

Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections  
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**W. Ormiston Roy Papers, 1888-2009  
(bulk 1899-1959)  
Collection: Mss. 2004:10**

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## **Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** W. Ormiston Roy Papers, 1888-2009 (bulk 1899-1958)

**Collection Number:** Mss. 2004:10

**Creator:** W. Ormiston Roy

**Extent:** 3 archival boxes

## **Administrative Information**

**Provenance:** Gift, 2004-2005

**Processed by:** Jessica Kross

**Access Restrictions:** Open to research

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## **Scope and Contents Note**

This collection comprises a disparate set of materials by or collected by the Montreal landscape architect William Ormiston Roy (1874-1958) and reflecting some of his varied interests. Included are materials by or about the poet-naturalist John Burroughs and his physician-companion Clara Barrus; English followers and imitators of Walt Whitman; materials, newspaper clippings, about Robert Burns including information on the later sale of some of his works. The whole of the collection was donated by Roy's grandson, George Ross Roy, whose Scottish Literature Collections are also housed in the Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

W. Ormiston Roy was born at Dorval, Canada, December 4, 1874, the son of a landscape gardener and horticulturalist. A noted landscape architect in his own right, he was most

famously known as the architect and general manager of Montreal's Mt. Royal Cemetery. He became a friend of the American naturalist and writer John Burroughs four years before Burroughs's death and was charged by Burroughs to carry out his last wishes for a resting place at his farm in upstate New York. Over the course of a long life, Roy also became known for his expertise on peonies and maples. His methods of reforestation in underdeveloped countries are still used.

He was a winner of the Sir Joseph Banks medal for horticulture and the Massachusetts Horticulture Medal. This professional and personal interest in nature eventually led him to the work of John Burroughs. Ormiston Roy was a breeder of collies and a judge of them at the Westminster Kennel Club competition in Madison Square Garden. He was also an expert on Robert Burns and a noted collector of Burns' works. Roy died in Montreal August 7, 1958.

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## Container List

### Series I: W. Ormiston Roy and Roy Family

This series contains published obituaries of W. Ormiston Roy and some published materials about other family members including George Simpson (1838). Correspondence concerns Roy's visits to Burroughs and Wallace correspondents in upstate New York and England.

#### Box 1

- W. O. Roy, obituaries and clippings, 1955-1958
- Roy Family, clippings, 1980,1995,2000
- Georgina Simpson (Ross) Roy, photo, c 1920
- Ormiston Roy, correspondence, 1950-1955 (5 items)

### Series II: John Burroughs and Clara Barrus

This series contains materials on or by the naturalist John Burroughs (1837-1921) and his physician and companion Clara Barrus (1864-1931). Correspondence includes a handwritten list, by Burroughs, of

articles or poems and the publications to which they had been submitted; publications by Clyde Fisher on John Burroughs; correspondence from and about John Muir; original photographs including Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas A. Edison, Harvey Firestone, and John Muir; and photographs of places associated with Burroughs, including the "Boyhood Rock," Woodchuck Lodge, and Slabsides, all in upstate New York.

Ormiston Roy arranged for Henry Ford's purchase of John Burroughs's farm in upstate New York after Burroughs' death. He also took an interest in supervising the maintenance of the property for Ford. The correspondence in this series (approximately 50 outgoing carbons and 50 incoming letters) is primarily between Ford's executive secretaries and Roy concerning visits to the farm, improvements made to the properties, a sculpture and tablet on Burroughs's grave, and Roy's visits to the grave for an annual commemoration. Also included is one letter of recommendation (TLS) from Henry Ford to A. Carlyle Roy dated 4/23/23.

### **Box 1**

G. Clyde Fisher, "Reminiscences of John Burroughs," *Natural History* 21 (1921): 113-125, inscribed.

Clyde Fisher, "With John Burroughs at Slabsides," *Natural History* 31 (1931): 500-510, of print.

John Burroughs, correspondence (5 pieces), 1888-1921

John Burroughs, "To her fair works did Nature link," poem, mss., 3 p., no date

John Burroughs, "Waiting," poem, photographed manuscript with pen corrections, 1 p., no date

John Burroughs, "A Critical Glance Into Darwin," corrected typescript, with note from Clara Barrus, 2 p., April 1919

Correspondence, 1912-1931 (mainly Clara Barrus). 18 pieces. Includes one John Burroughs mss., "Town and Country," 4 p., in Sept. 12, 1921 letter.

Barrus family correspondence, 1934-1935

John Muir to Clara Barrus, Dec. 15, 1909, ALS, 2 p. with envelope

Clara Barrus, "To the Friends of the Insane," published by patients at the State Homoeopathic Hospital, Middletown, N. Y., 1904.

Clara Barrus, "In Yosemite with John Muir," corrected typescript, 31 p., with autograph note, 1 p. This essay was later condensed and published in *The Craftsman*, December 1912.

Clara Barrus, obituary, April 6, 1931 and printed memorial service program, 1931

George A. Warburton. "A Prayer at Woodchuck Lodge," 1922; poems, typescripts, no date

### **Box 2**

Photographs. John Burroughs alone, 1899-1920 (2 folders)

Photographs. John Burroughs alone and with Clara Barrus, 1915-1918

Photographs. John Burroughs with others, 1908-1920 (2 folders)

Photographs. Nature scenes and buildings associated with John Burroughs. Map Slabsides, c 1915-1919

Postcards of John Burroughs; unidentified photographs not of Burroughs, no date

Magazine photos of John Burroughs, clippings, no date  
John Burroughs memorial plaque, statue, genealogy, photographs, no date  
John Burroughs, obituaries and clippings, 1919-1923, 1951  
John Burroughs Association, correspondence, 1934-1940. Roy served on the board of the Association.  
Henry Ford, correspondence, 1922-1940 (4 folders)  
Homestead farm description and maps, manuscript, c 1920

### **Series III: Walt Whitman Fellowship**

Ormiston Roy, and possibly through him Clara Barrus, were correspondents with and visitors to a group of Walt Whitman aficionados organized in England as the Walt Whitman Fellowship. James William Wallace and his companion Mrs. Minn Whiteside seem to be the English focal point of this group. Wallace had corresponded with and visited Walt Whitman. M Wallace can be found in J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings, eds., *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia* (New York 1998). Included in this series are correspondence and Whitman-inspired poetry, some of it printed. William MacDonald' "One Hundred Years of Peace," written "On the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mount Royal Cemetery" is dedicated "Willie Ormiston Roy." Many of the printed materials come from a subscription poetry pamphlet series "Leaves of Healing Lessons in Living." Correspondents also include Whitman executor Horace Traubel.

#### **Box 3**

J.W. Wallace to W. Ormiston Roy, 17 June 1925  
J.W. Wallace, photographs, 1922, no date  
Walt Whitman Fellowship, correspondence, 1893-1955, Includes Horace Traubel letter to Wallace, 1917  
Larry D. Griffin, "Wallace, James William (1853-1926).", no date  
Harriet Lake-Burch, "Dear Heart", poem typescript, no date  
Whitman-influence poetry, typescripts, no date  
Wilson MacDonald, "The Battle of Peace," c 1920  
Wilson MacDonald, "One Hundred Years of Peace," 1952  
M.L. MacRae, "To the Burns' Statue, Washington Park, Albany NY, typescript, 1953  
J. Johnston, correspondence and essay, 1909-1922  
Whitman related newspaper clippings, 1952-1955  
John Burroughs and Walt Whitman, clipping, 1954

### **Series IV: Burnsiana**

Ormiston Roy was a knowledgeable collector of the work of Robert Burns. As such he was connected to other collector scholars. Included in this series are correspondence from John McVie, editor of the "Burns Chronicle" which includes a reference to Hans Hecht, a German Jew forced to flee the Nazis, and George Hope Tait. William Craibe Angus (1830-1 a Glasgow art dealer, also collected Burns editions and was a major contributor to the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts Burns Exhibition, 15 July - 31 October, 1896. The sale of his Burns collection was mentioned in the *New York Times*,

December 27, 1902. The newspaper clippings on sales includes mention of the Robert Ainslie copy of Burns which is in the University of South Carolina Roy collection.

**Box 3**

Ormiston Roy, "Robert Burns: Hero of the Common Man," typescript, 2 p., c 1950s

John McVie to W.O. Roy, correspondence, 1938-1919

W. Ormiston Roy, correspondence, 1938-1939

Burns, clippings on editions and sales, 1907-2009

Burns, clippings, 1899-2002

W. Craibe Angus, Burns bookplates, several different examples, 9 items, no date