
ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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MS 1459
Sykes, Godfrey, 1861-1948
Diaries, 1892-1947 (bulk 1912-1947)

DESCRIPTION

Personal diaries, dated 1892-1893, 1902, 1907, 1912-1922, and 1924-1947, kept by Godfrey Sykes concerning his daily activities, projects, and current events. The entries provide a brief glimpse into his daily life and events of the times. Highlights include his 1907 trip to the Pinacate region with D.T. MacDougal, William Hornaday and others, his 1912 trip to Africa with MacDougal, and references to his study of the Colorado River delta and his many associates.

7 boxes, 3.5 linear ft.

RELATED MATERIAL

The Sykes family papers (MS 778), Sykes family photographs (PC 240), and MacDougal papers (MS 452) contain related materials.

ACQUISITION

Donated by Sykes family members.

ACCESS

There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

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PROCESSING

Kim Frontz prepared this finding aid in July 2012.

ARRANGEMENT

Chronological.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Godfrey Sykes, an engineer, author, and scientist, was born May 25, 1861, in Yorkshire, England. He came to the United States in 1879, working first as a cowboy in Kansas and Texas, before his arrival in Flagstaff, Arizona, in 1886. There he established a ranch with his brother, Stanley, and opened a repair business and workshop. Here he worked on the Lowell Observatory domes. Later, he designed and supervised construction of the dome at the Steward Observatory in Tucson.

He first explored the Colorado delta in 1891 and continued to study and visit the area throughout his life. In 1906, he came to Tucson to work for Daniel T. MacDougal at the Desert Carnegie Laboratory. That year he began a study of the Salton Sea. In 1907, he was a member of the Pinacate Expedition, and in 1912 he accompanied MacDougal on a trip to Africa to study sand drifts and the absence of plant life. He is the author of several scientific works including "The Colorado Delta" and "The Reclamation of a Desert" as well as his autobiography "A Westerly Trend." He retired from the Laboratory in 1929.

His first wife, Emma, died in 1906 and he later married her sister, Leila. He and Emma had two sons, Glenton, who worked as City Engineer in Tucson, and Gilbert, a district forest ranger in the Nogales-Ruby area. Godfrey died on December 22, 1948.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

These personal diaries record Sykes daily activities including work tasks at the laboratory, on projects such as the Steward Observatory dome, and around his home; seeing friends and family; progress on his writing; and local, national and world events. The entries are succinct but also descriptive. A few diaries include general notes about travels along the Colorado River particularly the delta region, a trip down the Grand Canyon in 1902, the Pinacate Expedition of 1907, his 1912 trip accompanying MacDougal to Africa, and many trips to England and San Diego. In his later years, he lived part of the year in England or San Diego.

His associates included Desert Carnegie Laboratory staff including Forrest Shreve and D. T. MacDougal, as well as A. E. Douglass, Robert Forbes, Grace Flandrau, Mrs. Spofford, and Mrs. Strickland. Local events are noted such as an early El Paso to Phoenix motorcycle race (1914), the circus, color films at the Rialto (1928), St. Mary's bridge burning (1928), all banks closed due to the Great Depression, a comet seen (1939), and the births and deaths of friends and family. National news includes elections, events of World Wars I and II, and the search for Amelia Earhart (1937).

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box 1

- f.1 Trip journal, 1892-1893
Colorado River including river conditions, places camped,
general notes
- f.2 Trip journal, 1902
Grand Canyon, Indian Gardens, Bright Angel, Pipe Creek
- f.3 Trip journal, 1907 draft
Pinacate expedition (contains one photograph, 1905-06,
possibly his wife and son)
- f.4 Diary, 1907, photocopies (originals in Rare)
Includes Pinacate expedition
- f.5 Diary, 1912
Includes trip to Africa with MacDougal (Jan. to Mar.), England (Apr.-May),
California (June), Salton Station (Oct.), England (Nov.), Gen. Campo and Mexican
rebels captured near Robles Ranch and jailed in Tucson (Sept. 23) (Note: The Africa
portion has been scanned and the CD is in the control file)
- f.6 Diary, 1913
England, Tucson, San Francisco
- f.7 Diary, 1914, photocopies (originals in Rare)
England (May-July), War events, opening of Panama Canal, El Paso to Phoenix
motorcycle race (Nov.7)

Box 2

- f.8 Diary, 1916
Desert Laboratory work, war news
- f.9 Diary, 1917
War news, Steward Observatory dome work (Feb. 12), California trip (June 17),
- f.10 Diary, 1918
England, war news
- f.11 Diary, 1919
England, to Tucson in March, flew by Curtis Hydroplane to California in August, to
England in December
- f.12 Diary, 1920
To Tucson in January, Bob Leatherwood died Apr.3, to Carmel in Sept., Allan Jaynes
died Nov. 7, Grace Livingstone married to Flandrau Nov. 25
- f.13 Diary, 1921
Began erecting Flandrau dome (Jan. 26), tickets to Harold Bell Wright's show (Mar.
11), Rialto to see vaudeville (Mar. 17), Carmel, California (Apr. to May), to England
in December

Box 3

- f.14 Diary, 1922
Operation (Jan. 3), England (Feb. 14), Circus (Sept. 10), Army dirigible (Oct. 11)

[No diary present for 1923]

- f.15 Diary, 1924
Working on new dendrograph ideas (Jan.9, Jan. 25, Feb.8), break in at Lab (Mar. 15), photographed transit of Mercury (May 7), California (Nov.), to Libertad (Dec. 15)
- f.16 Diary, 1925
Writing delta paper (Mar. 18), tinkering with dendrograph clamps (Apr. 5), started for Libertad (Apr. 13)
- f.17 Diary, 1926
Byrd reached North Pole (May 10), to Yuma (June 27), Santa Cruz River flooding, bridge gave way (Sept. 27), circus (Sept. 28, Oct. 13)
- f.18 Diary, 1927
Railroad wreck at Cortaro (Mar. 20), letter from Nicholas Roosevelt received (Mar. 22), to England (May-Aug.), to Libertad (Oct.)
- f.19 Diary, 1928
Citizenship application (Mar.), viewing color films at Rialto (Mar.), Libertad (Apr. 26), St. Mary's bridge burned (Apr. 25)

Box 4

- f.20 Diary, 1929
To England (July-Nov.)
- f.21 Diary, 1930
Naturalization forms (Apr. 4), Mr. Wetmore and well-drilling (May)
- f.22 Diary, 1931
Calexico (Apr. 22), to California (Oct.), work on delta report
- f.23 Diary, 1932
Work on delta report, drawings, papers, reviews
- f.24 Diary, 1933
Calexico (Jan. 10), Sister Ambrosius buried (Jan. 16), Roosevelt inauguration (Mar. 4), Banks closed for three days in Arizona (Mar. 2), banks closed in all 48 states until March 15 (Mar. 5), Los Angeles earthquake (Mar. 10), Dr. Neff's work on spotted teeth caused by Colorado River water (Apr. 4), Grace Flandrau visit (Apr. 8), to England (May 18)
- f.25 Diary, 1934
Finished manuscript (Mar. 15), to Tucson (Mar. 24), to San Diego (June 12), to Tucson (Oct. 7), to California (Dec. 11)
- f.26 Diary, 1935
Mostly in San Diego, San Diego Exposition
- f.27 Diary, 1936
Europe and Hitler (Mar. 9), to England (May), to Tucson (Nov.29)
- f.28 Diary, 1937
To San Diego (June 30), Amelia Earhart search (July 9), to Tucson (Nov. 2)
- f.29 Diary, 1938
San Diego (July 3), to Tucson (Nov. 2)

Box 6

- f.30 Diary, 1939
Comet seen (Apr. 21), to San Diego (June 14), to Tucson (Oct. 18), war concerns, war declared (Sept. 3)
- f.31 Diary, 1940

- Almost daily comments on war news, new parking meters installed in Tucson (Jan. 17), sent off another Ivory soap "blurb" (Jan. 25), Queen Elizabeth arrives in U.S. for safety (Mar. 7), partial eclipse of the sun (Apr. 7), to San Diego (May 30), to Tucson (Dec. 4)
- f.32 Diary, 1941
In Tucson all year, war news, bombing of Pearl Harbor (Dec. 8)
- f.33 Diary, 1942
Almost daily war news and comments, death of Mrs. Spofford at Norfolk, sugar rationing (May 4), swimming pool (June), gas rationing coupons (Nov. 18), rationing mentioned (Dec. 20)
- f.34 Diary, 1943
Telephone put in, 4-party line (Jan. 25), Hospital stay and eventual removal of leg to avoid gangrene (Feb. 24 to Mar. 22), war news
- f.35 Diary, 1944
War news, proofs for Westernly Trend book
- f.36 Diary, 1945
Mrs. Kitt brought books to autograph (Mar. 29), VE Day, no celebration seen (May 8), War is over (Aug. 14), everything closed, people celebrating (Aug. 15), post-war news, stores closed for Roosevelt's funeral (Apr. 14)
- f.37 Diary, 1946
In St. Mary's hospital and health problems (Jan. 1 to May), began new book
- f.38 Diary, 1947
Visitors, mail, domestic chores
- f.39 Loose notes, clippings and a Royal Geographical session ticket