
Descriptive Summary

Title: John P. Buwalda and Imra Wann Buwalda Papers,

Date (inclusive): 1907-1981

Collection number: 10056-MS

Creator: Buwalda, John P. 1886-1954

Extent: 8 linear feet

Repository: California Institute of Technology. Caltech Archives
Pasadena, California 91125

Abstract: The personal and organizational correspondence, working papers, notebooks, and manuscripts of John P. Buwalda (1886-1954) form the the bulk of the collection known as the John P. and Imra Wann Buwalda Papers in the Archives of the California Institute of Technology (Caltech). The writings of Imra Wann Buwalda, wife of John P. Buwalda, on the history of Caltech, the subject of earthquakes, and miscellaneous family and professional papers connected to her work as a policewoman form a subgroup of this collection. John P. Buwalda was a structural geologist who became the first chairman of Caltech's new Geology Division in 1925.

Physical location: Archives, California Institute of Technology.

Language of Material:

Languages represented in the collection:

English

Access

The collection is open for research. Researchers must apply in writing for access.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], John P. Buwalda and Imra Wann Buwalda Papers, 10056-MS, Caltech Archives, California Institute of Technology.

Acquisition Information

The Papers of John P. and Imra Wann Buwalda were contained in a large set of files donated by Caltech's Division of Geological and Planetary Sciences in August 1990. The papers of a personal and specific nature--those mainly unrelated to Buwalda's role as Division chairman--were separated from the larger collection and processed in 1998 as the Papers of John P. and Imra Wann Buwalda.

Biography

John Peter Buwalda was born December 16, 1886, in Zeeland, Michigan, a town settled by Dutch immigrants, to which group his parents belonged. In 1897 the family moved to Yakima, Washington, where Buwalda graduated from high school in 1905. He began his undergraduate studies at the University of Washington, but after some time off from school, during which he worked in the Coeur d'Alene mines of Idaho and surveyed for the Northern Pacific Railway in the Cascade Mountains, he enrolled as a geology major at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1909. He received his BS with honors in 1912. His mentors were John C. Merriam (paleontology) and Andrew C. Lawson (geology). In 1915 he completed his doctorate and began an instructorship at Berkeley. In 1917 he married a Berkeley graduate, Imra Wann, and took up a teaching position at Yale, where he remained until 1921--with a year off (1918-1919) to work for the US Geological Survey in Washington. In 1921 he returned to Berkeley as professor of geology and also held the post of Dean of Summer Sessions.

In 1925 Buwalda was invited by Robert Millikan to take on the chairmanship of the newly formed Geology Division at Caltech. Upon his arrival in Pasadena in January of 1926 to begin his new duties, one of his first actions was to appoint his Berkeley colleague Chester Stock to a position in vertebrate paleontology. Stock would later succeed Buwalda as chairman of the division.

Buwalda was a meticulous administrator and devoted much time to setting up a curriculum in geology modeled largely on Berkeley's program. He eventually integrated the Seismological Laboratory--established in Pasadena in the 1920s under the aegis of the Carnegie

Institution of Washington--into the Caltech geology division. He also devoted himself extensively to consulting, notably, in water supply, mining and oil exploration. One of his major involvements was with the National Park Service, and he served on the Yosemite National Park Board from 1929 until his death in 1954. He was active in many professional and civic organizations.

Buwalda's scientific career was focused in structural geology. His interests ranged from vertebrate paleontology to engineering geology and almost all aspects of Earth science.

Imra Wann Buwalda was a native of Berkeley, California. Her birth date is unconfirmed (ca. 1895), but she attended Berkeley High School and the University of California, graduating from the latter in 1917 with a bachelor's degree in law. (By her own explanation, the first year of law school at that time was equivalent to senior year for the AB degree.) After her marriage to John P. Buwalda in 1917, she became one of the first policewomen in the city of Washington, DC. She continued to advocate the presence of women on police forces and to work on social intervention as a means of crime prevention, especially in the cases of juveniles and women. She maintained a high level of activity in local social, civic and political organizations throughout her life. In her later years she wrote a history of the California Institute of Technology, which has remained unpublished. She and John Buwalda were the parents of four children.

Scope and Content

The John P. Buwalda papers include 11 boxes of personal and professional papers, including correspondence, subject files, manuscript, technical notes, memorabilia and photos. They comprise papers relating to various aspects of geology, including seismology, earthquake engineering and paleontology, professional organizations, national parks, and personal and family matters. The papers of Imra Wann Buwalda, occupying 4 boxes, contain her own unpublished history of the California Institute of Technology; and her studies of the social effects of earthquakes and other civic and social action materials, including reference to her pioneering work in criminology as a policewoman.

The collection is organized into the following series:

- Series 1. Personal Correspondence
- Series 2. Organizational Correspondence and Documents
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- Series 4. Technical Correspondence and Notes
- Series 5. Lectures, Manuscripts, Talks
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Related Material

Materials relating to John Buwalda's tenure as chairman of Caltech's Geology Division may be found in the collection called Records of the Division of Geological and Planetary Sciences.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects

California Institute of Technology
Geology
National Parks and Reserves
Seismology

Occupations

Geologists

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- Jan 13, 1940
- Sep 13, 1942
- Aug-Sep 1947
- Feb 2, 1948
- Jan 19, 1949
- Aug 28, 1950
- Oct 28, 1950
- Mar 5, 1951
- Mar 8, 1951
- Jun 24, 1952
- Jul 21, 1952 (Tehachapi)
- Jul 26 (no year)
- Undated (1)
- Undated (2)
- Undated (3)
- Undated (4)
- Sand gauge folder

Series 8. **Miscellaneous**

Box 11, Folder 1 **Photographs undated**

Box 11, Folder 2 **Book: Earthquakes in Kern County, California During 1952 undated**

Series 9. Imra Wann Buwalda

- Box 12, Folder 1 **"The Roots of the California Institute of Technology": Chapters 1-8 1963, undated**
- Box 12, Folder 2 **"The Roots of the California Institute of Technology": Chapters 9-19 undated**
- Box 12, Folder 3 **"The Roots of the California Institute of Technology": Chapters 20-25 undated**
- Box 12, Folder 4 **"The Roots of the California Institute of Technology": Chapters 26-Epilogue undated**
- Box 13, Folder 1 **"The Roots of the California Institute of Technology, 1891-1929" (second version) undated**
- Box 13, Folder 2 **"Caltech from the Wings" undated**
- Box 13, Folder 3 **"Throop Institute of Technology, 1908-1913" undated**
- Box 13, Folder 4 **"The Scherer Years, 1908-1920" undated**
- Box 13, Folder 5 **"Phantasmagoria" undated**
- Box 13, Folder 6 **"Caltech, the Community, and the Arts" undated**
- Box 14, Folder 1 **Earthquake manuscript: first version undated**
- Box 14, Folder 2 **Earthquake manuscript: second version undated**
- Box 14, Folder 3 **"Earthquakes and Other Growing Pains" undated**
- Box 14, Folder 4 **Correspondence related to "Earthquakes" manuscript 1957-1960, 1962, undated**
- Box 14, Folder 5 **Permissions to quote re: "Earthquakes" 1959, undated**
- Box 14, Folder 6 **"Earthquake: Could It Happen Here?" 1975, undated**
- Box 14, Folder 7 **"Afraid of Earthquakes? Who Isn't?" undated**
- Box 14, Folder 8 **"A Ship to Ride the Quakes" undated**
- Box 14, Folder 9 **"Thank God for Earthquakes" undated**
- Box 14, Folder 10 **"William Money, Earthquakes, and Seismological Engineering in San Gabriel, CA in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" undated**
- Box 14, Folder 11 **Partial Manuscripts and Miscellaneous Material undated**
- Box 15, Folder 1 **Biographical Material and Family Correspondence 1917, 1921, 1927, 1938, 1952, undated**
- Box 15, Folder 2 **California Institute for Cancer Research 1955-1956**
- Box 15, Folder 3 **City of Pasadena 1927, 1930, 1935, 1939-1941, undated**
- Box 15, Folder 4 **Correspondence: General 1917, 1939, 1942, 1950, 1952, 1954-1955, 1959-1963, 1965-1966, 1969, undated**
- Box 15, Folder 5 **Correspondence: Wu, Chien-Shiung 1959, 1966, 1969, 1971, 1974, undated**
- Box 15, Folder 6 **McKenzie, R. Tait: Printed Matter 1923, 1926, 1928, undated**
- Box 15, Folder 7 **Police Work 1929, 1935-1936, 1944-1945, 1974-1976, undated**
- Box 15, Folder 8 **Throop Universalist Church: Correspondence and Printed Matter 1961, 1964-1966**
- Box 15, Folder 9 **Imra Buwalda Oral History by Betty Lowenstam 1980-1981, undated**