Descriptive Summary

Title: Gustavus Augustus Eisen collection
Dates: 1847-1940
Collection Number: MSS-146

Creator/Collector:
Extent: 6 manuscripts boxes, 3 card file boxes, 1 record carton (4.78 linear feet)
Repository: California Academy of Sciences
San Francisco, California 94118

Abstract: The papers of Gustavus Augustus Eisen, an expert in earthworms, whose varied scientific interests included archaeology, invertebrate zoology, horticulture, and more. Included are aquaria photographs, biographical materials, clippings, correspondence, illustrations, journals, manuscripts, maps, notes, and publications on a range of topics.

Language of Material: English

Access
Access is unrestricted

Preferred Citation
Gustavus Augustus Eisen collection. California Academy of Sciences

Biography/Administrative History

Gustav A. Eisen was born in Stockholm, Sweden on August 2, 1847. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Upsala in Sweden in 1873, after which he moved to the United States at the request of Louis Agassiz. He became a naturalized citizen in 1887. Dr. Eisen had, at this point in his career, already become known as an expert in the field of earthworms, over which he had a short correspondence with Charles Darwin. In 1874, he became a member of the California Academy of Sciences and began leaving his mark on the State of California. When he arrived in the state the cultivation of fruit was still in its infancy. He delved into the study of Smyrna figs and is attributed with discovering the necessity of importing wasps from the Near East in order to pollinate the fig tree. He also made a contribution to the California Raisin Industry with his findings in "The raisin industry: a practical treatise on the raisin grapes, their history, culture, and curing". Dr. Eisen became a Lifetime Member of the Academy in 1883. He asked for the Academy's support in 1890, to bring a proposal to the United States Government that would create a national park to protect the California Sequoia Trees. This would eventually lead to Sequoia National Park, the second national park ever created. From 1893-1900 Dr. Eisen was a Curator for four different departments (Archaeology, Ethnology and Lower Animals, Biology, Invertebrates and Marine Invertebrates) at the Academy, and was named an Honorary Member on February 16, 1938. Also during the period 1880-1903 he was associated with the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, conducting biological and archaeological surveys of Guatemala and Mexico. The King of Sweden appointed him to the Order of the North Star in 1935 for his contributions to the world of science. He died on October 29, 1940 and is most well known for his research in oligochaeta of America, elements of blood of batrachians and man, amoeba of carcinoma, and his work toward the protection of the California Sequoia, but was also known to be an expert in antique glass. In his lifetime, Dr. Eisen was the author of over 150 publications in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, geography, botany, zoology, cytology, and art.

Scope and Content of Collection

The papers of Gustavus Augustus Eisen, an expert in earthworms, whose varied scientific interests included archaeology, invertebrate zoology, horticulture, and more. Included are aquaria photographs, biographical materials, clippings, correspondence, illustrations, journals, manuscripts, maps, notes, and publications on a range of topics.