Descriptive Summary

Title: W.A. Shelton papers, 1919-1950, bulk 1919-1920
Call Number: Series No. 187
Extent: 3 linear ft. (8 boxes)
Abstract: Papers of educator and Methodist minister William Arthur Shelton include correspondence, photographs, and other materials related to his participation in the American Scientific Mission, a 1920 exploration through Egyptian and former Ottoman territory led by James Henry Breasted. Also included are documents related to Shelton’s purchase of antiquities later housed in the Emory University Museum (now the Michael C. Carlos Museum).
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access
Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction
All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Source
Transfer

Custodial History
Emory University's Michael C. Carlos Museum possessed the collection from 1987 until 2011, when it was transferred to the Emory University Archives.

Citation
[after identification of item(s)], W.A. Shelton papers, Emory University Archives, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note
William Arthur Shelton was born on September 6, 1875 in Azusa, California. He received a bachelor of arts degree from Hargrove College in Ardmore, Oklahoma in 1904 as well as bachelor of divinity and master of arts degrees from Yale University in 1908. He was ordained in the Methodist Episcopal Church and subsequently served as President of Oklahoma Wesleyan College in Oklahoma City from 1911 until 1914.

In 1914, Shelton began to study with James Henry Breasted, Professor of Egyptology and Oriental History and Director of the Haskell Oriental Museum at the University of Chicago. The same year, Shelton was appointed Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature at Emory University in Atlanta, where he had also been awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity. Shelton discontinued his studies at the University of Chicago within two years.

In 1919 and 1920, Shelton accompanied Breasted and three other men—Ludlow Bull, Daniel Luckenbill, and William Edgerton—on an expedition through Egyptian and former Ottoman territory then under British mandate. The expedition, called the American Scientific Mission, sailed from New York on the S.S. Duca D'Aosta on Christmas Eve of 1919. It passed through Egypt and eventually reached Mesopotamia via Bombay (Mumbai) in March 1920.

Shelton, Breasted, and the others were students of the Ancient Near East, and the expedition was devoted primarily to the exploration of ancient artwork and ruins throughout the so-called "Fertile Crescent" (a term coined by Breasted), and to the gathering of antiquities, especially in Egypt. Several of these items, including a full mummy purchased in Cairo, formed the initial foundation of the Emory Museum’s (now the Michael C. Carlos Museum) Egyptology collection. Shelton documented the American Scientific Mission in his memoir, Dust and Ashes of Empires, published in 1922.

The expedition's itinerary included the following cities and sites: Naples, Rome, Luxor, Aswan, Cairo, Port Said, Bombay (Mumbai), Basra, Ur Junction, Shatra, Naziriyah, Hillah, Baghdad, Mosul, Damascus, Jerusalem, London, and Paris. The expedition also visited numerous other places by ship, including several sites along the Euphrates River, in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and through the Suez Canal.

After the American Scientific Mission, Shelton remained at Emory for nearly another decade, until he became the pastor of Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Church in Washington, DC, in 1930. Two years later he returned to Atlanta to lead Grace Methodist Church. Shelton became Superintendent of the Methodist Church’s Birmingham District in 1938. From 1949 to 1951 he was briefly Professor of Religion at Birmingham-Southern College. He died February 23, 1959.

Scope and Content Note
The papers of William Arthur Shelton primarily include materials related to his participation in the 1919 to 1920 American Scientific Mission led by James Henry Breasted of the University of Chicago, as well as some later documents cataloging his purchases for the Emory University
Museum. Shelton’s diary, personal correspondence, notes on the budget and purchases, photographs, print ephemera, and numerous glass lantern slides document the expedition. This material consists primarily of reportage from the field. Shelton’s primary correspondents include his wife, Ola, and their young children. Few of these materials are related to Shelton’s later career and none to his earlier years, so while the collection spans the period 1919 to circa 1950, the bulk of materials originate from late 1919 and January to August 1920. Researchers should note that Series 2 includes Shelton’s diary, chronicling the expedition from February 1920 forward, and that Series 3 includes fifty pages from a personal scrapbook in addition to many loose photographs.

**Arrangement Note**
Organized into 5 series: (1) Correspondence; (2) Ephemera and other papers; (3) Photographs; and (4) Glass lantern slides.
Description of Series

Series 1: Correspondence, 1919-1923
Series 2: Ephemera and other papers, 1920-1950
Series 3: Photographs, circa 1920
Series 4: Glass lantern slides, circa 1920
Series 1
Correspondence, 1919-1923
Box 1

Scope and Content Note
Personal correspondence, much of it from Shelton's time with the American Scientific Mission.

Arrangement Note
Arranged chronologically.

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<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manget, John A., 1919 November 24-1919 November 27</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outgoing from New York, 1919 December 20-1919 December 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Incoming Correspondence, 1919</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>At sea, 1919 December 25-1920 January 6</td>
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<td>Naples, 1920 January 8-1920 January 10</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Rome, 1920 January 11-1920 January 13</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The Milano (ship), 1920 January 18-1920 January 19</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Page from letter recounting incident on a ship in the Mediterranean, c. 1920 January</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Luxor, 1920 January 26-1920 January 27</td>
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<td>Aswan, Egypt, 1920 January 29-1920 January 30</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Cairo, 1920 February 4-1920 February 16</td>
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<td>Port Said, Egypt, 1920 February 17</td>
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<td>On the Euphrates, 1920 March 9</td>
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<td>Basra, 1920 March 13-1920 March 16</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Ur Junction, 1920 March 17</td>
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<td>Shatra, 1920 March 19</td>
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<td>Naziriyah, 1920 March 26</td>
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<td>Hillah (Babylon), 1920 March 31-1920 April 4</td>
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<td>Baghdad, 1920 April 7</td>
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<td>Mosul, 1920 April 17</td>
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<td>Baghdad, 1920 April 23-1920 April 27</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Cairo, 1920 July 1-1920 July 14</td>
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<td>Port Said, Egypt, 1920 July 22</td>
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<td>Paris, 1920 August 24</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Miscellaneous envelopes, 1920</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>Incoming correspondence, 1921</td>
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<td>Incoming correspondence, 1922</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Incoming correspondence, 1923</td>
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Ephemera and other papers, 1920-1950
Boxes 1-3

Scope and Content Note
Assorted ephemera, such as clippings, inventories, accounts, and illustrations. Includes Shelton's diaries of the American Scientific Mission.

Arrangement Note
Arranged alphabetically by topic.

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<td>Card from St. James Hotel, Assouan, 1920</td>
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<td>Expedition Diary (transcription), 1919-1920</td>
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<td>Expenses, 1920 September</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>Inventory of Shelton Archives</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shelton's Diary, 1920 February-1920 September</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings related to mummies, etc.</td>
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Photographs, circa 1920
Boxes 1, 3-6

Scope and Content Note
Photographs from the American Scientific Mission. Box 4 includes 50 pages from a personal scrapbook assembled by Shelton (or his family). Page numbers are noted in parentheses. Item titles in quotation are taken directly from captions on the images themselves, otherwise they are descriptive titles derived while processing the collection.

Arrangement Note
Arranged according to an index provided by Emory's Michael C. Carlos Museum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
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W.A. Shelton papers, 1919-1950, bulk 1919-1920

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