

G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
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Prepared by Melinda K. Friend



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson Papers

Span Dates: 1908-1977

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1963-1977)

ID No.: MSS85342

Creator: Matson, G. Eric (Gästgifvar Eric), 1888-1977

Creator: Matson, Edith.

Extent: 5,250 items; 21 containers plus 1 oversize; 8.0 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English and Swedish

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Photographers. Correspondence, diaries, financial records, invoices, printed matter, maps, photographs, and other papers relating to the Matsons' careers as photographers in Jerusalem with the American Colony Photo Department, with the bulk pertaining to their operation of the Matson Photo Service in the United States after departing from Palestine in 1946.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Deeb, Louis George--Correspondence.

Diek, Gabriel Said--Correspondence.

Giries, Joseph H.--Correspondence.

Lind, Lars E., 1891- --Correspondence.

Matson, Edith. G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson papers. 1908-1977.

Matson, G. Eric (Gästgifvar Eric), 1888-1977.

Mattson family--Correspondence.

Safieh, Hanna, 1910-1979--Correspondence.

Stephan, Michel S.--Correspondence.

Organizations

American Colony (Jerusalem). Photo Dept.

Matson Photo Service.

Subjects

Photography.

Places

Jerusalem--Description and travel.

Palestine--Description and travel.

Palestine--History--20th century.

Palestine--Social conditions--20th century.

Occupations

Photographers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson, photographers, were transferred from the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library to the Manuscript Division in 2006.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the [American Colony in Jerusalem Collection](#) and the [John D. Whiting Papers](#).

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The Matson Papers are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Online Content

Digitized images from the G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson Collection in the Prints and Photographs Division are available on the Library of Congress Web site at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/colony.html>. See also selected visual materials from the John D. Whiting Papers in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library, which are available through the Prints and Photographs Division online catalog at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures>.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, G. Eric Matson and Edith Matson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

G. Eric Matson

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1888, June 16	Born, Nås, Dalarna, Sweden
1896	Settled with parents at American Colony in Jerusalem, Palestine
early 1900s	Began working in darkroom of the American Colony Photo Department
1924	Married American Colony member Edith Edna Yantiss
1934	Given control of the American Colony Photo Department and its assets
1934-1939	Continued photography business under the name American Colony Photo Department
1940	Changed name of business to Matson Photo Service
1946	Departed Jerusalem for the United States to avoid increasing violence in Palestine
1946-early 1950s	Operated Matson Photo Service in California and through employees in Jerusalem

early 1950s-1977	Operated Matson Photo Service in California
1966-1970	Gave collection of negatives from Matson Photo Service to Library of Congress
1971	Cataloged Matson Photo Service negatives for the Library of Congress
1977, Dec.	Died
Edith Matson	
<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1889, July 29	Born, Edith Edna Yantiss, Falls City, Nebr.
1896	Settled with parents at American Colony in Jerusalem, Palestine
early 1900s	Began working in darkroom of the American Colony Photo Department
1924	Married American Colony member G. Eric Matson
1934-1966	Business partner, American Colony Photo Department and Matson Photo Service Created painted photographs
1966, June 10	Died, Alhambra, Calif.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of G. Eric Matson (1888-1977) and Edith Matson (1889-1966) span the years 1908-1977, with the bulk of the material dating from 1963 to 1977. The papers are in English and Swedish and are organized into the following series: [Diaries](#), [Correspondence](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Oversize](#).

The [Diaries](#) mostly encompass Eric Matson's operation of the Matson Photo Service in California after leaving Jerusalem in 1946. Only a few sporadic volumes represent the years he lived in the American Colony of Jerusalem and worked as a photographer in the American Colony Photo Department. Early diary entries record photographic work and include the date of the shoot, the number assigned to the photograph, its subject and location, expenses incurred, and maps. The 1908 and 1919 diaries are in the same volume, with the 1923 entries recorded in a volume labeled 1922. In 1934, Matson was given control of the American Colony Photo Department and its assets, but the 1935 diary kept by Matson on a trip to Cappadocia with American Colony member John D. Whiting is the only item representative of that decade. The diaries are continuous from 1942 to 1977 covering the years after 1940 when the name of the business was changed to the Matson Photo Service. All volumes include entries about social events, travel, people encountered, and contemporary historical events.

The [Correspondence](#) series largely relates to the Matson Photo Service and its clients, with letters to and from publishers and individuals wishing to purchase copies of Matson's photographs of the Holy Land comprising the bulk of the correspondence. Letters are interleaved with annotated invoices, check stubs, notes, and printed matter.

The [Correspondence](#) also contains letters with former employees, family members, friends, acquaintances, and organizations. Correspondents such as Louis George Deeb, Gabriel Said Diek, Joseph H. Giries, Lars E. Lind, Hanna Safieh, and Michel S. Stephan were former employees and

colleagues of Matson who worked for the American Colony Photo Department and Matson Photo Service. Their correspondence discusses the upheaval in Palestine, safeguarding and storing photographic equipment, restarting Matson Photo Service after the restoration of peace, and Palestine in general. Related to this correspondence are letters filed under Jerusalem Young Men's Christian Association pertaining to the storage of images from Matson Photo Service in the basement and their later retrieval. Other correspondence includes letters to and from the Matsons' children David, Anne, and Margaret, the Axel Matsson and Olaf Matsson families, and Clarence W. Sorensen, many containing photographs.

The Miscellany series contains financial records of the American Colony Photo Department and Matson Photo Service, brochures and catalogs of their filmstrips and slide sets, price lists, and the text for a slide lecture. Other items include biographical material, a photograph of the Matson family, a 1924 letter from Edith Edna Yantiss to Matson before their marriage, speeches and writings, and maps.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Diaries, 1908-1977](#)
- [Correspondence, 1926-1977](#)
- [Miscellany, 1914-1977](#)
- [Oversize, 1925-1962](#)

Description of Series

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