

**Frederick Eugene Wright Papers, 1900-1956**



**Carnegie Institution of Washington  
Geophysical Laboratory Archives  
Washington, DC**

Finding aid written by:  
Kevin Stone Fries  
July 2005

# Frederick Eugene Wright Papers

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**Frederick Eugene Wright Papers, 1900-1956**  
**GL-2005-05**

**Introduction**

*Abstract:* The collection contains the personal and the professional papers of Frederick Eugene Wright, a petrologist and 36-year employee of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. The professional materials are the products of an active professional engaged in the activities of government, research, and industry. The personal papers reveal a devoted husband and father.

*Extent:* 7.5 linear feet; 16 document boxes, 1 legal-sized document box, 1 photograph binder box.

*Acquisition:* The records were accessioned in 1995 upon receipt from administrative headquarters of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Additional records were transferred and accessioned in 2004.

*Access Restrictions:* There are no access restrictions.

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*Preferred Citation:* Frederick Eugene Wright Papers, 1900-1956, Geophysical Laboratory, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.

*Processing:* This collection was processed by Kevin Stone Fries, Legacy Project Archives Intern in July 2005.

**Biographical Sketch**

Frederick Eugene Wright (1877–1953) was a prominent research scientist on staff of the Geophysical Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington between 1906 and 1944. Wright earned his Ph.D. at the age of 23 from the University of Heidelberg. He significantly contributed to the use of optical glass in military applications during both World Wars. Another of his notable accomplishments includes the analysis of reflected light from the moon to better understand its surface features. He also studied the Pre-Cambrian geology of the Lake Superior region. Over the course of his career, Wright participated in many professional and social societies including the National Academy of Sciences, serving as Home Secretary for twenty years; the Optical Society of America; and the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C. He was also a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the London Physical Society. Wright was the author or co-author of more than eighty professional papers, including the landmark *The Manufacture of Optical Glass and Optical Systems; a War-time Problem* (Army Ordinance Department, Government Printing Office, 1921). In 1952 he was awarded the Roebling Medal of the Mineralogical Society of America. Helen Wright (1914-1997), his daughter, was a pioneer in the field of the history of science.

## **Scope and Contents**

The collection includes professional correspondence, memoranda, photographs, stereographs, reprints, research notebooks, newspaper clippings, and formal reports of petrologist Frederick Eugene Wright. The collection also includes some family correspondence, including letters of condolence at the time of Frederick's death and later his family's distribution of his National Academy of Science Biographical Memoir in 1956.

## **Arrangement**

This collection is arranged in two series.

Series 1: Professional Papers, 1900-1953, n.d.

Series 1 Subseries 1: Correspondence, 1900-1953, n.d.

Series 1 Subseries 2: Research and Formal Reports, 1901-1953, n.d.

Series 1 Subseries 3: Publication Reprints, 1906-1951

Series 2: Personal Papers, ca. 1900-1956, n.d.

Series 2 Subseries 1: Correspondence, 1923-1949, 1956, n.d.

Series 2 Subseries 2: Condolences, 1953

Series 2 Subseries 3: Photographs, ca. 1900-1950s

### **Series 1: Professional Papers, 1900-1953, n.d.**

This series contains two subseries and documents F.E. Wright's professional interactions and interests.

#### **Series 1, Subseries 1: Correspondence, 1900-1953, n.d.**

This series contains more than fifty years of correspondence between Wright and other professionals with an interest in various sectors of science including military, industry, academe, professional associations, and social societies. Most of the letters relate to publication efforts, research, and various topical projects. Individuals from organizations such as the Carnegie Institute of Washington, Optical Society of American, Bausch & Lomb, Army Ordnance offices and other government-related organizations are notable contributors to this run of letters. Arranged chronologically, the formats found in this series include memoranda, minutes, essays, travel diaries and itineraries, charts, draft statements, and a telegraph code book. A small quantity of correspondence on legal-sized paper is found at the end of the series.

#### **Series 1, Subseries 2: Research and Formal Reports, 1901-1953, n.d.**

The series includes notebooks containing raw data about various topics, including observations of the moon. A set of transparencies show CIW publication output, and formal reports to the Army and the National Academy of Sciences regarding optical glass work. This subseries is arranged in an order progressing from rough data to more refined expression in the technical reports.

**Series 1, Subseries 3: Publication Reprints, 1906-1951**

Arranged chronologically, this series contains reprints of most of Frederick E. Wright's published work.

**Series 2: Personal Papers, ca. 1900-1956, n.d.**

This series is arranged in three subseries and contains personal correspondence and photographs.

**Series 2, Subseries 1: Correspondence, 1923-1949, 1956, n.d.**

This subseries arranged chronologically includes letters to wife Kathleen, and letters received from daughter Helen's 1936 around the world trip. This series includes correspondence about Helen Wright's distribution of Frederick E. Wright's National Academy of Science Biographical Memoir.

**Series 2, Subseries 2: Condolences, 1953**

Wright's widow, Kathleen, received letters of condolence from family, friends, and associates from many walks of life, including the famous Canadian geologist Joseph Burr Tyrell (1858-1957).

**Series 2, Subseries 3: Photographs, ca. 1900-1950s**

This series includes formal portraits of Frederick, less formal pictures of Kathleen, and a family photo album that includes childhood photographs taken in Michigan. Also included in this series are commercial photographic prints of Germany and Mexico.

## Folder Listing

	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>
<b>Series 1: Professional Papers, 1900-1953, n.d.</b>		
<b>Series 1, Subseries 1: Correspondence, 1900-1953, n.d.</b>		
1900-1901	1	1
1902		2
1904		3
1905		4
1906		5
[June to December] 1907		6
[January to May] 1907		7
[July to December] 1908		8
[January to June] 1908		9
1909	2	1
1909		2
1910		3
1911		4
[September to December] 1912		5
[April to August] 1912		6
[January to March] 1912		7
1913	3	1
1914		2
1915		3
Bon Ami Company, 1916		4
1916		5
[November to December] 1917	4	1
[September to October] 1917		2
[June to August] 1917		3
[January to May] 1917		4
[March to December] 1918	5	1
[January to February] 1918		2
[October to December] 1919		3
[January to September] 1919		4
[July to December] 1920		5
[January to June] 1920		6
[July to December] 1921	6	1
[January to June] 1921		2
1922		3
[June to December] 1923		4
[January to May] 1923		5
[September to December] 1924		6
[January to August] 1924		7
[August to December] 1925	7	1
[January to July] 1925		2
[June to December] 1926		3
[January to May] 1926		4
[July to December] 1927		5

	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>
[January to June] 1927		6
[May to December] 1928	8	1
[January to April] 1928		2
[June to December] 1929		3
[January to May] 1929		4
1930		5
[June to December] 1931	9	1
[January to May] 1931		2
1932		3
1933		4
1934		5
1935		6
1936		7
1937		8
[July to December] 1938		9
[January to June] 1938		10
1939	10	1
1940		2
1941		3
1942		4
1943		5
1944		6
1945		7
1946		8
1947		9
[1948-1949]		10
[1950-1953]		11
[Undated Material] n.d.		12
Newspaper Clippings, 1936, 1945, 1952	Map Drawer 6	4
[Legal-size Correspondence] 1901-1929	11	1
[Legal-size Correspondence] 1949		2
[Codebook] n.d.	12	1
 <b>Series 1, Subseries 2: Research and Formal Reports, 1901-1953, n.d.</b>		
[Notebook:] August 1901	12	2
[Notebook:] Optic Axial Angle Data – Thermal Microsc[ope] 1913		3
[Notebook:] Optical Glass I 1917		4
Notebook No. 1, 1921		5
[Notebook:] Rotation of Plane of Vibration, March 15, 1923		6
[Notebook:] [?] Methods, Bale May 27-30, 1930		7
[Notebook: Neuchatel, 1930		8
[Notebook: Moon] 1938		9
[Notebook: Geophysical Laboratory] 1941		10
[Notebook] 1943		11
[Transparencies] n.d.		12
Gravity Patent 1924		13

	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>
Optical Glass Investigation (1 of 2) 1917	13	1
Optical Glass Investigation (2 of 2) 1917		2
Report: Inspection of the Optical Glass Stored at Frankford Arsenal, February 1, 1929		3
The National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council, by Paul Brockett 1931		4
Advisory Committee on Public Progress Reports 1929-1934		5
Joint Optics Committee – Semi Annual Report n.d.		6
The Effect of Curved Windshield Glass on Transmitted Rays of Light [-- Technical report] 1940	14	1
The Effect of Curved Windshield Glass on Transmitted Rays of Light [-- Notebook] 1940		2
The Effect of Curved Windshield Glass on Transmitted Rays of Light [-- Manuscript] n.d.		3
Gravity Apparatus 1940		4
Bibliographies, 1908-1924		5
[Book Reviews] 1921		6
[Papers by Frederick E. Wright] 1912-1953		7
[Publications about Frederick E. Wright] 1912-1953		8
<b>Series 1, Subseries 3: Publication Reprints, 1906-1951</b>		
[1906-1908]	15	1
[1910-1914]		2
[1915-1921]		3
[1923-1951]		4
<b>Series 2: Personal Papers, ca. 1900-1956, n.d.</b>		
<b>Series 2, Subseries 1: Correspondence, 1923-1949, 1956, n.d.</b>		
[Letters to Kathleen Wright] 1923	16	1
[Letters to Kathleen Wright] 1926-1927		2
[Letters to Kathleen Wright] 1930, 1945		3
[Letters from Kathleen Wright] September 1936 to January 1937		4
[Frank D. Adams] 1943		5
[McGill 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary] n.d.		6
[Distribution of NAS Biographical Memoir] 1956		7
<b>Series 2, Subseries 2: Condolences , 1953</b>		
[August] 1953	16	8
[September] 1953		9
[October- November] 1953		10
<b>Series 2, Subseries 3: Photographs, ca. 1900-1950s</b>		
[Album 1: Germany] n.d.	17	1
[Album 2: Germany (1 of 2)] n.d.		2
[Album 2: Germany (2 of 2)] n.d.		3
[Family Photo Album – Prints] n.d.		4



	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>
[Family Photo Album – Copies] n.d.		5
[Loose Family photographs]	18	
[Loose Mexico photographs ca.1900-1910]		

### **Subject Terms**

Topics:	World War, 1914-1918—Economic aspects Glass manufacture--United States Optical glass Geologists--Correspondence Moon--Surface
Occupation:	Geologists
Corporate Names:	Carnegie Institution of Washington. Geophysical Laboratory United States. Army. Ordnance Dept. Bausch & Lomb Optical Company National Academy of Sciences (U.S.)
Forms:	Correspondence Memorandums Technical reports Notebooks Photographs Transparencies Stereographs

### **Bibliography**

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Fleming, John A., Charles S. Piggot. 1956. Frederick Eugene Wright, 1887-1953. *National Academy of Science Biographical Memoirs* 29: 317-359.

Piggot, Charles S. 1954. Memorial to Frederick Eugene Wright (1877-1953). *Proceedings of the Geological Society of America* (May): 159-169.

Schairer, John F. 1954. Memorial to Frederick Eugene Wright [1877-1953]. *American Mineralogist* 39, no.3-4(Mar): 284-292.