

---

## **Seth Barnes Nicholson Papers: Finding Aid**

Finding aid prepared by Brooke M. Black, April 15, 2011.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Manuscripts Department

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2129

Email: [reference@huntington.org](mailto:reference@huntington.org)

URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

© 2011

The Huntington Library. All rights reserved.

---

## Overview of the Collection

**Title:** Seth Barnes Nicholson Papers

**Dates (inclusive):** 1914-1963

**Collection Number:** mssNicholson Seth papers

**Creator:** Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963.

**Extent:** 445 items in 3 boxes.

**Repository:** The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2129

Email: [reference@huntington.org](mailto:reference@huntington.org)

URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

**Abstract:** The collection contains the astronomical research and correspondence of American astronomer Seth Barnes Nicholson (1891-1963), dating from 1914 to 1963. The majority of Nicholson's research material deals with his study of Jupiter and its moons.

**Language:** English.

### Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

### Publication Rights

The Huntington Library does not require that researchers request permission to quote from or publish images of this material, nor does it charge fees for such activities. The responsibility for identifying the copyright holder, if there is one, and obtaining necessary permissions rests with the researcher.

### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. Seth Barnes Nicholson Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

### Provenance

Deposit, Observatories of the Carnegie Institution of Washington Collection, 1988.

Approximately fifty additional separate collections form the Mount Wilson Papers of the Observatories of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and are available for research in the Manuscripts Department of the Huntington Library. Forms part of: The Mount Wilson Papers of the Observatories of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

### Biographical Note

American astronomer Seth Barnes Nicholson (1891-1963) was born in Springfield, Illinois, on November 21, 1891. He received a Bachelors in Science from Drake University, Des Moines, Indiana, in 1911 and a Ph.D. from the University of California in 1914. He discovered Sinope, the ninth moon of Jupiter, while observing the seventh moon, Pasiphaë, at Lick Observatory. The computation of its orbit was the subject of his Ph.D. thesis.

Nicholson went on to discover three other moons of Jupiter, along with two asteroids, during his decades' long career at the Wilson Observatory. His main focus at Wilson Observatory was to monitor solar activity and he wrote the annual sunspot activity reports for most of his career. He made significant discoveries regarding sunspots, especially in regards to their magnetic properties and terrestrial effects.

Nicholson served as the editor of the *Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific* from 1943 to 1955 and was twice the president of the society. He was awarded the Bruce Medal in 1963, the year he died in Los Angeles.

### Scope and Content

The collection contains the astronomical research and correspondence of American astronomer Seth Barnes Nicholson (1891-1963). The majority of Nicholson's research material deals with his study of Jupiter and its moons (Box 1). His other research (Box 2) includes his study of magnetic activity, the asteroid Icarus, Trojan asteroids, Pluto, Venus, the Sun and Sun spots (there is one item dealing with both Jupiter and the Sun in Box 1). There are some pieces of correspondence in the research folders.

Most of the correspondence (Box 3) is between Nicholson and other astronomers throughout the world; the majority of it is also about Jupiter and its moons, asteroids and sun spots. Notable participants in the collection include: Giorgio Abetti, Astronomical Society of the Pacific, Robert Grant Aitken, Joseph Ashbrook, Ira Sprague Bowen, Leland E. Cunningham, Sturla Einarsson, Charles Federer, Paul Herget, Samuel Herrick, Theodor S. Jacobsen, Vladimir Kourganoff, Karl Otto

---

Kiepenheuer, Gerard Kuiper, Willem Luyten, M. G. J. Minnaert, Yngve Öhman, Jan Oort, William Henry Pickering, Frederick Hanley Seares, Harlow Shapley, Otto Struve, Alexander N. Vyssotsky, Fred L. Whipple and Fritz Zwicky.

The collection also includes several photographs; their presence is noted in the container list and on the folders.

### **Arrangement**

The collection is organized in three series:

- Box 1: Jupiter Research Box 2: Other Research
- Box 3: Correspondence

The research series are organized alphabetically by folder title; the correspondence is organized alphabetically by correspondent name.

### **Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

### **Subjects**

Humason, Milton L. (Milton La Salle), 1891-1972.

Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963.

Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories -- History -- Sources.

Mount Wilson Observatory -- History -- Sources.

Astronomers -- United States -- Archives.

Astronomical observatories -- California -- Wilson, Mount (Mountain)

Astronomy -- Photographs.

Astronomy -- Research.

Astronomy -- United States -- History -- 20th century -- Sources.

Asteroids.

Sunspots.

Icarus (Asteroid)

Jupiter (Planet) -- Observations.

Jupiter (Planet) -- Satellites.

Pluto (Dwarf planet)

Venus (Planet)

### **Forms/Genres**

Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 20th century.

Photographs -- United States -- 20th century.

Research (document genres) -- United States -- 20th century.

### **Additional Contributors**

Abetti, Giorgio, 1882-1982.

Aitken, Robert Grant, 1864-1951.

Ashbrook, Joseph, d. 1980.

Bowen, Ira Sprague, 1898-1973.

Einarsson, Sturla.

Federer, Charles, 1909-.

Herget, Paul, 1908-.

Herrick, Samuel, 1911-1974.

Jacobsen, Theodor S.

Kourganoff, V. (Vladimir), 1912-.

Kiepenheuer, K. O. (Karl Otto)

Kuiper, Gerard P. (Gerard Peter), 1905-1973.

Luyten, Willem Jacob, 1899-1994.

Minkowski, Rudolf, 1895-.

---

Öhman, Yngve, 1903-.  
Oort, Jan Hendrik.  
Pease, F. G. (Francis Gladheim), b. 1881.  
Pickering, William H. (William Henry), b. 1858.  
Roemer, Elizabeth, 1929-.  
Shapley, Harlow, 1885-1972.  
Struve, Otto, 1897-1963.  
Vyssotsky, A. N. (Alexander N.), b. 1888.  
Whipple, Fred L. (Fred Lawrence), 1906-2004.  
Zwicky, F. (Fritz), 1898-1974.  
Seares, Frederick Hanley, 1873-, recipient.  
Astronomical Society of the Pacific, recipient.

**Indexing: Added Entries and Subjects**

**Indexing: Added Entries**

Astronomical Society of the Pacific

- Addressee of Otto Struve, 1897-1963 letter (1951, July 5). Box 3 (49).
- Addressee of Alan Tower Waterman, 1892-1967 letter (1953, Mar. 25). Box 3 (53).

Kuiper, Gerard P. (Gerard Peter), 1905-1973

- Author of letter to Frederick Hanley Seares, 1873- (1938, July 7). Box 2 (2).

Seares, Frederick Hanley, 1873-

- Addressee of Gerard P. (Gerard Peter) Kuiper, 1905-1973 letter (1938, July 7). Box 2 (2).

**Indexing: Subjects**

Humason, Milton L. (Milton La Salle), 1891-1972

- Subject in Seth B. (Seth Barnes) Nicholson, 1891-1963. Note re: Pluto Image (1919). Box 2 (6).
- Subject in Ira Sprague Bowen, 1898-1973 letters (1946-1960). Box 3 (9).

---

Box 1	Jupiter Research
Folder 1	<b>Herrick, Samuel, 1911-1974 and Charles G. Hilton. "1958 Ephemerides of Jupiter's Ninth and Twelfth Satellites: manuscript. 3 items. Includes type draft and two pages of notes.</b>
Folder 2	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Charts: Jupiter (1914-1915). 1 item.</b>
Folder 3	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Jupiter IX: Perturbations from 1913 to 1914:" report (1913-1914). 1 item.</b>
Folder 4	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Jupiter IX: Perturbations from 1914 to 191[6]:" report (1914-1916). 1 item.</b>
Folder 5	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Jupiter IX: Perturbations from 1914 to 1916: Correction of Orbit:" report (1914-1916). 1 item.</b>
Folder 6	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963 and Beatrice W. Mayberry. "Jupiter IX: Perturbations from 1916 to 1918:" report (1916-1918). 1 item.</b>
Folder 7	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Measures and Reductions of Spectra: Object JVII:" charts and notes (1939-1960). 1 item.</b>
Folder 8	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Measures and Reductions of Spectra: JVII and JIX:" charts and notes (1939-1940). 8 items.</b>
Folder 9	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Measures and Reductions of Spectra: JVIII:" charts and notes (1938). 13 items.</b>
Folder 10	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Measures and Reductions of Spectra: JXIII:" charts and notes (1953-1957). 7 items. Includes one letter by Elizabeth Roemer, 1929- to Rudolf Minkowski, 1895- (1957, Mar. 19).</b>

---

Folder 11	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Miscellaneous Notes: Jupiter (1938-1947). 63 items. Includes: two photographs, three reprints and fourteen letters (between Nicholson and Guy W. Clark, etc.).</b>
Folder 12	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Positions of Satellites of Jupiter 1946: report (1946-1947). 1 item.</b>
Folder 13	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Sun and Jupiter: tables [undated]. 4 items.</b>
Box 2	<b>Other Research</b>
Folder 1	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Asteroids: tables, charts and notes [undated]. 25 items.</b>
Folder 2	<b>Pease, F. G. (Francis Gladheim), b. 1881. "Interferometer Star Diameters:" manuscript (1936-1954). 5 items. Includes notes and one letter by Gerard P. (Gerard Peter) Kuiper, 1905-1973 to Frederick Hanley Seares, 1873- (1938, July 7).</b>
Folder 3	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Magnetic Activity: reprint, charts, tables and notes (1941-1950). 23 items.</b>
Folder 4	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Measures and Reductions of Spectra: Icarus:" charts and notes (1950). 9 items.</b>
Folder 5	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Measures and Reductions of Spectra: Trojan asteroids:" charts and notes (1958-1959). 26 items.</b>
Folder 6	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Note re: Pluto Image (1919). 1 item. Note: Location of negatives is unknown.</b>
Folder 7	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Observational Data: Venus:" tables (1920-1921). 17 items.</b>
Folder 8	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. "Recurrent Geomagnetic Activity and Lunar Declination: reprint and tables (1948-1959). 41 items. Includes letter by Nicholson to H. Raudsaar (1959, Feb. 3).</b>
Folder 9	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Spot Counts: charts and tables (1941-1946). 1 item.</b>
Folder 10	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Spots: tables (1954). 1 item.</b>
Folder 11	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Solar Rotation Formulae: manuscript [undated]. 1 item.</b>
Folder 12	<b>Nicholson, Seth B. (Seth Barnes), 1891-1963. Sun Spots near Equator: tables (1935). 1 item.</b>
Box 3	<b>Correspondence</b>
Folder 1	<b>Abetti, Giorgio, 1882-1982 (1950-1951). 3 items.</b>
Folder 2	<b>Adams, Charles H. (1948-1949). 3 items.</b>
Folder 3	<b>Aitken, Robert Grant, 1864-1951 (1949-1951). 8 items.</b>
Folder 4	<b>American University of Beirut (1951). 2 items.</b>
Folder 5	<b>Ashbrook, Joseph, d.1980 (1955). 2 items.</b>
Folder 6	<b>Beals, Carlyle Smith, 1899- (1951, Oct. 11). 1 item.</b>
Folder 7	<b>Biesecker, Earl B. (1951). 2 items.</b>
Folder 8	<b>Bowen, E. G. (1949, Jan. 10). 1 item.</b>
Folder 9	<b>Bowen, Ira Sprague, 1898-1973 (1946-1960). 17 items. Includes charts and graphs.</b>
Folder 10	<b>Boyer, Jacques (1955, Mar. 24). 1 item.</b>
Folder 11	<b>Bracewell, Ronald N. (Ronald Newbold), 1921-2007 (1963, Apr. 3). 1 item.</b>
Folder 12	<b>Cameron, Bob (1954, May 5). 1 item.</b>
Folder 13	<b>Church, Fred (1951). 3 items. Includes newspaper clipping.</b>
Folder 14	<b>Cunningham, Leland E. (1950-1953). 11 items. Includes items about Icarus and Jupiter's moons.</b>
Folder 15	<b>Czaplicki, Helen S. (1962, Dec. 3). 1 item.</b>
Folder 16	<b>Dillon, Edward S. (1947). 2 items.</b>
Folder 17	<b>Einarsson, Sturla (1951-1954). 17 items.</b>
Folder 18	<b>Federer, Charles, 1909- (1951). 7 items. Includes newspaper clipping, sheet with negatives of sun spots, and telegram (1929).</b>
Folder 19	<b>George, Kenneth (1955, Mar. 16). 1 item.</b>
Folder 20	<b>Goldberg, Leo (1952). 2 items.</b>

---

---

Folder 21	<b>Graves, Vera (1950, Sep. 6). 1 item.</b>
Folder 22	<b>Herget, Paul, 1908- (1951-1955). 15 items. Includes notes.</b>
Folder 23	<b>Herrick, Samuel, 1911-1974 (1951-1955). 10 items. Includes notes.</b>
Folder 24	<b>Hix, Elsie (1949). 6 items.</b>
Folder 25	<b>Jackson, J. (John), 1887-1958 (1928-1931). 3 items.</b>
Folder 26	<b>Jacobsen, Theodor S. (1950). 2 items.</b>
Folder 27	<b>Jeffers, Hamilton Moore (1948, May 12). 1 item.</b>
Folder 28	<b>Kiepenheuer, K. O. (Karl Otto) (1951-1953). 3 items.</b>
Folder 29	<b>Kourganoff, V. (Vladimir), 1912- [1951]. 1 item.</b>
Folder 30	<b>Kroll, Clifton H. (1953, July 29). 1 item.</b>
Folder 31	<b>Luyten, Willem Jacob, 1899-1994 (1949-1954). 3 items.</b>
Folder 32	<b>Marsden, Brian G. (1962). 2 items.</b>
Folder 33	<b>Maxwell, A. (1950). 3 items.</b>
Folder 34	<b>Mayall, N. U. (Nicholas Ulrich), 1906-1993 (1952, Feb. 20). 1 item.</b>
Folder 35	<b>Minnaert, M. G. J. (Marcel Gilles Jozef), 1893-1970 (1951). 2 items.</b>
Folder 36	<b>Morgan, William, 1906- (1928, Apr. 12). 1 item.</b>
Folder 37	<b>Mumford, George S. (George Saltonstall), 1928- (1954, Nov. 17). 1 item.</b>
Folder 38	<b>Murchie, Guy, 1907- (1960). 2 items.</b>
Folder 39	<b>Murphy, James K. (1962). 4 items.</b>
Folder 40	<b>Musen, Peter, 1912- (1953, Dec. 18). 1 item.</b>
Folder 41	<b>Öhman, Yngve, 1903- (1949). 3 items.</b>
Folder 42	<b>Oort, Jan Hendrik (1953). 3 items.</b>
Folder 43	<b>Petrie, R. M. (1951). 2 items.</b>
Folder 44	<b>Pickering, William H. (William Henry), b. 1858 (1934). 6 items.</b>
Folder 45	<b>Rabe, Eugene K. (1951). 2 items.</b>
Folder 46	<b>Roemer, Elizabeth, 1929- (1958). 2 items. 47. Shapley, Harlow, 1885-1972 (1951). 2 items.</b>
Folder 48	<b>Stroud, W. G. (1949). 3 items.</b>
Folder 49	<b>Struve, Otto, 1897-1963 (1951, July 5). 1 item. Addressee: Officers of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. Copy.</b>
Folder 50	<b>Van Biesbroeck, George, 1880-1974 (1951-1954). 5 items.</b>
Folder 51	<b>Van de Kamp, Peter, 1901- (1951, Feb. 27). 1 item.</b>
Folder 52	<b>Vysotsky, A. N. (Alexander N.), b. 1888 (1954). 2 items.</b>
Folder 53	<b>Waterman, Alan Tower, 1892-1967 (1953, Mar. 25). 1 item. Addressee: Astronomical Society of the Pacific. Copy.</b>
Folder 54	<b>Whipple, Fred L. (Fred Lawrence), 1906-2004 (1962). 2 items.</b>
Folder 55	<b>Whistler, Donald F. (1950-1952). 4 items.</b>
Folder 56	<b>Zwicky, F. (Fritz), 1898-1974 (1954, Dec. 17). 1 item.</b>