
George Tompkins Peabody Papers

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2017

Descriptive Summary

Title: George Tompkins Peabody Papers

Dates: 1891-1941

Collection Number: 2017_13

Creator/Collector: Peabody, George Tompkins Lais Trading & Development Company

Extent: 1 archives box.

Repository: Sherman Library and Gardens

Corona del Mar, California 92625

Abstract: The collection consists of correspondence, documents, and news clippings related to the life and professional activities of George Tompkins Peabody.

Language of Material: English

Access

These papers are open for research.

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Preferred Citation

George Tompkins Peabody Papers. Sherman Library and Gardens

Acquisition Information

These papers were a gift from Shelly Fetterman.

Biography/Administrative History

George Tompkins Peabody was born July 23, 1879 in Sacramento, California to Henry Adams Peabody and Sallie Bradley Peabody. Peabody was a key figure in the development of the City of Newport Beach. He served on the first Board of Trustees of Newport Beach following the city's incorporation in 1906. The following year, he was one of the sixteen "Harbor Boosters" responsible for the creation of the Chamber of Commerce, for which he later served as President. During his tenure, he handled the public relations and politics related to the Newport Harbor Development, public voting bond issues, and public hearings before the Board of Army Engineers attempting to gain federal assistance. Recognizing the potential of Pacific Electric Island as a commercial harbor, Peabody was instrumental in persuading oil tycoon W.K. Parkinson to purchase the island (renamed Lido Isle) in 1923. He, along with Harry Welch, aided Parkinson in obtaining a permit to build a bridge between Lido Isle and the Newport Beach mainland.

The Peabodys were a prominent family in Newport Beach. His father, Henry, was editor and part owner of the Santa Ana Blade newspaper and served as Postmaster for the Santa Ana Post Office. In his youth, Peabody worked as a reporter for the Blade and later as a postal employee with the Post Office. He also often worked in the family store, Peabody's Grocery, serving customers and delivering ice.

He had a strong interest in forestry and, in early 1900, at the age of 20, joined the newly-formed Bureau of Forestry in Washington D.C. As Assistant Forester, Peabody worked in conjunction with Abbott Kinney to survey the forest conditions around Southern California. Additionally, he surveyed the forest conditions in Tennessee on behalf of the University of the South, where he also taught a course in forestry, and conducted a study of the New York State spruce production for paper pulp. Later that year, he served for two months as Timber Estimator in charge of forestry and lumbering operations for the Northwestern Lumber Company and the Frank H. Lamb Timberlands and Timber Products in Hoquiam, Grays Harbor County, Washington.

In August 1901, Peabody joined a three-month gold mining expedition, serving as Mate aboard the yacht, "Violet." The following year, he assumed a position as Chief Amalgamator at the Calmalli gold stamp mill for Charlie Gump and the Ybarra Gold Mining Company.

Between January and May 1903, Peabody joined a voyage to the Philippine Islands, serving as a Commissary Worker for the U.S. Transportation Service aboard the "Thomas." He then returned to Peabody's Grocery, where he remained until 1910, overseeing management of the Peabody Investment Co., family enterprise, and the building of the Peabody Bath House. In the fall of 1911, he journeyed to Baja, California to prospect for family farm land on which to establish a commune.

From 1912 to 1916, Peabody served as Supervisor of Planting for Dr. A.J. Chandler in Chandler, Maricopa County, Arizona. At this time, Chandler was experimenting with long staple cotton farming in the area. Peabody also served as Public Relations and assistant General Manager of the Chandler Improvement Company, Secretary/Manager of the Chandler

Chamber of Commerce, and Secretary of the San Marcos Summer Club in Chandler. In 1914, he participated with fourteen others as a tenderfoot ostrich “cowboy” to drive 500 ostriches fifty miles through Arizona into Chandler.

From October 1916 to February 1917, and again in 1918, Peabody led expeditions to Baja, California to explore mineral and farming potential in the area on behalf of the Parkinson Syndicate. Between 1918 and 1930, he served as the Business and Estate Manager for the Syndicate, and as Director of the Lido Isle dredging project.

Peabody served as Consulting Engineer in charge of the 1926 study into water potential around Aztec, Arizona and was in charge of installing a water plant in Le Sage Arizona for the Yuma Company. From 1934 to 1936, he served as Garden Laborer for the Los Angeles County Playgrounds, S.E.R.A. and W.P.A. He went on to become Supervisor of Recreation until 1938.

In 1938, Peabody became President of the Lais Trading & Development Company in Lais, Davao, Mindanao, Philippine Islands. In December 1941, serving as Brevet Major in the United States Armed Forces Far East, Davao Sector of Mindanao, he was sent to Davao to take charge of Off Shore Patrol and Communications. During this time, he became a leader in the resistance movement against the Japanese in the region. He was later betrayed to the Japanese and held prisoner until his death by beheading in December 1942. George Tompkins Peabody was survived by his wife, Blanche Peabody, and their children, George Wilkes Peabody and Ysabel Peabody Fetterman.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection consists of correspondence, documents, and news clippings related to the life and professional activities of George Tompkins Peabody. This includes materials related to the history of Newport Bay, business records of the Peabody Investment Company, and correspondence regarding Peabody’s death in 1942. A portion of the collection relates to Peabody’s expeditions in Baja, Mexico, including research materials, letters, and a scrapbook.

Indexing Terms

Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Newport Beach - Orange County - California.

Philippine Islands.

Box 1

Folder 1	Baja - A Legacy of Letters - Research Materials 1900-1932
Folder 2	Fetterman, Ysabel Peabody - “Letters from Baja, 1901-1917” 1901-1917
Folder 3	Harbor Lines of Newport Bay 1925
Folder 4	Native Daughter of the Golden West - Henry Adams Peabody 1992-1993
Folder 5	Parkinson Correspondence - Oil Leases 1923-1937
Folder 6	Peabody, Geo. T. - Newport Beach, 1920’s 1920’s
Folder 7	Peabody, George Tompkins - Baja California Scrapbook 1904
Folder 8	Peabody, George Tompkins - “History of Newport Bay” Orange County - n.d.
Folder 9	Peabody, George Tompkins - Resume 1891-1941
Folder 10	Peabody, Henry - Newspaper Clippings - Copied 1892-1917
Folder 11	Peabody Investment Co. - Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, Minutes 1905-1907
Folder 12	Welch, Harry - Correspondence - Regarding George Peabody’s Death 1940’s
Folder 13	Wilkes, Blanche - Manuscript of Classic Mythology (written junior year) 1902