Vol. 51: Cashbook Accounts with N. H. Sewall, 1890-1895.	
		Vol. 52	Cashbook. Accounts with Canal Bank of New Orleans and Bank of West Feliciana, 1895-1901.	
P:6	34	Vol. 53	Cashbook. Accounts with Canal Bank of New Orleans; Birmingham Trust & Savings Co.; Bank of West Feliciana; and Bank of Woodville, Mississippi, 1901-1904. Record books, 1895, 1926-1940.	
		--	Vol. 54	Record book-Shipping and freight, 1895.
		--	Vol. 55	Record book-Wages paid, 1926-1940. Invoice books, 1930-1943.
P:6	34	Vol. 56	Invoice book, 1930-1936.	
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Series III. Personal Papers, 1865, 1880-1942, undated.				
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8:12	27	1-12	Subseries 1. Clippings, 1887-1936, undated.	
		13-30	Subseries 2. General Printed Items, 1839-1936, undated.	
OS:Mc	32	5-6	General Printed Items. Oversized material, 1892-1918, undated.	

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder/ Volume</u>	<u>Contents with dates</u>
P:5	--	Vol. 60	<i>Richardson's New Method for the Piano-forte</i> , 1855.
	--	Vol. 61	<i>Peter's Original and Complete Edition of Bertini</i> , 1864.
8:12	27	31-58	Subseries 3. Ephemera, 1868, 1880-1942, undated.
			Series V. Photographs, 1882-1945, undated.
	28	1-12	Vol. 62: Photograph album, 1906-1928.
	29	1-9	Photographs, 1882-1945.
	30	1-12	Photographs, undated.