

RBGE Archives

The Joseph F. Rock Collection

GB235 JFR

The RBGE Joseph Rock collection consists mainly of items bequeathed to the Garden in Rock's will. This consists mainly of Rock's diaries, an extensive collection of photographs and negatives taken in China, Tibet and Hawaii, some field notes, unpublished manuscripts and maps. There is also some correspondence which forms from its inception part of the RBGE institutional archives.

### Biography

Born Vienna, Austria 1884; died Hawaii 1962

Relatively uneducated, penniless and often in poor health Joseph Rock left Vienna as a young man in 1902, travelling through Europe and on to the United States. Moving to Hawaii where he was appointed by the Division of Forestry as its first botanical collector, he became a naturalised American in 1913. Although self taught as a botanist, Rock was appointed lecturer at the College in Hawaii, established its first herbarium, and served as its first curator from 1911 until 1920 when he was appointed by the US Department of Agriculture to find a tree in south east Asia the oil from which was supposed to be useful in treating leprosy. This was the start of his new life as an explorer and in 1922 he arrived in Lijiang, Yunnan which was to become his 'home' province though he also travelled widely in Szechuan, Gansu and also Tibet. He was to spend the next 27 years living among the people of the Western Provinces of China collecting plants for western museums and exploring and mapping mountains on the Tibetan border. Working for organisations such as Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum, the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States Natural History Museum and the National Geographic Society, he photographed and wrote about the indigenous plants, people and geography of the remote region. He entered the lamaseries of Tibet and became deeply involved in the social and political conditions that affected Western China, witnessing much brutality during various rebellions. He was forced to leave communist China in 1949, but continued travelling around the world, eventually returning to Hawaii where he died in 1962. Rock bequeathed his extensive photographic collection to the archives of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, alongside his diaries documenting his travels.

Source: 'In China's Border Provinces; The Turbulent Career of Joseph Rock' by S.B. Sutton and 'Joseph Rock and His Shangri-La' by Jim Goodman. D.W.

JFR/1 Unpublished Writings

JFR/1/1 Diaries and their Transcripts

- JFR/1/1/1 Diary 1913 includes monograph on the Island of Palmyra and Diary of "My trip around the World begun Honolulu, Sept 14 1913 on USA Transport Thomas"
- JFR/1/1/1p photocopy of above
- JFR/1/1/2 Diary of J.F. Rock 1921-1923  
Includes:
- Dec. 30<sup>th</sup> 1921 to May 10<sup>th</sup> 1922 – Journey from Chiangmai to Li-kiang, NW Yun-nan [with 5 loose photographs];
  - Ascent of Lichiang snow range up to little over 17000 feet elevation
  - Ascent of Lichiang Snow Range to an altitude of 16000 feet, August 27<sup>th</sup> 1922
  - Vegetation on Likiang snow range in September
  - Journey from Ta-li to T'eng-Yueh, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1922 to October 9<sup>th</sup> 1922
  - Journey from T'eng-Yueh to Lung-ling, October 19<sup>th</sup> 1922 to Oct 25<sup>th</sup> 1922
  - Journey from T'eng-Yueh to Sadon in Burma, November 7<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> 1922
  - Tengyueh to Hsuehshan-ting, November 25<sup>th</sup> [1922?]
  - Journey from Tzu-ku to Champutong on the Salwin, October 21<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup> 1923
  - Trip to Chantabum from Bangkok, November 28<sup>th</sup>
- JFR/1/1/2p photocopy of above
- JFR/1/1/2t Rock's transcript of the above diary
- JFR/1/1/2tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/3 Diary J.F. Rock [1923-1924]  
Includes:
- [pt1] Notes on Yunnan, 1923
  - [pt2] Journey from Nguluko to Atuntze – Liu to chiang; Dokerla – Tsarong – Penicashan[?] – Tingchulin[?] and return to Nguluko, October 2<sup>nd</sup> to December 14<sup>th</sup> inclusive, 1923
  - [pt3] J.F. Rock, Agricultural Explorer, U.S. Department of Agriculture Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington D.C. [Jan. 16<sup>th</sup> – April 13<sup>th</sup> 1924]
- JFR/1/1/3p photocopy of above
- JFR/1/1/3t Rock's transcripts of parts 2 and 3 of above diary
- JFR/1/1/3tp photocopy of above transcripts
- JFR/1/1/4 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 1; Yunnanfu to Ch'eng-tu, 1924  
From Yunnanfu to Chengtufu, Vol I; Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Botanical Explorer, Arnold Arboretum Harvard

- University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C.; From December 13<sup>th</sup> 1924 to March 16<sup>th</sup> 1925 inclusive.
- JFR/1/1/4p photocopy of the above  
 JFR/1/1/4t Rock's transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/4tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/5 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 2; Ch'eng-tu to Choni, 1925 Szechuan to Kansu, Vol. II; Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Director Harvard – Arnold Arboretum Expedition from Chengtu to Choni, March 17<sup>th</sup> to May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1925. Includes loose papers including list of Choni lamaseries in Chinese and lists and maps written on some of Rock's Nakhi dictionary index cards  
 JFR/1/1/5p photocopy of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/5t Rock's transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/5tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/6 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 3; Cho-ni to T'ie-Pu and Lan-Chou, 1925  
 Volume III, Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Director Arnold Arboretum Harvard University Central Asiatic Expedition from May 26<sup>th</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> 1925 inclusive. Includes loose sheets of notes  
 JFR/1/1/6p photocopy of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/6t Rock's transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/6tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/7 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 4; Lan-Chou to Kokonor Babo 1925  
 Kansu Province, Diary Vol. IV of Joseph F. Rock Director Harvard Arnold Arboretum Asiatic Expedition from August 31<sup>st</sup> in part to November 16<sup>th</sup> 1925. From Hsiangtang to Kokonor Babo and return to Sining  
 Includes sheet of Chinese writing on Chinese paper and loose notes, including lists [of plants? Photographs?]  
 JFR/1/1/7p photocopy of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/7t Rock's transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/7tp photocopy of the above transcript  
 JFR/1/1/7at Rock's annotated transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/7atp photocopy of the above annotated transcript
- JFR/1/1/8 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 5; Hsi-ning to Cho-ni, 1925-1926  
 Diary Vol V of Joseph F. Rock, Director Arnold Arboretum Harvard Expedition, from Sining to Choni via Shunhoa[?] Labrang; November 21<sup>st</sup> 1925 to April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1926  
 Includes New Year 1945-1946

- Includes loose sheet of Chinese writing  
 JFR/1/1/8p photocopy of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/8t Rock's transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/8tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/9 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 6; Cho-ni to Radja and Jupar 1926  
 Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Director Arnold Arboretum Harvard Expedition, Vol. VI. Journey from Choni to Labrang and west to the Yellow River at Radja and beyond to the Amnyi Machen from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to August 20<sup>th</sup> 1926 [see also Volume 20]  
 Includes Rock's hand drawn maps of the area and loose note  
 JFR/1/1/9p photocopy of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/9t Rock's transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/9tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/10 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 7; Cho-ni to Wantsang 1926  
 Diary Vol.VII, Joseph F. Rock, Director Arnold Arboretum Harvard Expedition to West China and Tibet from August 24<sup>th</sup> 1926 to February 28<sup>th</sup> 1927.  
 Includes loose notes, pressed flower and Tibetan script[?]  
 JFR/1/1/10p photocopy of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/10t Rock's transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/10tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/11 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 8; Cho-ni to Sung-pan, 1927  
 Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Director Arnold Arboretum Expedition, Vol. VIII, Journey from Choni via Tebbu country to Chungking, March 9<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1927.  
 Includes Sept-Oct. 1952, Feb. 1954, New Year 1956-1957 and Aug. 1951.  
 Contains loose map of Minchow (with the compliments of J, McGillivray), pressed flowers and notes.  
 JFR/1/1/11p photocopy of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/11at Rock's annotated transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/11atp photocopy of the above transcript  
 JFR/1/1/11rt Rock's revised transcript of the above diary  
 JFR/1/1/11rtp photocopy of the above revised transcript
- [J.F. Rock's Volume 9 (as printed on spine); not a diary but a list of negatives taken in Kansu – see under JFR/5/3
- JFR/1/1/12 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 9 [10 on spine]; Yunnanfu to Mu-li, Konka-ling, 1927-1928.

- Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Director National Geographic Society Expedition, Volume VIII, IX, from Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> 1927 to June 17<sup>th</sup> 1928.  
Contains loose notes/indices.  
JFR/1/1/12p photocopy of the above diary
- JFR/1/1/13 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 10 [11 on spine]; Konka-ling to Li-chiang, 1928  
My journey to Mt Konka (Konkaling) from Muli, S.W. Szechuan. Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Sunday June 18<sup>th</sup> 1928 to October 24<sup>th</sup> 1928. Vol.X.  
Some pages are loose.  
JFR/1/1/13p photocopy of the above diary
- JFR/1/1/14 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 11 [12 on spine]; Li-chiang to K'u-lu and Yung-ning, 1928-1929.  
Diary of Joseph F. Rock Volume XI, Journey from Nguluko – Likiang to Tatsienlu from November 8<sup>th</sup> 1928 to February 9<sup>th</sup> 1929.  
Contains loose notes.  
JFR/1/1/14p photocopy of the above diary  
JFR/1/1/14t transcript of part of the above diary, pp.190-298  
JFR/1/1/14tp photocopy of the above transcript
- JFR/1/1/15 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 12 [13 on spine]; Yung-ning to Ta-t sien-lu, 1929.  
Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Volume XII, from February 13<sup>th</sup> 1929 to June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1929.  
Contains loose notes.  
JFR/1/1/15p photocopy of the above diary
- JFR/1/1/16 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 13 [14 on spine]; Minya Konka to K'u-lu and Yung-ning, 1929.  
Diary of Joseph F. Rock, from June 5<sup>th</sup> 1929 to August 31<sup>st</sup> 1929.  
Contains loose notes and correspondence.  
JFR/1/1/16p photocopy of the above diary
- JFR/1/1/17 Diary Of J.F. Rock Volume 14 [15 on spine]; Nyorop'u to Nv-lv-k'o Lu-feng, 1929-1930.  
Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Volume XIV, from September 1<sup>st</sup> 1929 to January 31<sup>st</sup> 1930.  
Contains loose notes on Naxi pictogram and photograph of Rock with Chinese and Western gentlemen.  
JFR/1/1/17p photocopy of the above diary

Due to numbering complications, there is no Volume 15.

JFR/1/1/18 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 16; Yunnanfu to Lichiang A-ts'an-gko, 1931.  
Diary of Joseph F. Rock, Vol. XVI, from January 1<sup>st</sup> 1931 to May 1<sup>st</sup> 1931.  
Contains pressed flower and loose photograph of Rock taken by Edgar Snow in 1930.  
JFR/1/1/18p photocopy of the above diary

There are no volumes 17 or 18.

JFR/1/1/19 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 19; Yunnanfu to Lichiang; January 13<sup>th</sup> 1935 to January 1<sup>st</sup> 1937  
Also includes June 14<sup>th</sup> 1951  
New Year 1953-1954  
January 30<sup>th</sup> 1954  
Sept 6<sup>th</sup> 1954  
New Year 1958-1959, including January 13<sup>th</sup> 1959  
January 13<sup>th</sup> 1962.  
Includes loose air ticket and newspaper article and pasted in photographs of Rock including some with plane.  
JFR/1/1/19p photocopy of the above diary

JFR/1/1/20 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 20; April to May 1926; May 1933 to March 1934.  
Includes loose photograph of the Watson family 1947, and loose page of Chinese script.  
JFR/1/1/20p photocopy of the above diary

JFR/1/1/21 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 21; May 1938 to February 1940  
JFR/1/1/21p photocopy of the above diary

JFR/1/1/22 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 22; 1936-1939  
Also includes Christmas 1957  
New Year 1957-1958  
New Year 1959-1960  
New Year 1961-1962  
JFR/1/1/22p photocopy of the above diary

JFR/1/1/23 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 23; March 20<sup>th</sup> 1932 – April 29<sup>th</sup> 1933  
Includes pasted in photograph of Rock age 5 with father and sister.  
JFR/1/1/23p photocopy of the above diary

JFR/1/1/24 Diary of J.F. Rock Volume 24; from January 29<sup>th</sup> 1934 – January 1<sup>st</sup> 1935  
Includes pasted in photographs of Rock, Edgar Snow and Nakhi men, November 1934  
JFR/1/1/24p photocopy of the above diary

JFR/1/2 Unpublished Manuscripts and their Transcripts

JFR/2 Expedition Records / Field Notes

JFR/3 Correspondence

One box of correspondence relating to Joseph Rock, most of which dates from the time of its inception as part of the RBGE institutional archives and one bound volume of correspondence between Rock and C.S. Sargent, Arnold Arboretum.

JFR/3/1 Folder 1 – Correspondence between RBGE / William Wright Smith and the Arnold Arboretum / Charles Sprague Sargent, 1925-27

JFR/3/1/1/1-11 1925 includes seeds sent to RBGE from Rock's 1925 Kansu / N. Tibet expedition; field notes c.13243-13283; list of plants desired by Arnold Arboretum from RBGE and Kew[?] [in exchange for Rock's seeds?]

JFR/3/1/2/1-25 1926 includes seeds sent to RBGE from Rock's 1926 Kansu / Tebbu expedition; field notes c.14570-14983; few references to George Forrest rhododendron seed sent to Arnold Arboretum and beyond.

JFR/3/1/3/1-12 1927 includes seed sent to RBGE from Rock's 1926-7 Tebbu expedition; field notes c.14931-15094, c.12893-14953

JFR/3/2 Folder 2 – Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / W. Wright Smith and John MacQueen Cowan, 1950-1956

JFR/3/2/1/1-37 1950-54 Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / Sir William Wright Smith and John MacQueen Cowan regarding 'Plant Geography of [North] West China' and plant determinations. Rock outlines plans to come to Edinburgh in 1952 which were never realized; also Cowan's resignation and Harold Fletcher's appointment is discussed. Rock writes from Kalimpong, London, Palermo in Italy, Hawaii and Seattle.

JFR/3/2/2/1-25 1955 Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / Sir William Wright Smith regarding Rock's 'Monographic Study of the Am-nye Machen Range and adjacent Regions', plant determinations, and more unrealised plans to visit Edinburgh. Rock writes from Rome, London, Zurich, New York and Seattle.

- JFR/3/2/3/1-34 1956 Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / Sir William Wright Smith regarding seed determinations / exchanges; introduction of axis deer to Hawaii; Peter Goullart's 'Forgotten Kingdom'; also Rock's 'Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of SouthWest China' and 'Monographic Study of the Am-nye Machen Range and adjacent Regions'; seed lists of seeds received from Rock, and more plans to visit Edinburgh. Rock writes from Hawaii and London.
- JFR/3/3 Folder 3 – Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / Harold Fletcher, 1959-1962
- JFR/3/3/1/1-30 1959 Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / Harold Fletcher regarding seed exchanges, more aborted plans to visit Edinburgh, the weather (drought)  
Rock writes from Hawaii, London, Zürich, Rio de Janeiro, Panama
- JFR/3/3/2/1-28 1969 Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / Harold Fletcher regarding seed exchanges, more aborted plans to visit Edinburgh, plans for his photographs and diaries – intention to print and bind them and send to Edinburgh; mention of Paul Weissich, Rock's eventual executor. Rock writes from Hawaii, Zürich, Bonn and London.
- JFR/3/3/3/1-26 1961-2 Correspondence between Joseph F. Rock and RBGE / Harold Fletcher regarding seed exchanges, more aborted plans to visit Edinburgh, Rock's health (heart attacks and skull operation) and his photographs. Rock writes from Hawaii, Zürich, and London.
- JFR/3/4 Folder 4 – Correspondence between Joseph Rock and James Keenan / RBGE, 1957 – 2 letters regarding a proposed visit to Edinburgh, plus possibly a visit which has already happened? [he mentions Fletcher taking the blame for how Rock had found the Hawaiian seedlings], also seed exchanges and treatment of plants – silversword. Rock writes from Crans and Zürich, Switzerland.
- JFR/3/5 Folder 5 – mainly correspondence to Joseph F. Rock, much from the U.S.A., presumably mostly collated by Rock. Letters date between 1923 and 1960. – letters have been kept in their previously numbered order, but may be re-arranged and renumbered at a later date so that the collection is arranged chronologically.
- JFR/3/5/1-45 correspondents include:
- United States Department of Agriculture, 1923;



- Alexandra David-Neel, 1924;
- Arnold Arboretum / Charles Sprague Sargent, 1925-1927;
- Lionel Walter Rothschild, Tring, 1934;
- National Geographic Society, 1935;
- Peiping Union Medical College, 1936;
- American Consular Service / James Penfield [mention of Frank Kingdon Ward in Burma], 1937;
- Embassy of the United States of America / Nelson Trusler Johnson, 1941; Smithsonian Institution / E.H. Walker, 1945-1954;
- Colgate University / Wallace B. Danham, 1950;
- Royal Horticultural Society / C.V.L. Lycett, Patrick Synge, 1950;
- Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh / John MacQueen Cowan, 1950;
- Nepalese Embassy, 1950;
- University of Washington / George Taylor, 1950;
- Harvard – Yenching Institute / Wallace B. Danham, 1950;
- Aberconway, 1950;
- University of California / Woodbridge Bingham, 1950;
- Foreign Service, United States of America / Loy W. Henderson [re Nakhi manuscripts], 1951;
- Johannes Schubert, 1951;
- Royal Horticultural Society / Lanning Roper to and from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh / John MacQueen Cowan - photocopies , 1952-1953;
- John Rylands University, Manchester [re MoSu manuscripts], 1954;
- Botany Department, University of Michigan / Kenneth A. Wilson [Hawaiian plants], 1954;
- J.B. Lippincott Co., publishers, 1954;
- Harry E. Bauer to Prof George E. Taylor, both University of Washington – copy letter regarding purchase of Rock's library, 1954;
- Memo regarding Rock Library, see above, 1954;
- American Rhododendron Society / C.I. Sersanous, regarding proposed Plant Geography of West China, 1954,1956;
- Outline of proposed Plant Geography of West China, see above, [1954];
- Department of Agriculture, Canada, 1954;
- Four pages entitled 'The Genus Saroseris, plant lists and descriptions in Rock's hand, 1955;
- Pensione Pitscheider, hotel in Merano, Italy? Regarding room booking?, 1956;
- National Geographic Magazine / Tip Ross, regarding copies of Rock's photograph legends from Society Archives,1958;

- Merrill F. McLane, regarding photographs, negatives and numbering, 1960.

JFR/3/6 Folder 6 – Last Will and Testament of Dr. Joseph F. Rock, and associated letters with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Photocopies sent by Rock's executor Paul Weissich, via Donald R. Hodel, June 2006.

JFR/3/6/1-10 1960-1964, ten photocopies covering Joseph Rock's last will and testament and correspondence between Harold R. Fletcher of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Paul R. Weissich, Director of the Honolulu Botanic Gardens and Rock's executor regarding dispatch of material to Edinburgh to satisfy the conditions of the will. Photocopies sent to RBGE in June 2006 by Donald Hodel. Acquisition number RBGEA2006.10

JFR/3/7 One volume of bound correspondence mainly between J.F. Rock and Professor Charles Sprague Sargent (also E.H. Wilson), July 1924-June 1927. Letters are all typed transcripts and seem to be from the same set held by the Arnold Arboretum and available from their Archives catalogue

([http://arboretum.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Rock\\_Joseph\\_III\\_JFR.pdf](http://arboretum.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Rock_Joseph_III_JFR.pdf)). There is also the addition of one loose letter, Sargent to Rock, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1925 (also available from above catalogue).

Volume divided into sections as follows:

Title: "Correspondence between J.F. Rock, Leader of the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University Northwest China and Northeast Tibet Expedition. From July 19<sup>th</sup> 24 to June 29<sup>th</sup> 1927, and C.S. Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum."

First Section: "Rockland, Maine, July 19<sup>th</sup> 1924 to Tung-ch'uan December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1924." All Rock to Sargent

Second Section: "Chao-t'ung January 5<sup>th</sup> 1925 to Choni December 29<sup>th</sup> 1925." All Rock to Sargent

Third Section: "Choni January 1<sup>st</sup> to Choni December 28<sup>th</sup> 1926" All Rock to Sargent, Rehder, E.H. Wilson

Fourth Section: "Choni January 1<sup>st</sup> to June 29<sup>th</sup> 1927" Rock to Sargent and Wilson

Fifth Section: "Letters received by J.F. Rock from Prof Charles Sprague Sargent between 1924 and 1927"

JFR/4 Publications

JFR/5 Photographs

JFR/5/1 Prints

JFR/5/1/1 China, Tibet

46 A4 boxes of China / Tibet photographs, numbered 15-4248 by RBGE (not indicative of number of photos), also includes many unnumbered (and therefore not databased) photographs  
7 larger boxes from Rock's bound collection of photographs, numbered Albums 1-6 and 1 box of photographs from an unknown source. Album 2: "Minya Konka 1929", Albums 3 and 5 "North West Yunnan, 1931-1933"

1 box of printed scans from Rhododendron Exhibition in 2002.

JFR/5/1/2 Hawaii, etc

10 A4 boxes of photographs taken mainly in Hawaii, also Palmyra, Japan, Burma, Siam, Innisfree, Millbrook, New York, Java, Laos.

JFR/5/2 Negatives

JFR/5/3 Captions / Legends to accompany photographs

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