

Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell Papers

Finding aid prepared by Anna J. Clarkson

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Archives and Manuscripts Collections

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Summary Information

Repository	Archives and Manuscripts Collections
Creator	Bussell, Conrad T., b. 1891
Creator	Bussell, Pauline, b. 1901
Title	Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell Papers
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1923-1929
Date [inclusive]	1907-1946
Extent	0.2 Linear feet . Contains 1 box consisting of 7 folders: 5 folders of correspondence, 1 folder ephemera (3 items), 1 folder of photographs (20 items)
Language	English
Abstract	The Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell papers measure .02 linear feet with the bulk of material dating between 1923-1929 while the Bussells lived in Monrovia, Liberia. The papers contain correspondence, ephemera, and photographs of the Bussells and contains letters from the President of Liberia and his brother, to Conrad Bussell; letters from Pauline Bussell back home to her family in the United States detailing their activities; ephemera related to Liberia; and photographs detailing Monrovia life, typography, local costumes, and customs of various tribal peoples.

Preferred Citation

Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, The Baltimore Museum of Art.

Biographical Information

Conrad Turner Bussell (1891 – unknown) was born in Irvington, VA to Captain A. W. Bussell and graduated from Randolph-Macon Academy at Bedford City and the University of Virginia. Upon graduation, Lieutenant Bussell was appointed to the Coast and Geodetic Survey as a Junior Hydrographic and Geodetic Engineer by President Wilson.

After the war, Bussell worked as a navigator for the *Venetia* after it was returned to civilian service whereupon he met his future wife, Pauline Winterstein (1901-unknown) of Bristol, PA.

In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge sent Bussell to survey the boundaries of the Republic of Liberia, then an African-American experiment in state-building. Bussell never completed the survey but was appointed General Receiver of Customs in the country's capital, Monrovia, and later became Deputy Financial Officer to Liberian President Charles Dunbar Burgess King. Bussell's then fiancée, Pauline Winterstein, joined him in Monrovia where they were married on February 25, 1926.

While in Liberia, Conrad Bussell helped to negotiate an agreement between Liberian President King, Harvey S. Firestone, Jr. of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, Sidney de la Rue of the Liberian government, the Finance Corporation of America, and the U.S. government to establish a large rubber plantation in Liberia to sustain the rapid growth of the United States automobile industry. Previous to this agreement, all Liberian rubber supplies had been controlled by British-run plantations.

Before returning to the United States in 1929, the couple accumulated a distinguished collection of works by indigenous artists from ethnic groups in the interior of the country such as the Gola, Vai, Dan, Kpelle, and Mende- before they were heavily influenced by Western culture through the colonial government based in Monrovia.

Upon returning to the United States in 1929, Conrad Bussell held several positions including Assistant Regional Representative of the United States Bureau of Unemployment Compensation and lived in Richmond, VA, Washington, D.C. and Birmingham, AL.

In 1988, Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell's son, Robert Bruce Bussell of Arlington, VA, and wife, Catherine O'Carroll Bussell, transferred forty-six works of African Art collected by Conrad and Pauline while living in Liberia to The Baltimore Museum of Art (forty-one objects accepted as gifts and five purchased). Of exceptional quality, the acquisition is extremely important because few collections from this part of Africa exist in America that were assembled before the 1930s.

Scope and Contents

The Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell papers measure .02 linear feet with the bulk of material dating between 1923-1929 while the Bussells lived in Monrovia, Liberia. The papers are comprised of correspondence, ephemera, and photographs of the Bussells and contains letters from the President of Liberia and his brother to Conrad Bussell; letters from Pauline Bussell to her family in the United States detailing their activities; ephemera related to Liberia; and photographs detailing Monrovia life, topography, local costumes, and customs of various tribal peoples.

The Papers are housed in one box and consist of three series: Correspondence, Ephemera, and Photographs. The material came to The Baltimore Museum of Art by the bequest of Catherine O'Carroll Bussell and Robert Bruce Bussell in 1998 of the African Art Collection and Papers of Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell. The materials are arranged by subject and then by date.

Arrangement note

Arranged into three series: 1. Correspondence. 2. Ephemera. 3. Photographs. Series arranged by subject and then by date.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Archives and Manuscripts Collections June 6, 2012

Restrictions on Use

The Conrad T. and Pauline Bussell Papers are the physical property of the Manuscripts Collections, Baltimore Museum of Art. Copyright, except in cases where material has passed into the public domain, belongs to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult a Library staff member.

Provenance

Gift of Catherine O'Carroll Bussell and Robert Bruce Bussell, Arlington, VA in 1998. Transferred to the Archives from the Department of The Arts of Africa, the Americas, Asia & the Pacific Islands (AAAPI) in 2008.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Anna J. Clarkson in June of 2012.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Firestone Tire and Rubber Company.

Genre(s)

- Correspondence
- Photographic postcards
- Photographs
- Printed ephemera

Personal Name(s)

- Buell, Raymond Leslie, 1896-1946
- de la Rue, Sidney, b. 1888
- Firestone, Harvey S., 1898-1973

Subject(s)

- Christmas cards
- Liberia
- Liberia--Description and travel
- Liberia--Politics and government
- Passports

Collection Inventory

Correspondence 1926-1928 (Bulk, 1927-1928) 5.0 folders	Box	Folder
1	1	
Scope and Contents		
<p>Series 1, Correspondence contains letters to Conrad T. Bussell from the Kings and correspondence from Pauline Bussell to her family in the United States.</p>		
<p>Correspondence to Conrad T. Bussell is extremely limited and contains one letter from President Charles Dunbar King of Liberia and another from his brother, E.S.W. "Eddie" King, to Bussell. In the letter dated July 15th, 1926 from President King, he expresses the frustrations with the politics of negotiations "on both sides of the Atlantic". In the second letter dated February 14, 1927, E.S.W. King expresses his sympathy regarding the death of Bussell's father.</p>		
<p>Correspondence from Pauline Bussell to her family in the United States is much more extensive and is contained in four folders. The letters date between July 15, 1926 – December 25, 1928 are addressed to her mother, father, and other extended family and friends.</p>		
<p>In correspondence dated January 12, 1927 – April 11, 1927, Mrs. Bussell describes in part: the "Harmitan" wind from the Sahara; her husband's lack of progress in negotiations between Sydney B. de la Rue, Firestone and the President of Liberia; her concerns about her family; domestic chores around their home in Liberia; traveling in a "Ginagogue" or dug-out canoe up Stockton Creek and St. Paul River where they saw "pigmy hippos"; dinner dates and outings with President and Mrs. King; Sidney B. de la Rue's countless absences; receiving gifts from a Mr. Belton (a red leather country whip, a cigarette box, a cigarette case, candy or powder box, small</p>		

Conrad T. Bussell

knife in an ornate sheathe, country cloth); and many anecdotes about town life and acquaintances coming in and out of the Bussells' busy life.

The correspondence dated April 13 – July 18, 1927 details in part: Sidney B. de la Rue's continued absences; trouble with Firestone employees and Harvard staff with the locals resulting in much friction; the climate of Liberia; family matters in the United States; a surveying trip to a falls near Junk or Marshall for the possible development of hydroelectric power; indigenous peoples' fear of "devil bush"; tribal customs of giving relatives money before oneself; song and dance of itinerant performers; Harvard Expedition in the Congo; wedding of President King's sister, Izetta M. Stevens, to Representative Smith of Sinoe; the 1927 Presidential Elections and subsequent re-election of King; several killings that happened outside the Bussells' home; Mr. Massoquoi(?), the Consul General of Hamburg, gift of a "nice country cloth"; development of the power plant for "electric lights and radio in Monrovia"; and the adoption of several exotic pets before leaving for an extended break to the United States.

The correspondence dated January 2 – April 20, 1928 mentions in part: some "devil dancing" of indigenous in costumes performing on stilts; a failed crocodile hunting expedition; difficulties of some of the foreign women adjusting to Liberian life; turbulent weather; the arrival of Mr. & Mrs. Harvey Firestone; Bussell's appointment as Acting Financial Adviser; and family matters back home in the United States.

The final folder of correspondence dated April 20 – December 25, 1928 details in part: the Bussells moving into a new house; a critique of Raymond Leslie Buell's article "Mr. Firestone's Liberia"; Sidney de la Rue's continued absence and subsequent resignation; and Christmas spent with friends.

Conrad T. Bussell 1926 July 15, 1927 Feb 14

Box

Folder

1

1

Pauline Bussell 1927 Jan 12 - 1928 Dec 25

Ephemera

	Box	Folder
1927 Jan 12 - Apr 11	1	2
1927 Apr 13 - July 18	1	3
1928 Jan 2 - Apr 20	1	4
1928 Apr 20 - Dec 25	1	5

Ephemera Circa 1907-1914, 1923-1929, 1927-1946	Box	Folder
1.0 folders	1	6

Scope and Contents

Series 2, Ephemera consists of a postcard of a “Vhey Girl in her native dress” dated circa 1907-1914, a Christmas card from Mr. and Mrs. J.T. Togba depicting a man with a primitive instrument on the front dated between 1923-1929, and the Busells’ passport book with both of their portraits and passport stamps dated between 1927-1946.

Bussell, Pauline, b. 1901 Photographs 1923-1929	Box	Folder
1.0 folders	1	7

Scope and Contents

Series 3, Photographs, contains 20 items. There are a series of portraits of individuals including: Conrad T. Bussell, Pauline Bussell, President & Mrs. Charles Dunbar Burgess King, Mrs. Jacob West, and an unknown man in tribal costume. In addition, the collection contains several photographs of buildings and topography around Monrovia including three scrapbook pages with multiple images. Also, the collection contains numerous photographs of villagers with the Bussells as well as dressed in their domestic and ceremonial costumes performing song and dance.

Photographs

All photographs are black and white prints with the exception of one glass plate negative.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Firestone Tire and Rubber Company.

Genre(s)

- Correspondence
- Photographic postcards
- Photographs
- Printed ephemera

Personal Name(s)

- Buell, Raymond Leslie, 1896-1946
- Bussell, Conrad T., b. 1891
- de la Rue, Sidney, b. 1888
- Firestone, Harvey Samuel, 1868-1946

"President King, Trip to Basa, March 18, 24: Charles Dunbar Burgess King and Mrs. King. 'President Burgess'". 18 March 1924

Untitled (Conrad T. Bussell posing on step). 1923-29

"Baptist church, Legislative Hall, Methodist Print Shop". 1923-29

Photographs

"Country Devil. Zigida - 1926" 1926

Untitled (Conrad T. Bussell and Mrs Jacob West? flanked by two Liberian children in front of river). 1923-1929

"Mrs. Jacob West & I (Pauline), Wada, Feb. 1926" 1926 Feb

"A Native Dancer: The dark glasses are worn for beauty's sake - not to protect her eyes. She is holding money in her mouth." 1923-1929

Untitled (Native female dancers dancing in front of crowd in front of river bank). 1923-1929

"Notice the 'medicine men' in who wear wooden "bucket affairs" over their heads". 1923-1929

Untitled (Females singing? and dancing? with medicine men in front of river). 1923-1929

Untitled (Mrs. Jacob West? in front of dwellings with thatched roofs). 1923-1929

Untitled (Villagers in front of their village with thatched roofs in background). 1923-1929

Untitled (Pauline Bussell kneeling with small child in front of its mother? and thatched home?). 1923-1929

Untitled (Pauline Bussell holding small child next to villager holding another small child). 1923-1929

"Col. Joe Bennis?: King's Second Inauguration"; "Copyright-Germany-Schornbr? Expedition". 1927

"Providence Island: Where first settlers landed and lived for several months". 1923-1929

Photographs

Untitled Scrapbook page (two photographs of houses / buildings, one river scene, one ariel scene of town). 1923-1929

Untitled Scrapbook page (landscape photograph of tall tree and three photographs of homes / buildings). 1923-1929

Untitled Scrapbook page (photograph of building / home, and three arial views of coastline, riverbank and town and surrounding forest). 1923-1929

Untitled (Portrait of African male in tribal costume posing with chair by Humphrey Taylor & Sons, Ltd). 1923-1929