Robert B. Betts Papers

Inclusive Dates:
1950-1998

Name and Location of Repository:
William P. Sherman Library and Archives Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage
Foundation, Great Falls, MT

Collection Processed by:
Dick Smith, 2007

Finding aid prepared by:

Collection Number:
AR 001

Name of Creator:
Robert B. Betts (1923-1989)

Extent:
1 linear foot

Biographical Note:
Robert B. Betts was born in Easton, PA. He was a quiet, dedicated Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation (LCTHF) member, benefactor, and scholar. He was the president and creative director of the William Esty Advertising Agency in New York. After retirement as Chairman of the Board of Etsy Advertising Bob turned to historical research. He wrote Among the Ramparts of the Tetons (1978), and the book for which he is best known among Lewis and Clark enthusiasts In Search of York: The Slave Who Went to the Pacific with Lewis and Clark (1885).

The royalties from In Search of York were donated to the LCTHF. The contract for LCTHF to receive the royalties was signed May 23, 1984. An additional financial contribution from Betts in 1989 enabled LCTHF to purchase computer equipment and software for the publication of We Proceeded On. When Gary Moulton secured a grant to publish a completely reedited version of the Lewis and Clark journals in the early 1980’s, Robert Betts contributed generously to that project as well. His collection of Lewis and Clark books (279 items) formed the core of the William P. Sherman Library and Archives library.

At the July 1998 LCTHF Convention awards banquet the Distinguished Service Award was presented posthumously to Mr. Betts by Wilbur P. Werner. Werner said, “His gifts to worthy causes were most generous and made without publicity.”
Scope and Contents:
This is a collection of some of the research worksheets, notes, correspondence, and publishing agreements of Robert B. Betts. Formats include notecards, photocopies, and manuscripts. The primary material is paper. The materials span from 1950 to 1998. In his detailed research on the journals of Lewis and Clark as well as other members of the expedition Betts came up with an estimate of the amount of time spent writing in the journals. His detailed research leaves no question as to the accuracy of his work. He also studied the spelling and grammar of Lewis and Clark. His study of York seems to be equally as detailed.

Arrangement:
The collection is arranged in three series, one for Betts research processes for his publications, one for his general correspondence (including his wife’s correspondence), and one for the library that he built while working on his research projects. Series one is split into four subseries highlighting his work and correspondence by publication. Series two is correspondence not related to specific books or articles authored by Betts. It is split into two sub series: sub series one is correspondence between Betts and other authors and scholars interested in Lewis and Clark; subseries two is his wife Emilie’s correspondence. Series three is split into two subseries: sub series one is note cards detailing book purchases and receipts for those books; sub series two is materials Betts gathered through his research.

Subject Terms:
Along the Rampant Tetons
Clark, Jonathan
Clark, William
Chuniard, Eldon G. “Frenchy”
Cutright, Paul Allen
Gass, Patrick
Grossman, Jack
In Search of York
Jackson, Donald
Lange, Robert
Robert Betts’s Library
Sherman, William P.
Slavery
Peace, William
Wrightingest Explorers of Their Time
York
Date Acquired:

Acquisition Source:
This collection was donated to the LCTHF by Robert Betts's family.

Access Restrictions:
The collection is open for use.

Use Restrictions:
LCTHF does not own copyright to all the materials in the collection. In some cases, permission for use may require seeking additional authorization from the copyright owners.

Preferred Citation:
Item description and date. Robert B. Betts Papers. AR 001. Box and Folder numbers. William P. Sherman Library and Archives, Great Falls, MT.
Box Listing:

Box 1:
Series 1: Betts publications including books and articles
  Sub-Series 1: In Search of York (1980, 1983-4) 11 folders
    Folder 1: Research (1980)
    Folder 2: Notes from Manuscript
    Folder 3: Manuscript as sent to William Peace
    Folder 4: Peace/Betts Correspondence (1983)
    Folder 5: Manuscript as sent to William Peace
    Folder 6: Peace/Betts Correspondence (1983)
    Folder 7: Manuscript
    Folder 9: Book Reviews and Letters about the book
    Folder 10: Book Reviews and Letters about the book
    Folder 11: Book Reviews and Letters about the book
  Sub-Series 2: The Writingest Explorers of Their Time, 4 folders
    Folder 12: Writingest Explorers Article
    Folder 13: Notes
    Folder 14: Betts/Grossman Correspondence (1981)
    Folder 15: Measurements of Text Notecards
  Sub-Series 3: Other articles and Publications by Robert Betts, 2 folders
    Folder 16: Along the Rampant Tetons Publishing Agreement (1977)
    Folder 17: We Commenced Writing

Box 2:
Series 2: General Correspondence
  Sub-Series 1: General Correspondence (1978-1984), 7 folders
    Folder 1: Betts Correspondence Misc. (1982)
    Folder 2: Betts/Cutright Correspondence (1980, 1981)
    Folder 3: Betts/Jackson Correspondence (1981, 1984)
    Folder 4: Betts/Chuinard Correspondence (1980-1981)
    Folder 5: Betts/Lange (1980-1982)
    Folder 6: Betts/Lange (Spring 1981)
    Folder 7: Betts/Sherman (1978-1983)
  Sub-Series 2: General Correspondence Emilie Betts (1989-1993), 1 folder
    Folder 8: Emilie Betts Correspondence

Series 3: Robert B. Betts Library (Box 2)
  Sub-Series 1: Book Purchases Note Cards (1950 - 1998), 7 folders
    Folder 9: Notecards
    Folder 10: Notecards/receipts
    Folder 11: Notecards/receipts
    Folder 12: Notecards/receipts
    Folder 13: Notecards/receipts
Folder 14: Notecards/receipts
Folder 15: Notecards/receipts

Sub-Series 2: Materials gathered for Research (1951 - 1995), 8 folders
Folder 17: Bibliography on Notecards
Folder 18: Article Photocopies and Correspondence Missouri Historical Society (1981)
Folder 19: William Clark’s Will
Folder 20: Jonathan Clark’s Will
Folder 21: Manuscript: “The Life and Times of Patrick Gass” by John G. Jacobs
Folder 22: Manuscript: “Louisville: Starting Point for Lewis and Clark” by Robert Emmet McDowell
Folder 23: “Search for a Black Past” Photocopy