

# Guide to the Caroline Furness Papers, 1887-1928

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## Collection Summary

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries
<b>Creator:</b>	Furness, Caroline Ellen, 1869-1936
<b>Title:</b>	Caroline Furness Papers,
<b>Dates:</b>	1887-1928
<b>Quantity:</b>	2.6 cubic feet (5 boxes)
<b>Abstract:</b>	Materials relating to Furness's life and work as an astronomer and as a member of the faculty at Vassar College. Significant correspondents include her father, Henry Furness, Mary Watson Whitney, Rose Cecil O'Neill, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Ruth E. Smith.

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## Biographical Note

Caroline Furness was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on June 24, 1869. She came from Cincinnati, where her father was a high-school science teacher, to Vassar as a freshman in 1887, and was associated with the college for most of her life. In 1894 she became Professor Mary Whitney's assistant in the Vassar College Observatory, and in 1900 received her Ph.D. from Columbia University. She became an associate professor at Vassar in 1911; Director of the Observatory a few years later; and, in 1916, Alumnae Maria Mitchell Professor of Astronomy. Her best known publication is *Introduction to Variable Stars*, published in 1915. One of Miss Furness' many interests outside her work was Japan and Japanese women. She died in 1936. For

more information see the material in the Faculty Biographical Files in the Department of Archives and Special Collections.

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## Scope and Content Note

Correspondence makes up the largest portion of the Furness papers and includes 130 letters from her father Henry Furness about Cincinnati, Ohio politics, his reading, her work and career, family matters, and other intellectual pursuits, 1887-1911; 1077 letters and postcard from Mary Watson Whitney, her astronomy teacher and mentor at Vassar, about intellectual and professional issues, travel, affairs of friends, and other personal news, 1890-1915; 168 letters Furness wrote to her family during her student years at Vassar, 1887-1892; 174 letters received concerning Japan and Furness' efforts to aid Japanese women, 1918-1923; personal letters from Rose O'Neill, inventor of the Kewpie Doll; letters from Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Ruth E. Smith, and other astronomy colleagues regarding professional issues; letters from women colleagues discuss housing, family duties, and other difficulties in following their professional lives; and letters received about the Pan-Pacific Women's Conference, 1927. Other items include diaries from trips to Europe and Japan with records of star sightings, 1901-1928; astronomy notebooks; and memorabilia.

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## Subject Headings

### Names:

- Furness, Henry
- O'Neill, Rose Cecil, 1874-1944
- Smith, Ruth E.
- Stefansson, Vilhjalmur, 1879-1962
- Whitney, Mary Watson, b. 1847

### Organizations:

- Pan-Pacific Women's Conference (1927)
- Vassar College--Faculty
- Vassar College--Students

### Subjects:

- Astronomers
- Astronomy--Research
- Astronomy--Study and teaching
- Furness family
- Women college teachers
- Women scientists
- Women--Diaries

- Women--Japan--Social conditions

**Places:**

- Cincinnati (Ohio)--Politics and government

**Document Types:**

- Diaries
- Postcards

**VCL Categories**

- Math, Science and Medicine
- Vassar College

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**Encoding Information**

Encoded by Elizabeth Clarke, February 2007.

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**Administrative Information****Preferred Citation**

Caroline Furness Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

**Processing Information**

Original processing date unknown.

**Acquisition Information**

Gift of Estate of Caroline Furness.

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**Container List**

There is no container list currently available for this collection.

▼ Details

Abstract

Materials relating to Furness's life and work as an astronomer and as a member of

the faculty at Vassar College. Significant correspondents include her father, Henry Furness, Mary Watson Whitney, Rose Cecil O'Neill, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Ruth E. Smith.