

**TATTNALL COUNTY ARCHIVES
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

MS 002

Dorothy Simmons Papers

Repository: Tattnall County Archives
Creator: Dorothy Durrence Simmons, 1932-2012
Title: Dorothy Simmons Papers
Date Span of Material: 1900-2008
Quantity: 1.3 linear feet (3 boxes plus 1 oversize photograph)
Archivist: Janisse Ray
Collection Completed: October 2019
Collection Number: MS002

Source: Pharris Johnson, Belleville, Ga. via a Simmons caretaker who called the courthouse with a last box of papers, wanting to know if Tattnall County might want them. This occurred after the estate auction. They were delivered on Sept. 25, 2017.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dorothy "Dot" Durrence Simmons (Nov. 9, 1932-Nov. 8, 2012) was the daughter of Judge Henry Hartridge Durrence and Lillian Shehee Durrance. A native of Evans County, she was a naturalist, self-trained botanist, historian, artist, musician, and teacher. She graduated from Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville, where she sang in the A Capella Choir.

Simmons served on the board of the Statesboro Regional Library and was a member of Ogeechee Riverkeeper and other conservation organizations. Active in her Garden Club, she became a leader in the movement to reclaim and restore the LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation, home of Louis LeConte. With her husband, Frank Simmons, she established Wiregrass Plantation as her home for the purpose of preserving its natural resources.

Simmons authored and published three books:

A History of Evans County: "a small warm place around the heart." 617 pages, illustrations, maps, facsimiles. Published by Evans County Historical Society, Claxton, Ga., 1999.

A Durrance - Durrence family history from England to North Carolina to Wiregrass Georgia. 138 p., Printed by Southeastern Print Tech Inc., Glennville, Ga., 2000.

A Journey with Rare Plants, 95 p.: col. illustrations, facsimiles, maps. Self-published, 2008. Chapters are 1. Pygmy Spider Lily-*Hymenocallis pygmaea* -- 2. Georgia Plume-*Elliottia racemosa*

-- 3. Franklin Tree-*Franklinia alata* -- 4. Silky Camelia-*Stewartia malocodendron* -- 5. Wiregrass-*Aristida stricta* --6. American Chestnut-*Castanea dentata* -- 7. Soap Tree-*Sapindus marginatus* -- 8. Yellow Fringed orchid-*Habenaria ciliaris* -- 9. American Wisteria-*Glycine frutescens* -- 10. White Oak-*Quercus alba* -- 11. Other Favorites -- 12. First Garden Club.

Simmons was co-author of *Letters, Lumbees and Lists*. 76 p.: facsimiles. Published under the auspices of Bulloch County Historical Society, Statesboro, Ga., 1993. She also compiled but did not publish *Seventh Regiment Georgia Volunteer Cavalry*, 2003, a copy of which is located in the Evans County Public Library, 2003.

Frank and Dorothy Simmons had three children: Frank Jr., Becky, and Jeff, who died in 2011 from injuries received in a car accident. Simmons died on Nov. 8, 2012, one day short of her 80th birthday.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

As a naturalist especially interested in flora, and as a self-trained botanist, Dorothy Simmons chaired a project in the 1980s to restore the LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation near Riceboro, Ga. Materials related to that project are here. The collection includes a Master Plan for restoration, as well as lists of plants found in the LeConte gardens and in colonial gardens in general. These would prove very useful to other botanical restoration projects, especially along the Georgia Coast, as well as continued efforts at LeConte-Woodmanston.

The lives of other naturalists, especially Southern naturalists, fascinated Simmons. She studied the life and work of John Abbot and collected a number of his illustrations (these are not in the collection.) She joined the Bartram Trail Conference and served as treasurer from 1984-85. Anyone interested in researching Abbot or Bartram would be delighted with Simmons' papers.

In the early 2000s Simmons embarked on an experiment to grow a rare *Hymenocallis*, the pygmy spider lily. She documented her efforts with painstaking and scientific precision. These notes are useful for botanists who specialize in rare plants, native plant aficionados, those interested in domestic cultivation of rare plants, and conservationists and environmentalists.

As a local historian and talented genealogist who searched for primary source material, Simmons undertook the project to finish **, which her father, Judge H.H. Durrence, had begun. Notes from that work are found here. Genealogical information on a number of families from Tattnall, Evans, Liberty, and Bulloch counties are included.

Please note that this collection does not contain all of Simmons' papers.

INDEX TERMS

Horticultural history
Botanical illustrations

Bartram trail conference
Franklinia, or Franklin Tree
Pygmy Spider Lily
LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation
John Abbot, naturalist artist
History of Evans County, Georgia
Durrence/Durrance Family History
Garden Club of Georgia
Milledgeville College Choir
Dr. Curtis Hames
Dr. Bird Daniel

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation note –

Dorothy Simmons papers, ms002, Tattnall County Archives, Reidsville, Georgia

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS AND FOLDER LISTINGS

Box 1

Series 1 John Abbot

This series pertains to the naturalist artist, John Abbot (1751-ca.1840), called “Georgia’s Audubon.” Simmons was fascinated with him and his work, and she collected some of his illustrations. She gave talks on Abbot, the notes of which are collected here, along with publicity detailing these talks, and loaned his work to a special exhibit that occurred from September through December 1983 at the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center in Madison, Ga. Of special interest is correspondence with Vivian Rogers-Price, scholar of Abbot; her father, George A. Rogers, professor at Georgia Southern University; and Col. Claude Black.

Folder 1—Personal Writings, Biographical Information on Abbot

Folder 2—Notes for Public Talks on Abbot

Folder 3—Clippings, Simmons’ Programs on Abbot

Folder 4—Collected General Clippings on Abbot

Folder 5—Correspondence with Vivian Rogers-Price

Folder 6—Articles by Vivian Rogers-Price

Folder 7—Correspondence with George A. Rogers

Folder 8—Correspondence with Col. Claude Black

Folder 9—Price List, Abbot Engravings

Folder 10—Printed Materials, Abbot Exhibit in Madison Georgia, including teacher’s guide & Marketing Material for Madison-Morgan Cultural Center

Folder 11—Clippings, John Abbot Exhibit at Madison-Morgan Cultural Center

Folder 12—Correspondence, personal, regarding Abbot exhibit

Folder 13—Article on Abbot, *The Atlanta Historical Journal*

Folder 14—Book, *John Abbot in Georgia: The Vision of a Naturalist Artist, 1751-ca.1840*, Catalogue of an Exhibition at the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center, Sept. 25-Dec. 31, 1983

Series 2 Bartram Trail Conference

This series pertains to Simmons' involvement with the Bartram Trail Conference, a nonprofit organization. She served as treasurer from 1984-1985.

Folder 1—Correspondence, Bartram Trail Conference treasurer, 1984-85.

Folder 2—Newsletter, The Traveller, and By-Laws of Bartram Trail Conference

Folder 3—Flora References in William Bartram's *Travels* (book)

Series 3 LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation

In the 1970s the LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation near Riceboro, Ga. was turned over to the Garden Club of Georgia for restoration. For a time Simmons headed the committee to oversee restoration. This series deals with her research into colonial garden restoration and her work at LeConte-Woodmanston.

Folder 1—Master Plan, restoration of LeConte-Woodmanston

Folder 2— LeConte-Woodmanston Nature Trail

Folder 3—Biographical & genealogical information on LeConte

Folder 4—Genealogies, LeConte & Quarterman families

Folder 5—LeConte-Woodmanston restoration plea, with note to Deen Day Smith

Folder 6—Maps, LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation & Colonial Georgia

Folder 7—Article, "A Brief History of the LeConte Family..." & correspondence with author

Folder 8—Article, "An Early List of Bulbous Plants Associated with the LeConte Plantation" and original information obtained from the American Philosophical Society Library

Folder 9—Lists of plants found in colonial gardens

Folder 10—Flora references in *Children of Pride* (book)

Folder 11—Flora & fauna references in *Memories and Thoughts along Life's Journey* by Rev. T.E. Sikes, along with biographical note on Sikes

Folder 12—Clippings regarding LeConte-Woodmanston Restoration Project

Folder 13—Communications, Garden Clubs, LeConte-Woodmanston Restoration

Folder 14—Information on the LeConte, or sand, pear, including communications of George D. Lowe of Baxley, Ga.

Folder 15—John LeConte (brother of Louis) observations on spider lily

Folder 16—Price list of *Camellia japonica* plants, printed 1933, and notes on camellias.

Folder 17—Clippings, general garden restoration projects and colonial gardens in general.

Box 2

Series 4 Genealogy

This material was used in researching the Simmons' books and in doing the genealogy of her own family and that of her husband. Portions of census material and sheafs of pages copied from other histories are common.

Folder 1—Brewton Family

Folder 2—Burkhalter & Related Families

Folder 3—DeLoach & Related Families

Folder 4—Donaldson & Related Families
Folder 5—Durrence Family
Folder 6—Durrence Family, Emigration & Early Settlement
Folder 7—Dyess Family
Folder 8—Foy, Washington Manassas Genealogy
Folder 9—Grice Family
Folder 10—Hodges & Related Families
Folder 11—Kicklighter & Related Families
Folder 12—Knox Family
Folder 13—Rogers & Related Families
Folder 14—Simmons Family
Folder 15—Tippins & Related Families
Folder 16—Printed materials re: Judge H.H. Durrence, father of Simmons
Folder 17—Correspondence, Mary Frances Oliver (Kicklighter & Rogers Genealogy)
Folder 18—Maps used in research
Folder 19—Article, “Cracker Immigration” by Stanley H. Whonic
Folder 20—Fort Stewart, history before military reservation
Folder 21—Land Lottery of 1820 applicants
Folder 22—Tattnall Co. Court Calendar, 1900
Folder 23—Pages from census records and other lists
Folder 24—Correspondence, Joe Spann, Confederate soldiers from Tattnall
Folder 25—Article, Brig. Gen. J.L. Sweat, Confederate veteran
Folder 26—Visit from Lumbee (Croatan) Indians, Robeson County, NC Nov. 1999

Series 5 *A History of Evans County (book)*

This material consists of research material and correspondence related to this volume, as well as publicity materials that appeared after its publication.

Folder 1—Correspondence & publicity, *A History of Evans County (book)*

Box 3

Series 6 Personal

The material located here revolves around more personal and individual details about Simmons' life. It includes miscellany on her home, Wiregrass, as well as material collected regarding other botanists, including Mary Gibson Henry.

Folder 1—Personal writing, “My Grandmothers’ Gardens” and list of vintage garden flowers

Folder 2—Wiregrass, the Simmons’ home

Folder 3—The Wiregrass Trail, tourism material

Folder 4—Milledgeville College Choir, 1950, and reunions, 1986 & 1987

Folder 5—Other botanists & naturalists, printed material

Folder 6—Collected information on Mary Gibson Henry, botanist

Folder 7—Personal miscellany, including clipping on Dr. Curtis Hames, “True Medicine is Still an Art” and a clipping about Dr. Bird Daniel, “Local doctor has seen many years of growth” by Jane Lightcap Brown.

Series 7 Conservation

Much of Simmons' work pertained to conservation of the natural world. This series outlines her interests and one important project to repopulate the wild with the rare pygmy spider lily.

Much of this information is contained in her self-published volume, *A Journey with Rare Plants*.

Folder 1—Miscellaneous clippings and printed material

Folder 2—Typed notes for talk, "Protected Plants of Georgia," with clippings of photos of plants

Folder 3—Article & notes for talk, "Are We the Big Bad Wolf?"

Folder 4—Map, area locations of rare plants

Folder 5—Clippings, American chestnut

Folder 6—Clippings, *Franklinia*, or Franklin Tree

Folder 7—Printed material, Georgia Plume, *Elliottia racemosa*

Folder 8—Notes & photographs, Pygmy Spider Lily project

Folder 9—Wiregrass, botanical information

Series 8 Photographs

This series contains both original photographs and copies of random photographs found in Simmons' papers, most of which are unidentified. Some photos remain with the subjects in which they were found.

Folder 1—Photographs

Folder 2—Simmons Home Place, Christmas Day, 1941