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Finding Aid to the Collection of John Wesley Coombs Materials

John Wesley Coombs

Colby College Special Collections

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Collection of John Wesley Coombs Materials, Colby College Special Collections, Waterville, Maine.

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Finding Aid to the Collection of John Wesley Coombs Materials COOMBS.1

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Colby College Special Collections

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Summary Information

Repository:	Colby College Special Collections
Title:	Collection of John Wesley Coombs Materials.
ID:	COOMBS.1
Date [inclusive]:	1903-2006
Physical Description:	1.5 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	John Wesley ("Colby Jack") Coombs (1882-1957) was an early professional baseball player who set numerous records as a pitcher during his career with the Philadelphia Athletics, the Brooklyn Robins, and the Detroit Tigers. Following his playing career he was a successful coach of college baseball, notably at Duke University, and authored an influential guidebook for baseball instruction. The most successful professional athlete to come out of Colby, he was also the first student to graduate with a B.S. (Chemistry) in 1906. Coombs also received an M.A. in 1946, and the baseball field at Colby was named Coombs Field in his honor in 1951. The collection contains correspondence and writings, photographs, artifacts and memorabilia, and news clippings of his lengthy career.

Preferred Citation

Collection of John Wesley Coombs Materials, Colby College Special Collections, Waterville, Maine.

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Biographical / Historical

John Wesley ("Colby Jack") Coombs (1882-1957) was a successful professional baseball player from 1906-1920. He played for several major league teams, including the Philadelphia Athletics, the Brooklyn Robins, and the Detroit Tigers. He later became an influential collegiate coach at Williams, Princeton, and especially Duke University where he coached from 1929-1952.

Coombs was born in La Grand, Iowa and moved at age five to Freeport, Maine where he attended public schools and began his baseball career pitching for his high school team. He attended Coburn Classical Institute in Waterville and entered Colby College with the Class of 1906. He majored in Chemistry, was active in theater, pledged as a member of Delta Upsilon and participated in track, football and tennis as well as baseball. He was captain of basketball in 1904 and captain of baseball in 1905.

Coombs was scouted by Connie Mack of the Philadelphia Athletics and was offered an annual contract of \$2,400 which he accepted, foregoing his intended career as a chemistry teacher. Three weeks after graduation in 1906, Coombs pitched and won his first major league game. He set several major league pitching records, including winning a marathon 24-inning game his rookie year, hurling a record 13 shutouts in the 1910 season, and pitching three complete game victories in the 1910 World Series. He went on to compile a 158-110 lifetime mark, despite suffering setbacks to his arm due to overuse and a lengthy illness due to Typhus, diminishing his career statistics and chances for induction in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

"Colby Jack," as he preferred to be known, was unusual in his era as a college graduate in professional sports. During his professional career he also toured on the vaudeville circuit and appeared in a short feature film on baseball. He also wrote the chapter on pitching in "How to Play Baseball by the Greatest Baseball Players" (1913). During his career as a coach he authored an authoritative instructional text, "Baseball: Individual Play and Team Strategy" (1938) which has been published in four editions.

Coombs was honored by Colby with a master's degree in 1946 at his 40th reunion, and the baseball field on the Mayflower Hill campus was named after him in 1951. He settled in Palestine, Texas, but continued to spend summers in Maine at his farm in West Kennebunk. He died April 15, 1957, at age 74.

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Scope and Contents

The collection contains nine folders of correspondence relating to Coombs' professional career as athlete, author, and coach, including correspondence with Colby College administrative officials and from Coombs' associates, family members, and historians. The collection contains manuscripts and published writings by and about Coombs, including publisher's flyers and promotional materials, order forms, and book jackets. More than 50 photographs, both mounted and unmounted prints and negatives, comprise the image collection relating to Coombs' academic career at Colby and his later athletic and coaching career. Memorabilia in the collection consist of Coombs' Colby College academic materials including his 1906 diploma (the first B.S. degree awarded by the college), his laboratory class notebooks, graduation materials, academic honors, and alumni questionnaires. Additional memorabilia have been added to the collection by his grandnephew, Don Wentworth '50; a pair of vintage baseball cards were donated by Bill Alford; and several game baseballs and other sports memorabilia were provided by the Office of the Baseball Coach. Rounding out the collection are three folders of clippings relating to Coomb's athletic career and his chances of induction in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

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Arrangement

Materials arranged in five series: Correspondence, Manuscripts, Photographs, Memorabilia and Artifacts, and Clippings.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Colby College Special Collections

Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Materials donated by Don Wentworth '50, Bill Alford '72, and the Office of the Colby College Baseball Coach; additional materials acquired via gift or purchase.

Conditions Governing Use

Materials to be used on site during regular Special Collections hours or by appointment. Photocopying or scanning may be possible at discretion of staff for nominal fee. Digital cameras are permitted. Materials may be protected by copyright.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Pitchers (Baseball)
- Pitching (Baseball)

- Baseball
- Baseball coaches
- Baseball -- Coaching
- Bixler, Julius Seelye, 1894-1985
- Dyer, Richard Nye, 1918-1993
- Johnson, Franklin W. (Franklin Winslow), 1870-1956
- Goddard, G. Cecil (Garfield Cecil), 1906-1996
- Millett, Ellsworth W. (Ellsworth Willis), 1901-1966
- Siddell, Hallie Ola, 1896-1977
- Smith, Joseph Coburn, 1900-1975

Collection Inventory

Series A: Correspondence, 1937-1987

Date [inclusive]: 1937-1987

Subseries 1: Letters from John Wesley Coombs, 1937-1956

Date [inclusive]: 1937-1956

Physical Description: 37 items.

Title/Description	Instances
<p>Folder A1: to Julius Seelye Bixler, 1945-1949</p> <p><u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1945-1949</p> <p><u>Physical Description:</u> 3 t.l.s.</p> <p><u>Controlled Access Headings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bixler, Julius Seelye, 1894-1985 	
<p>Folder A2: to Richard Nye Dyer, 1952</p> <p><u>Date:</u> 1952</p> <p><u>Physical Description:</u> 1 items. 1 hologram postal card, unsigned, postmarked Feb. 3, 1952</p> <p><u>Controlled Access Headings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dyer, Richard Nye, 1918-1993 	
<p>Folder A3: to G. Cecil Goddard, 1937-1947</p> <p><u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1937-1947</p> <p><u>Physical Description:</u> 7 items. 6 t.l.s.; 1 a.l.s.</p> <p><u>Controlled Access Headings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goddard, G. Cecil (Garfield Cecil), 1906-1996 	
<p>Folder A4: to Franklin W. Johnson, 1937-1946</p> <p><u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1937-1946</p>	

Physical Description: 3 t.l.s.

Controlled Access Headings:

- Johnson, Franklin W. (Franklin Winslow), 1870-1956

Folder A5: to Ellsworth W. "Bill" Millett, 1946-1956

Date [inclusive]: 1946-1956

Physical Description: 21 items. 17 t.l.s.; 4 t.c.s.

Controlled Access Headings:

- Millett, Ellsworth W. (Ellsworth Willis), 1901-1966

Folder A6: to Hallie Siddell, 1953

Date: 1953

Physical Description: 1 items. 1 t.l., unsigned copy

Controlled Access Headings:

- Siddell, Hallie Ola, 1896-1977

Folder A7: to Joseph C. Smith, 1946

Date: 1946

Physical Description: 1 t.l.s.

Controlled Access Headings:

- Smith, Joseph Coburn, 1900-1975

Subseries 2: Letters to John Wesley Coombs, 1937-1957

Date [inclusive]: 1937-1957

Physical Description: 37 items.

Title/Description	Instances
Folder A8: from Colby College Administrative Personnel, 1937-1957	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1937-1957	
<u>Physical Description</u> : 38 items. 35 t.l.; 1 telegram; 2 a.c.s.	

Subseries 3: Letters about John Wesley Coombs, 1941-1987

Date [inclusive]: 1941-1987

Physical Description: 30 items.

Title/Description	Instances
Folder A9: from various correspondents, 1941-1987	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1941-1987	
<u>Physical Description</u> : 28 items. 12 t.l.s.; 8 t.l.; 1 a.l.s.; 1 a.c.s.; 6 memos	

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Series B: Manuscripts and Writings, 1912-1999

Date [inclusive]: 1912-1999

Subseries 1: Manuscripts and Writings by John Wesley Coombs, 1912-1952

Date [inclusive]: 1912-1952

Physical Description: 4 items.

Title/Description	Instances
Folder B1: The Pitcher, 1913 <u>Date</u> : 1913	
Folder B2: To the Class of 1917, Freeport High School, 1917-05-14 <u>Date</u> : 1917-05-14	
Bibliography	
From "The Clarion," 1917 yearbook of Freeport (Me.) High School	
Folder B3: Baseball Clinic in Europe, 1952 <u>Date</u> : 1952	
<u>Physical Description</u> : 2 items. 1 typescript; 1 printed column cut from unknown publication	
Folder B4: Baseball Individual Play and Team Strategy Materials	
<u>Physical Description</u> : 27 items.	
<u>Material Specific Details</u> : Materials relating to "Baseball: Individual Play and Team Strategy," by John W.(Jack) Coombs. Third Edition. New York: Prentice-Hall, c1951; including book jackets, publisher's flyers and order cards, and published reviews of the 1947 revised edition.	

Subseries 2: Manuscripts and Writings about John Wesley Coombs, 1912-1999 and undated

Date [inclusive]: 1912-1999 and undated (*approximate*)

Physical Description: 5 items.

Title/Description	Instances
Folder B5: Writings about John Wesley Coombs by various authors, 1912-1999 and undated	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1912-1999 and undated (<i>approximate</i>)	

Physical Description: 6 items.

General

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Series C: Photographs

Physical Description: 47 photographs

Title/Description	Instances
Folder C1: Photographs of John Wesley Coombs, 1906, 1910 and undated	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1906, 1910 and undated	
<u>Physical Description</u> : 37 items. 32 photographic prints, 5 negatives	
<u>Physical Location</u> : 8 oversize mounted photographs transferred to oversize box.	

Folder C2: Photographs of Colby College Classmates of John Wesley Coombs, 1905-1906 and undated	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1905-1906 and undated	
<u>Physical Description</u> : 18 photographs	

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Series D: Memorabilia and Artifacts, 1903-2006 and undated

Date [inclusive]: 1903-2006 and undated

Title/Description	Instances
Folder D1, Diploma, 1906	
<u>Date</u> : 1906	
<u>Physical Location</u> : Shelved in COOMBS OVRSZ folio box.	
Folder D2, Biology Notebook, 1903-1904	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1903-1904	
Folder D3, Chemistry Notebook, 1905-1906	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1905-1906	
Folder D4, Chemistry Notebooks, 1906	
<u>Date</u> : 1906	
<u>Physical Description</u> : 2 items.	
Folder D5: Colby College Student Materials, 1905-1906	
<u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1905-1906	

Physical Description: 6 items.

Folder D6: Colby College Alumni Materials, 1906-1951 and undated

Date [inclusive]: 1906-1951 and undated

Physical Description: 9 items.

Folder D7: Coombs Day Memorabilia, 1910-06-20

Date: 1910-06-20

Physical Description: 2 items.

Folder D8: Awards and Honors, 1945-1954

Date [inclusive]: 1945-1954

Physical Description: 6 items.

Folder D9: Coombs Baseball Cards, 1909-1911

Date [inclusive]: 1909-1911

Physical Description: 2 items. 2 baseball cards

Physical Description: One 1909-1911 Ramly Turkish Cigarettes card of "COOMBS, Pitcher, Athletics A.L." and one 1911 Mecca Cigarettes Double Folder of "John W. Coombs" (Pitcher) and "Ira Thomas" (Catcher)

Immediate Source of Acquisition:

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Bill Alford '72.

Folder D10: Baseballs, 1903 and undated

Date: 1903 and undated

Physical Description: 2 objects 2 baseballs

Physical Description: One baseball inscribed "Frost vs Coombs - '03 Maine 3 Colby 2 - 16 Innings"; one baseball unmarked

Physical Location: Two baseballs stored in separate artifact box.

Immediate Source of Acquisition:

Immediate Source of Acquisition

From the Office of the Colby College Baseball Coach.

Folder D11: Materials from the Office of the Colby College Baseball Coach, 1951-2006 and undated

Date [inclusive]: 1951-2006 and undated

Physical Description: 21 items.

Material Specific Details: 6 reproduction photo prints; 1 CD of digitized images; biographical material, reprints, business cards, and receipts from the Philadelphia Athletics Historical Society; materials related to athletic center exhibit on Coombs.

Immediate Source of Acquisition:

Immediate Source of Acquisition

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Series E: Clippings

Title/Description	Instances
Folder E1: Clippings, 1906-1912 and undated <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1906-1912 and undated	
Folder E2: Clippings, 1906-1920 and undated <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1906-1920 and undated	
Folder E3: Clippings, 1944-1996 and undated <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1944-1996 and undated	

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