H. A. Pilsbry papers, 1885-1957 (bulk 1900-1953) ANSP.2010.017

Finding aid prepared by Eric Rosenzweig

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Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway Philadelphia, PA, 19103 215-299-1075 archives@ansp.org

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Summary Information

Repository	Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia
Creator	Pilsbry, Henry Augustus, b. 1862
Title	H. A. Pilsbry papers
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1900-1953
Date [inclusive]	1885-1957
Extent	6.75 Linear feet 8 containers
Language	English
Abstract	Henry Augustus Pilsbry, Dean of American Malacologists, was the conservator, curator and head of the Department of Shells at the Academy of Natural Sciences for 70 years. He was also the internationally recognized authority in the field of land mollusks. He wrote and edited many volumes of the <i>Manual of Conchology</i> and from 1889 until his death was an editor of the journal <i>Nautilus</i> , which he founded. A member of many scientific expeditions, he traveled all over the United States, to the Caribbean, South America, Mexico, Hawaii and other Pacific Islands, and to Australia. This collection contains the professional papers of Henry A. Pilsbry between the years 1885 and 1957. The bulk of this collection consists of Pilsbry's working files and drafts of published material that came from those files, including a draft of the second volume of <i>Land Mollusks of North America</i> . Pilsbry's correspondence is by far the most valuable part of this collection. It reflects an extensive international network of scientific investigation of which Pilsbry was at the center. The correspondence is largely related to the identification, exchange and taxonomy of specimens from around the world. The materials in this collection would be of interest to anyone researching the professional

life of Henry Pilsbry, the history of the Academy of Natural Sciences, or especially the history of malacology.

Preferred Citation note

[Description and date of item], [Box/folder number], 2010.017, H.A. Pilbry papers, 1885-1957 (bulk 1900-1953), Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

Biographical note

Henry A. Pilsbry (1862-1957), Dean of American Malacologists, was associated with the Academy of Natural Sciences for 70 years. At the Academy, he served as conservator, curator and head of the Department of Shells, but he was also the internationally recognized authority in the field of land mollusca. He wrote and edited many volumes of the *Manual of Conchology* and, from 1889 until his death, was an editor of the journal *Nautilus*, which he founded. A member of many scientific expeditions, he traveled all over the United States, to the Caribbean, South America, Mexico, Hawaii and other Pacific Islands, and to Australia.

Pilsbry was born on December 7, 1862 on a farm near Iowa City, Iowa to Dexter R. and Elizabeth Anderson Pilsbry. Pilsbry was "interested in animals and plants from an early age, and made collections of them as a boy," (American Malacological Union, page 1). He obtained his education from the public schools of Iowa City and earned his bachelor's of science degree from the University of Iowa in 1910. During his scholarship at the University of Iowa, his interest in geology, fossils, and zoology developed under the teaching of Professor Samuel Calvin. According to Pilsbry, "after his school days, [he] had to make a living and worked in newspaper and book printing houses in Iowa City and Davenport, Iowa, and finally New York, [but] all [his] spare time ... was spent in country trips mainly after fossils and mollusks," (Pilsbry, page 58).

George W. Tryon of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and author of the *Manual* of *Conchology* responded to a letter Pilsbry sent regarding shells and "changed the course of [his] life," (Pilsbry, page 58) by asking him to visit him in Philadelphia. Pilsbry took the position of Tryon's assistant at the Academy of Natural Sciences on December 1, 1887 and, after the death of Tryon on February 8, 1888, became Conservator of the Conchological Section and served as editor of the *Manual* of Conchology from 1889 to 1932. He also founded and edited the *Nautilus*, a publication previously titled the *Conchologist's Exchange*, in 1889. He served as conservator of the Conchological Section from 1888 to 1895 when its budget was transferred to the Department of Mollusks. He became the curator of that department and continued in that capacity from 1895 until his death.

During his tenure at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Pilsbry became known as "the world's leading authority on North American land shells" (Unidentifiable obituary). He established himself as the leading authority on Cirripedia, or barnacles, "since Charles Darwin ... through his 1907 monograph, mainly based on the collections of the United States National Museum," (American Malacological Union, pages 2-3). He authored more than one thousand scientific papers and many volumes including *Land Mollusca of North America*.

Pilsbry served as consulting malacologist to the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu; honorary foreign correspondent of the Zoological Survey of India; corresponding member of the Zoological Society of London; and honorary member of the Conchological Society of Britain and Ireland, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Madrid, Royal Zoological Society of Belgium, the Birmingham (England) Natural History and Philosophical Society, and the California Academy of the Sciences. He also served as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and as a member of the American Society of Naturalists and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In addition to serving as a

member of the American Malacological Union, he also had the honor of serving as its first president. He received the Joseph Leidy Award from the Academy of Natural Sciences in 1928. In 1954, the Academy created the Henry A. Pilsbry Chair of Malacology in his honor. He earned honorary degrees of doctor of science from the University of Iowa in 1900, the University of Pennsylvania in 1940, and Temple University in 1941.

In 1957, Pilsbry suffered a heart attack while in his office at the Academy of Natural Sciences. He recuperated at Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia and then traveled to visit with his daughter in Florida. He died in Lantana, Florida on October 26, 1957. At the time of his death, he was survived by his two daughters, Elizabeth and Grace. His wife Adeline Avery Pilsbry had died on November 13, 1924.

Pilsbry is described as "among the most productive taxonomists ever to pick up a magnifying glass; ... [his] immersion in the world of shelled creatures was so intense and over such a long period ... that he became a veritable institution," (Smith).

Bibliography:

American Malacological Union. "Scientific Contributions Made from 1882 to 1939 by Henry A. Pilsbry, Sc.D.," 1940.

Pilsbry, Henry A. "The First Years," Frontiers: A Magazine of Natural History. December 1937.

Smith, Charles H., Joshua Woleben and Carubie Rodgers. *A Biographical History of Biogeography*. http://web2.wku.edu/~smithch/chronob/PILS1862.htm (accessed December 22, 2009).

Unidentifiable Obituary (located in Biographical Files, Archives of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia).

Scope and Contents note

This collection contains the professional papers of Henry A. Pilsbry between the years 1885 and 1957. The collection is arranged into six series: "Correspondence," "Subject files," "Manuscripts," "Index card file of species," "Publication papers," and "Audio material." Pilsbry's correspondence is by far the most valuable part of this collection. It reflects an extensive international network of scientific investigation of which Pilsbry was a central figure. The correspondence is largely related to the identification, exchange and taxonomy of specimens from around the world. The bulk of this collection consists of Pilsbry's working files and drafts of published material that came from those files, including a draft of the second volume of *Land Mollusks of North America*. The materials in this collection would be of interest to anyone researching the professional life of Henry Pilsbry, the history of the Academy of Natural Sciences, or especially the history of malacology.

The "Correspondence" series contains letters received by Dr. Pilsbry from his colleagues, and from specimen collectors from around the world. Over the course of his career at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Pilsbry would receive specimens from researches all over the world. After having found the

received specimens to be unique, Pilsbry would publish information about the species in the journal. Some of the papers in this series originally accompanied specimens, others present questions regarding specimen identification, collection or taxonomy. In addition to scientific queries, this series also includes correspondence sent from Pilsbry's peers regarding expeditions and publication. These letters are of particular interest to anyone researching the life and methodology of Dr. Pilsbry, or to anyone studying the history of malacology. About half of the letters have been processed and are arranged in alphabetical order by the sender's last name; the remaining unprocessed portion is grouped into folders with date range expressions.

The "Subject files" series contains papers that are essentially Dr. Pilsbry's working files. After he published information on various species, he cut out passages from the publications and glued that information to sheets of paper. As Pilsbry continued his research, he would add notes to the pages in preparation for republishing the updated information. In this way the subject files served two functions: as ready reference material for Pilsbry's on-going research; and as drafts for manuscripts or journal articles. The papers in this series contain printed text and illustrations in addition to Pilsbry's handwritten notes and sketches. Many of the working files in this series were published, but some were not. Once identified, the unpublished papers would be of significant interest to malacologists.

This collection of papers in general provides insight into Pilsbry's research habits and information gathering behaviors, as well as his dedication to the advancement of knowledge. As each of the papers in this series is a work-in-progress, dates have not been assigned to the majority of the folders in the inventory list. The folders are labeled by species, and the order that was imposed prior to this project has been preserved.

Much of Dr. Pilsbry's research that is presented in the "Subject files" series ultimately led to the publication of scholarly articles and monographs. The "Manuscripts" series presents Pilsbry's research in the form of drafts for publication. The series is divided into three subseries, "Manuscripts of Taiwanese and Japanese species descriptions," "*Land Mollusks of North America, volume 2*," and "Other manuscripts." The "Manuscripts of Taiwanese and Japanese species descriptions" subseries contains drafts of published works that present Pilsbry's information on mollusk species in those two regions. The second subseries contains a draft of Pilsbry's monumental work. This monograph is still used as an authoritative reference source for the study of mollusks. The draft included in this collection shows Pilsbry's working notes, and contains four folders of galley proofs for the entire volume. This subseries is arranged by page number. The third subseries contains two more of Pilsbry's manuscripts: "Mexican Species of the Philomycial Slug Pallifera," and "Charles Darwin as a Specialist on Barnacle Systematics" which can be found at the end of the "Manuscripts" series.

The "Index card file of species" series contains another component of Pilsbry's research methodology that compliments the "Subject files" series. In addition to the working files described above, Pilsbry kept a collection of hundreds of 3x5 index cards on which he gathered citations for printed material on species of mollusca. The size of this series demonstrates the expansiveness of the body of knowledge that Pilsbry remained aware of and contributed to through the decades of his professional work. The cards were probably at some point in alphabetical order, however, that order has been compromised.

The "Publication papers" series contains records related to the publication of the *Manual of Conchology*. Dr. Pilsbry served as editor of this journal from 1889 to 1932. The journal was one of several vehicles for Pilsbry to make public new information relative to the study of mollusks and shells. Unlike the

"Manuscripts" series, the "Publication papers" series does not contain information about the publication's subject. Rather, the papers serve as a record of how the journal was published and distributed. These papers consist mainly of individual and institutional subscription lists. The series also includes correspondence regarding journal issue contents; paid receipts from the publishers or binders; and some reports from the Academy of Natural Science's Publication Committee. Pilsbry's involvement with the *Manual of Conchology* is readily apparent in this series, as his signature appears on most if not all of the receipts, and a majority of the correspondence is addressed to him. This series has research value to anyone with a specific interest in the history of this publication, or anyone interested generally in the practical process of academic journal publication during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In addition to the papers related to the publication of the *Manual of Conchology*, this series also contains some correspondence from around 1940 regarding the publication of Pilsbry's monographs by the Science Press, which was run by the Academy of Natural Sciences. The series is arranged chronologically.

As implied by the series title, the "Audio material" series contains some recorded audio footage featuring discourses on malacology by Dr. Pilsbry and some of his colleagues. One of these colleagues is Axel Olsson, with whom Pilsbry kept a professional relationship for about thirty years, as evidenced in lists of Pilsbry's publications and correspondence files in this collection. The magnetic tape reels date from the 1950s, towards the end of Pilsbry's career. The series also contains audio material on the rare medium of recording wire. The content of these materials cannot be determined without the proper playback equipment. The series is arranged chronologically

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia

Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use note

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Archives with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce the material.

Processing Information note

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

This collection was *minimally processed* in 2009-2011, as part of an experimental project conducted under the auspices of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries to help eliminate processing backlog in Philadelphia repositories. A minimally processed collection is one processed at a less intensive rate than traditionally thought necessary to make a collection ready for use by researchers. When citing sources from this collection, researchers are advised to defer to folder titles provided in the finding aid rather than those provided on the physical folder.

Employing processing strategies outlined in Mark Greene's and Dennis Meissner's 2005 article, *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing Approaches to Deal With Late 20th-Century Collections*, the project team tested the limits of minimal processing on collections of all types and ages, in 23 Philadelphia area repositories. A primary goal of the project, the team processed at an average rate of 2-3 hours per linear foot of records, a fraction of the time ordinarily reserved for the arrangement and description of collections. Among other time saving strategies, the project team did not extensively review the content of the collections, replace acidic folders or complete any preservation work.

Related Materials

Separated Materials note

Some of the files once located in this collection have been relocated to the H. A. Pilsbry Biography File of the Archives of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.
- United States. Bureau of Fisheries.

Genre(s)

- Audiovisual materials
- Card indexes
- Correspondence

- Galley proofs
- Manuscripts
- Photographs

Geographic Name(s)

- Japan
- Philadelphia (Pa.)
- South America
- Taiwan

Personal Name(s)

- Hirase, Yoichiro, 1859-1925
- Pilsbry, Henry Augustus, b. 1862
- Richards, Horace Gardiner, 1906-1984
- Tryon, George W. (George Washington), 1838-1888

Subject(s)

- Conchologists
- Malacologists
- Mollusks
- Shells

Collection Inventory

Correspondence 1890-1956

Chronological sets 1890-1954

	Box	Folder
Text	1	1-30

Alphabetical series 1890-1956

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Text	1	31-55
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Zonitidae undated

Subject files

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Hydrobiidae undated

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Endodontidae; Anguispira undated

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Helicidae of Japan: Euhadra undated

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Helicidae of Japan undated

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Land mollusks of Japan and Taiwan undated

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Helicidae of Japan: Aegista coelorus plectotropsis undated

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Clausiliidae of Japan and Taiwan undated

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Clausiliidae of Japan and Taiwan: Stereophaedusa undated

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American and Hawaiian land shells undated

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Text	3	28-29

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American and Hawaiian land shells: Bifidaria undated

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South American land snails: Temesa undated

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	pecies descriptions circa 1900	
Manuscripts circa 1900-1950 Manuscripts of Taiwanese and Japanese sp Pilsbry: "Taiwan (Formosa); complete list of mith: "Formosan Melaniidae" undated		wn up to 1908," and E.

Taiwan: Helicidae circa 1905

Manuscripts of Taiwanese and Japanese species descriptions

	Box	Folder
Text	4	2
n: Zonitidae circa 1905		
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Text	4	3
n: Endodontidae philomycidae auriculidae circa 1905		
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n: Freshwater mollusks circa 1905		

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Taiwan: Operculates circa 1905

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Manuscripts of Taiwanese and Japanese species descriptions

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Taiwan: Loose pages at the end circa 1905

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Text	4	8
ails of Japan," draft undated		
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"Types and Figured Specimens in the T. H. Aldrich Collection, Johns Hopkins University" undated

	Box	Folder
Text	4	10

"Distribution of Eulota quaesita" undated

Manuscripts of Taiwanese and Japanese species descriptions

	Box	Folder
Text	4	11

"Land Snails of Japan," maps undated

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Text	4	12

Japan: Marine mollusks undated

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Text	4	13-14

Notes on snails from unidentified manuscript undated

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Text	4	15

Japan: Freshwater mollusca auriculidae undated

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Text	4	16	

Japan mollusca undated

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Text	4	17

Japan mollusca: Unionidae cyrenidae undated

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Text	4	18

Japan mollusca: Blanfordia undated

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reshwater mollusca undated	Box	Folder

Manuscript of Land Mollusks of North America, Volume 2 circa 1946

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Manuscript of Land Mollusks of North America, Volume 2

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ages 421-480 undatedText	Box	Folder
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Galley proofs: pages 1-160 undated

Other manuscripts

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ey proofs: pages 545-573, and Index (i-ix) undated		
Text		
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ey proofs: pages 289-384 undated		
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"Charles Darwin as a Specialist on Barnacle Systematics" undated

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Index card file of species circa 1890-1950			Box 5-6
Journal production papers circa 1881-1940			
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Manual of Conchology

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Subscription list circa 1889

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Library subscription lists circa 1890

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Correspondence regarding subscription 1928-1931		
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Correspondence with publishers undated

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The Science Press papers circa 1940

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Audio material circa 1950

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the Caribbean" 1954		
	Box	Reel
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	zoological nomenclature und	dated
ording: Pilsbry lecture on the history of		
ording: Pilsbry lecture on the history of		
ording: Pilsbry lecture on the history of	Box	Reel

Unidentified wire recording undated

	Box	Reel
Audio	8	4