Descriptive Summary
Languages: English
Contributing Institution: Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla 92093-0175
Title: Harrison Williams Collection on Expeditions of William Beebe and George P. Putnam
Creator: Williams, Harrison, 1873-1953
Identifier/Call Number: MSS 0800
Physical Description: .4 Linear feet(1 archives box)
Date (inclusive): 1922-1937
Abstract: A small archive of papers collected by Harrison Williams, a wealthy businessman who provided financial support for three major natural history expeditions: William Beebe's Galápagos Expedition (1923) and Arcturus Expedition (1925) for the New York Zoological Society; and George P. Putnam's Arctic Greenland Expedition (1926) for the American Museum of Natural History. Williams was also an interested supporter of Beebe's later Bermuda Oceanographic Expeditions (ca. 1929-1932).
Scope and Content of Collection
A small archive of papers collected by Harrison Williams, a wealthy businessman who provided financial support for three major natural history expeditions: William Beebe's Galápagos Expedition (1923) and Arcturus Expedition (1925) for the New York Zoological Society; and George P. Putnam's Arctic Greenland Expedition (1926) for the American Museum of Natural History. Williams was also an interested supporter of Beebe's later Bermuda Oceanographic Expeditions (ca. 1929-1932). The collection contains letters, memoranda, telegrams, radio communications, and reports related to the expeditions. The majority of the letters were written by explorer William Beebe to Harrison Williams. Other correspondents include explorers George P. Putnam and Fitzhugh Green, and New York Zoological Society president Henry Fairfield Osborn.
The letters include updates dated 1922-1937 from Beebe to Williams concerning Beebe's research station in Bermuda. Beebe conducted sustained underwater studies in the spherical submarine vessel Bathysphere, first developed by deep-sea diver Otis Barton, off Nonesuch Island during this period. Harrison Williams also retained press clipping files for each major expedition (the two Galápagos expeditions and the Greenland Expedition).

Historical Background
Harrison Williams (1873-1953) was a wealthy entrepreneur and businessman who founded the American Gas & Electric Co. in 1906, followed six years later by the creation of the Central States Electric Corp. holding company. His utilities fortune allowed him to support his interest in travel and natural history exploration, and he became a patron of the New York Zoological Society and the American Museum of Natural History, in addition to sitting on a number of important boards. Williams and his second wife, Mona, owned numerous properties around the world and the largest privately held yacht at the time, the Warrior.

William Beebe (1877-1962), who is the main correspondent with Williams in this collection, was an American naturalist, biologist, and explorer. Among many notable adventures and accomplishments, he is remembered for the expeditions he conducted on behalf of the New York Zoological Society's Department of Tropical Research, his deep Bathysphere dives in Bermuda, and his accessible writings on various scientific subjects. While his early expertise and expeditions for the Society focused on bird populations, Beebe gradually developed an interest in marine biology and oceanography. His first visit to the Galápagos Islands during the Williams Galápagos Expedition (1923) aboard the steam yacht Noma lasted about 20 days. During that time, he discovered and charted Darwin's Bay, a heretofore unknown crater-form bay on Tower (Genovesa) Island. Beebe's mission was to document (in notes, artwork, photography and film) the islands, and collect and preserve plant and animal specimens for the Society. Beebe's Arcturus Expedition (1925) brought him back to the area to investigate the Sargasso Sea region and re-visit the Galápagos. The expedition is significant for its ground-breaking observations of the Pacific Ocean currents off South American and the "El Niño" effect. From the late 1920s through the mid-1930s, Beebe established a research station in Bermuda where he continued to study marine animals, flora and currents. Off the coast of Nonesuch Island, he planned and executed underwater excursions in the spherical submarine vessel Bathysphere, along with its inventor, Otis Barton. This was the first time a biologist observed deep-sea animals in their native environment, and set several successive records for the deepest dive ever performed by a human, the deepest of which stood until it was broken by Barton 15 years later.

George P. Putnam (1887-1950), another prominent correspondent in this collection, was a well-known New York publisher, author and explorer. In 1926, Putnam and noted Arctic explorer Captain Bob Bartlett led an expedition to Northwest Greenland sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History and supported by the patronage of Harrison Williams.
Their ship, the *Effie M. Morrissey*, narrowly escaped disaster on the rocks near Northumberland Island, though the expedition was safely concluded and Putnam explored Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago the following year. In addition to his success in the publishing world, Putnam is remembered for being the husband of aviatrix Amelia Earhart.

**Preferred Citation**
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**Acquisition Information**
Acquired 2017

**Publication Rights**
Publication rights are held by the creator of the collection.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
- Scientific expeditions -- Bermuda Islands
- Scientific expeditions -- Galapagos Islands
- Scientific expeditions -- Greenland
- Williams, Harrison, 1873-1953 -- Archives
- Beebe, William, 1877-1962 -- Correspondence
- Putnam, George Palmer, 1887-1950 -- Correspondence
- American Museum of Natural History
- New York Zoological Society
- Williams Galápagos Expedition (1923)
- Arcturus Oceanographic Expedition (1925)
- American Museum Greenland Expedition (1926)
- Bermuda Oceanographic Expedition (1932)
- Bermuda Oceanographic Expedition (1930)
- Bermuda Oceanographic Expedition (1931)
- Bermuda Oceanographic Expedition (1929)

**DOCUMENTS**

**Box 1, Folder 1**
**Letters 1923**
- General note
  - Includes letters and cablegrams from William Beebe, written prior to and during the expedition; letters to and from Harrison Williams to Henry Fairfield Osborn, President of the New York Zoological Society; and in invitation to related art exhibition.

**Box 1, Folder 2**
**Radio log for Sargasso Sea cruise 1925**

**Box 1, Folder 3**
**Clippings 1925**

**Box 1, Folder 4**
**Arcturus Expedition (1925)**
- Letters 1924-1926
  - General note
  - Includes letters and cablegrams from William Beebe, written prior to and during the expedition; reports; expedition-related memoranda from the New York Zoological Society:

**Box 1, Folder 5**
**Second and third quarter reports 1925**

**Box 1, Folder 6**
**Radio log for Sargasso Sea cruise 1925**
- Clippings 1925

**Box 1, Folder 7**
**Greenland Expedition (1926)**
| Box 1, Folder 8 | **Letters 1926**  
  General note  
  Includes letters from George P. Putnam and Fitzhugh Green, written prior to and during the expedition; summaries and memoranda. |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Box 1, Folder 9 | **Clippings 1926**  
  **Bermuda Oceanographic Expedition (circa 1929-1932)** |
| Box 1, Folder 10-14 | **Letters 1922-1937**  
  General note  
  Primarily letters from William Beebe, written prior to, during and after the work in the Bahamas. |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | **Report - A record decent beneath the surface of the ocean 1930 June or July** |