



Summer 2012

MS-128: Papers of William C. Darrah

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Gettysburg College

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MS-128: Papers of William C. Darrah

Description

This collection consists of material retained by William Darrah as it related to his position as an administrator and a faculty member at Gettysburg College. It includes correspondence, primarily from students, former students and parents of students; a report of his administrative activities as director of a continuing education program attempted by the College in the mid-1950s; a review of the varied research and presentation interests of Mr. Darrah while a member of the faculty; and materials that preserves his legacy to his profession, to his interests in the history of photography, science and technology, and to Gettysburg College.

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Keywords

Gettysburg College, history of photography

Disciplines

History | Photography | Social History | United States History

**Guide to the
William C. Darrah Papers
As a Faculty Member
At Gettysburg College**



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections & College Archives**

**G. Ronald Couchman
Summer 2012**

MS – 128: Papers of William C. Darrah as a Faculty Member at Gettysburg College

(1 box, .27 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: 1953-1988

Bulk Dates: 1953-1974

*Processed by: G. Ronald Couchman
Summer 2012*

Provenance

Given to Musselman Library by Mrs. Elsie Darrah Morey, daughter of William Darrah in September 1990

Biography

William (Bill) Culp Darrah was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, January 12, 1909. He earned the degree of Bachelor of Science from the University of Pittsburgh with majors in geology and botany. From 1934 to 1942 Darrah conducted research and taught at Harvard University in the division of biology and later as research curator of paleobotany at the Harvard Botanical Museum. In 1942, he joined Raytheon Manufacturing Company, a major war-time technological company, as an engineer and later as Assistant Head in the Research and Development Department.

Because of the loss of vision in one eye which put him at risk in the laboratories, in 1951, deciding to venture out on his own as an independent researcher and writer, Darrah relocated to a farm outside of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He soon found himself active in the academic community of Gettysburg College as a lecturer in the freshman and sophomore level general education program, as director of an experimental adult education program, and later as an assistant and then full professor in the biology department.

Bill Darrah was a renaissance man whose interests ranged widely and whose literary output in the areas of his interest was significant. His publications included a paleobotany textbook; a biography of John Wesley Powell, a late 19th century scientist and explorer and later Director of the United States Geological Survey; a story of the early days of the petroleum industry; an exploration of Pennsylvania flora; a history of stereographs in America; cartes de visite in 19th century photograph; and the history of the engineering program at Gettysburg College.

Darrah retired from the college in 1974. Gettysburg College awarded him an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in 1977. He married Helen Marie Hilsman in 1934 and they had two daughters Barbara Anne and Elsie Louise. He died in 1989.

At his memorial service he was remembered as one who had the God-given gift of teaching. For years, students flocked to his courses which were frequently over-subscribed. Yet he turned no-one away. His legacy survives him through the William C. Darrah Endowment fund at Gettysburg College which provides support to the Biology Department, scholarships to students in biology, and a visiting scientist lecture series offered in his name.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection consists of material retained by William Darrah as it related to his position as an administrator and a faculty member at Gettysburg College. It includes correspondence, primarily from students, former students and parents of students; a report of his administrative activities as director of a continuing education program attempted by the College in the mid-1950s; a review of the varied research and presentation interests of Mr. Darrah while a member of the faculty; and materials that preserves his legacy to his profession, to his interests in the history of photography, science and technology, and to Gettysburg College.

Series Description

This collection is divided into four Series. **Series 1: Correspondence** includes correspondence from September 1957 through January 1988. The bulk of the correspondence covers the two decades of the 1960s and 1970s when Darrah was the most active as a faculty advisor. It is worth noting that over two-thirds of the letters from students, former students, and parents of students contain a statement of thanks and appreciation for his advice, support or help. **Series II: Continuing Education Program** documents Darrah's activities within the Adult Education Division, the experimental continuing education program that he directed for Gettysburg College, 1953-1955. It includes Darrah's fair and honest assessment of the program in which he recommended that the program be terminated because of low enrollments and increased competition from other area agencies and institutions. **Series III: Research and Presentations** provides a glimpse into some of the varied areas of Darrah's research interests and the presentation of some of that research to the college and community, including some correspondence relative to research for Darrah's monograph on the History of Engineering at Gettysburg College and a handwritten copy of a lecture which he gave during the Commencement weekend when the College awarded to him the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. **Series IV: Legacy** contains material that highlights Darrah's legacy to his profession as a paleobotanist, to his interest in photography, and to the College where he served as an honored and respected member of the faculty.

Box 1

1-1 Finding Aid and Provenance

Series 1 Correspondence September 1957 – January 1988

1-2 Correspondence A – F

- Aldridge, Mary Lynne – report on the start of an interesting career in pharmaceutical research; October 24, 1964
- Allen, Harry – request for a recommendation for graduate program at Rutgers School of Agriculture in Environmental Science; June 15, 1965
- American Academy of Arts and Sciences – regarding an application for a grant-in-aid for Dr. James Gilford; September 1957 and December 1959
- Annis, Norman – letter of thanks and appreciation; June 9, 1978
- Beta Beta Beta Biological Society – membership and key order; May 12, 1969
- Brey, Bill – letter of introduction and thanks; November 5, 1981
- Broslovsky, Lewis – from Darrah to Broslovsky in support of his efforts to gain admission to an Italian medical program: April 20, 1971
- Cavaliere, A. R. – invitation to attend the Annual Biology Honors Day Program; March 30, 1981
- Cole, Frederick L. – letter of thanks and report of successful admission at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathy; July 19, 1965
- Despreaux, Carl W. Jr., - request for letter of recommendation to a graduate program at Long Island University; November 11, 1964
- Dressner, Steve – excitement of study at medical school and deep appreciation for his preparation at Gettysburg; October 5, 1964
- Dunn, Gary – report on activities at Jackson Lab and plans for the future which may require a recommendation at some future time; December 28, 1967
- Epp, Len – request for help in arranging a college-level biology field trip to Gettysburg; March 9, 1978
- Foster, Emily – request for recommendations to graduate programs in biology or zoology; May 21, 1970
- Fruchter, Kenneth – experience with a class B baseball team, plans for academic future, and request for help with graduate school application to the University of Tennessee; July 18, 1967

1-3 Correspondence G-M

- Gearhart, Brent C. – request from an accepted student to learn more about the 3-2 forestry program with Duke University; March 9, 1971
- Goebel, E. C. – thanks for the clipping from the school newspaper regarding the book that he presented to the college; September 3, 1965
- Granville, Rachel – appreciation for Darrah's article about the Engineering program which appeared in the December 1974 issue of the Gettysburg Magazine; February 4, 1975
- Gross, Jay – appreciation for words of encouragement and support during an alternate but successful route toward a medical career; March 8, 1978
- Hanson, C. A. – announcement of the granting of a sabbatical leave; May 19, 1965
- Hawes, Rodney A. – alerts Darrah to the probability of a communication from the Graduate School of Wagner College regarding admission to a

- Master's program in Bacteriology and Public Health and a positive word about the program for other Gettysburg College graduates; April 22, 1969
- Hefner, Philip – request for review of the scientific material in a paper on Man and the Life Sciences; March 28, 1966
 - Hefner, Philip – thanks for his serious criticism of his paper and shares reactions from some who heard the paper read at M.I.T.; April 6, 1966
 - Hurni, William M. – request for a meeting upon his return to the campus to discuss future plans; August 16, 1965
 - Jarashow, Debbie Wolgamuth '69 - alerts him to being listed as a reference on her application and resume for a college teaching position; March 11, 1971
 - Kerrigan, Jack – thanks for his recommendation for a successful admission to the Biology Department at the University of Michigan; April 21, 1981
 - Knickerbocker, John H., College Librarian – provides a copy of the letter that Knickerbocker plan to send in support of the Library Services Bill; May 22, 1958
 - Lord, Francis – request for some information about Herman Haupt; May 9, 1961
 - Loveland, Frank – appreciation for his lecture on Powell and the Bureau of Ethnology for students in Anthropology J-9; January 10, 1978
 - Mallin, Chris '73 – remembrances of the Darrah field trips in early spring on the battlefield to observe the changes indicating that spring, indeed, was coming; March 23, 1981
 - Mann, Charles W. – discussion of the possibility of housing the Darrah collection of cartes-de-visite at Penn State; January 21, 1988
 - Mary – thanks for the graduation gift and experiences in a new job; June 14, 1961
 - McCreary, Ralph W. – acknowledgement of a letter about the Life Science Building; May 27, 1969
 - McCreary, Ralph W. – appreciation for a book; February 9, 1973
 - McGraw Hill Book Company – request for a complimentary copy of Anatomy of the Earth by Gailleux as possible collateral reading for a course that he is teaching; April 29, 1970
 - Miller, Paul D. – review of plans for a second attempt at gaining admission to medical school, August 10, 1965
 - Mollerhaver, Henry – request for recommendation for York Junior College in hopes of improving record for eventual return to Gettysburg as a biology major; June 27, 1962
 - Murphy, Carol Mange – experiences in a new study program in Hawaii; March 19, 1969

1-4 Correspondence P-Z

- Paul, W. S. – appreciation for the very nice letter sent from Darrah at the announcement of Paul's retirement from the Gettysburg College presidency; February 13, 1961

- Platt, Charles – request from Darrah to the Executive Committee for a Sabbatical Leave; March 20, 1965
- Reeder, T. P., Jr. – appreciation for the letter explaining what is happening in his son's courses; February 17, 1960
- Ryder, Richard C. – Darrah sends regrets for not being able to meet with him but offers a series of stereo views that may be of interest; May 13, 1970
- Schubart, Susan – great pleasure with reading Darrah's monograph on the history of engineering at Gettysburg College; January 25, 1975
- Scott, Carolyn '63 – request for a recommendation for a Master of Science program in Anatomy at Jefferson Medical College where she is currently working as a senior physical therapist; April 11, 1969
- Sharp, Katherine – question from a mother of a Gettysburg graduate about "singing Geography" which appears in an autobiography of a great-great uncle and about the possibility for publication of the work; March 20, 1981
- Smith, Robert D. Director of Alumni – appreciation for his presentation at the Friday banquet during alumni weekend; June 2, 1975
- Spencer, John L. – advise to a student who wondered about a career in mycology and related fields; November 17, 1948
- Strunk, Charles G. – request for recommendations for graduate school in Biology and Hospital Administration; summer 1965
- Truex, R. C. – request from a parent for help with changing his son's schedule; September 11, 1959
- White, Denis E. – post-graduation activity and appreciation for a recommendation that appeared to be instrumental in gaining a position at Stauffer Chemical Company; September 21, 1966
- Williamson, Denise J. – ideas for research in preparation for a literary work highlighting industrial development in South Central Pennsylvania during the Civil War era; August 8, 1986
- Winters, Richard L. – inquiry from a high school senior about the course offerings at Gettysburg for a student interested in biology and art, November 15, 1964
- Zazzarino, Dominic – request for a recommendation for Creighton University graduate program in anatomy and expression of great appreciation for Darrah's teaching and support during the medical school application process; June 1, 1965

1-5 Correspondence Restricted

Series II Continuing Education Program

1-6 Adult Education Division

Series III Research and Presentations

1-7 History of Engineering at Gettysburg College

1-8 "Stereographs 1851-1939" Exhibition at Gettysburg College Library

1-9 John Wesley Powell: Soldier, Explorer, Scientist

- 1-10 Honorary Degree Lecture 1977
- 1-11 Newspaper Clippings

Series IV Legacy

- 1-12 Legacy

For more information about William Culp Darrah

Mss B361; William Culp Darrah Papers 1946-1972; Utah State Historical Society,
Salt Lake City, Utah

Gettysburg College Bulletin; October, 1972, P. 23