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# Limbaugh, Ronald H. Oral History Interview

Ronald Limbaugh

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FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS  
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



**Limbaugh, Ronald (1966-2000)**  
**Professor of History, Director of Holt-Atherton Pacific**  
**Center for Western Studies**

September 20 – 23, 2008  
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Transcribed by Kamile Jureviciute, University Archives

Subjects: Negotiations to obtain and make accessible the John Muir Papers.

LIMBAUGH: This is Ronald H. Limbaugh. It is September the 20, 2008, at 4:26 in the afternoon and I am going to try to reminisce a bit about the Muir papers at UOP and how they arrived at the university. I have a few notes but I am doing this mostly from memory and what I say I think should be able to be corroborated in the director's files and the archivists' files in the correspondence collections at the university in the archives of the Holt-Atherton Library.

Let me say first that I came to UOP in the fall of 1966 basically just out of graduate school. I was an ABD, actually; most of my dissertation had pretty well been completed when I came to university in September '66 from Idaho. I taught part-time previously at Boise Junior College but at the university the first few years were very difficult for me. I had what I considered to be a very heavy load and because I had archival experience at the Idaho State Historical Society I was given release time to work in what was then known as the Stuart Library. Essentially it was special collections but it was known then as the Stuart Library. I was given some relief to help organize the Stuart library collection. Reginald Stuart and his wife had helped build that collection from Rockwell Hunt's time at the university. There was a considerable amount of material there but it had not been organized, there had not been any professional staff or experience given to it so I was helping out there and essentially my supervisor originally was Leland Case but he left by about 1969. Then Richard Coke Wood was the director of the Stuart library or at least of the California history programs at UOP. And so I essentially worked under him as an assistant. He didn't have any archival experience. I did so I was essentially the archivist for the university. Eventually that job became a formal part of my workload.

About 1969 or 70 I believe we received a letter or a phone call, I'm not exactly sure, from Jean Hanna Clark, a granddaughter of John Muir. She lived in Carson City at the time. She was the secretary for the governor of Nevada. Her brother Richard Hanna was also living in Carson City. He was an attorney and an experienced person. Both of them essentially had charge of a considerable body of material. They were the representatives of the Muir family at that time. Jean talked to Dr. Wood a bit and after that conversation Coke and I decided to go to Carson and visit the Hannas as well as see the collection for ourselves.

The Muir Family collection had been moved around a bit after the death of Jean and Richard's mother Wanda. Wanda Muir Hanna died I think in around 1940 or 41. Prior to her death she had allowed some of the Muir material to be deposited with what was at that time the Pacific School of Religion where William Badè was a faculty member. He had been working with that collection to develop articles and reproduce or at least publish some of the unpublished materials that were left over after Muir's death. Jean Hanna Clark said she still had considerable material that was stored in her garage in Carson City. She and Richard had decided it was time to find a better home for that material because it was deteriorating badly. They had a dog, which had gotten into the material. There were urine stains on some of the material in her garage, and so it was a mess. The bulk of the collection, however, was elsewhere. It had been at the Pacific School of Religion and

then sometime in the 1940s it had been transferred to the custody of the Bancroft library at the University of California in Berkeley. Bancroft did not have legal title. The collection had always been considered a custodial deposit and the Muir-Hanna families always retained a legal title to all of the Muir papers and still do indeed today.

You ask what do I remember about the beginning of the Muir Papers coming to the Pacific. Well, there are two things that are very important to remember as background. Number one: the Muir family had close ties to UOP long before the papers got here. As you know, some of the family members had graduated from the university. You can look all of those details up. They had connections to the university at that time as well. Jean Hanna Clark's son Ross DeLipkau was attending McGeorge School of Law just about the time that she initiated the conversation with Coke Wood to bring the papers to UOP.

A second reason why the Muir family was interested in UOP was because of the status of the bulk of the collection at Bancroft Library at the time. Remember this was 1968-69, 1970. Bancroft library was in the middle of a university campus that was in some turmoil because of the free speech movement, the anti-war movement and there was violence on the campus. There were lots of protests, demonstrations, takeovers of buildings. Some buildings were damaged. There were bricks thrown, even through the windows of main library, where Bancroft was located. It's changed now. So all of this caused some consternation in the minds of Muir family and I believe that gave them some incentive to look around for another home.

It may have been a letter that initiated the conversation between the Hannas and UOP, I'm not sure but that could be confirmed by looking in the director's files. At any rate around that time Jean and Coke began discussing a possible custodial option. I was brought in because I was working at the library as an archivist and it seemed necessary for Coke and I to drive up to Carson to talk more with the family and actually pick up the collection that was stored in the garage of the Jean Hanna Clark's home.

My memory is so poor that I may have just dreamt that up and Jean brought the papers down to UOP. Somehow that's confused in my mind. I seem to recollect that we went up there. Perhaps it was the Kimes that brought the papers to UOP. At any rate the papers came. That is, let me put it this way: The Clark family segments of the papers came to UOP sometime early in 1970 I believe. There were as I recall about ten or a dozen boxes. Some were document boxes, some were in larger cardboard boxes, like book boxes, maybe one and a half cubic feet in size. I don't remember the total size of the collection but it was fairly small. I was the processor of the material. I tried to find what the original order was, but as I discovered later these papers were not simply stored since the 1940s; they had been worked over by the family, as well as by William and Maymie Kimes. Kimes had been to Jean's house, had looked at the papers, apparently had sorted through some of the papers and as I found out later had actually taken some of the papers. Jean gave them some material that was rather sensitive relating to Muir's conduct in regard to a dubious episode in Yosemite in 1871.

I wrote about the sensitive papers in my article “Pride, Prejudice, and Patrimony” published in *John Muir: Family, Friends, and Adventures*. Bonnie Gisel has fairly fully explained that episode in her book, containing a collection of letters Muir wrote to Jean Carr. These special papers were in a folder that Linne Marsh Wolfe had put together about Muir’s troubles with the Hutchings in Yosemite in the 1870-71 period. In her research, Wolfe had gathered material that had been collected and abstracted and written about – material she found in the bulk of the Muir papers. She had full access when Wanda Hanna invited Linne to write the biography. She had access to the papers both still in family hands and in the specific School of Religion files that were later transferred to Bancroft Library. The collection was in two parts: a bulk of it was at Bancroft. There was also a smaller family collection that we gathered or that they brought down to us – I don’t remember which. And that small family collection included many of Muir’s original Alaska Journals as well as his correspondence but it did not include any reference to Elvira Hutchings because the papers had been sterilized, had been selectively culled for that kind of material and what Wolfe had written about had been put in a separate folder and given to the Kimeses prior to it coming to UOP.

You mention the Bancroft Library people, Robert Becker and James Skipper. They weren’t involved at all in the initial deposit at UOP. The initial deposit came as I said from Carson City and they were the personal family collection that Jean Clark, and I take it her brother Richard, had culled from or at least held out from the material that the Bancroft library had taken custody of long before. The Bancroft library part of the collection came to UOP sometime later in 1970. After I’d worked through the initial deposit, we got into several conversations with Jean Clark who came to UOP on a number of occasions, during that initial period. She and Richard were in agreement that all the papers should come together, including those at Bancroft Library and an additional collection at the Yosemite Park Library that had been held out back in the mid-1930s. Wanda Hanna had allowed Yosemite Park to borrow some of the original journals and materials for display at Yosemite. Those papers had been separated from the main collection and were still in Yosemite’s hands when Wanda Hanna died. The family had never released them to the National Park. They still had legal title but they allowed Yosemite to have that collection housed at Yosemite and to use it in some occasional displays. I recall them saying it was used in 1964 when the Muir stamp was issued 50 years after his death. At any rate back in 1970 when we were gathering the papers together Jean Clark and Richard Hanna both agreed that we needed to pursue actively the acquisition of all of the Muir papers and put them under one roof at the University of the Pacific. So the next step was then negotiating with Bancroft Library because that’s where the bulk of the papers were and this is where Bob Becker and James Skipper come in. This was also a conversation initiated by the Muir-Hanna families. UOP was not involved in initiating that discussion at all. In fact if you look at the Muir papers at UOP I believe you’ll find in either the Ross DeLipkau files or the Sherry Hanna files or somewhere in that collection you will find correspondence between the Muir-Hanna families and the University of California that show, for example, the University of California was very anxious to acquire legal title of their portion of the Muir papers that had come in from the Pacific School of Religion long after Linne Marsh Wolfe died and after Badè died and apparently the papers were simply turned over sometime in the 1940s, turned over to

Bancroft Library. Bancroft Library like most archival libraries had a very reasonable policy. They didn't want to process any papers or spend money or time or staff on any papers unless they had legal title. They did not want to have papers in their custody unless they did have legal title. That's a standard practice of most major archival institutions in the country. They want full legal title to anything they have in their custody. Bancroft had tried to get the Muir family to turn over legal title; they made appeals and had written letters. The family refused. And then in 1970 or so they simply wrote a letter to the Bancroft library saying that the papers were being transferred to the custody of the University of the Pacific and they told Bancroft that the UOP representatives would come over to the Bancroft Library and make arrangements to take custody of the Muir papers. This is all important to remember that the University of the Pacific did not have legal title to those papers as distinguished from the books, I'll mention that later.

In 1970 it was necessary for UOP to work out some kind of custodial arrangement by which the university acted as the physical custodian of the papers but not the legal owner of the papers. Working with Bob McMaster and other UOP officials we drafted an arrangement. You can probably look in the director's or archivist's files and find the drafts that we worked through. I thought that it would be a good idea to formalize this arrangement in writing so there wouldn't be any questions about what we could and could not do with the papers. Why did UOP take this responsibility? Well, it was a certainly a major coup to have John Muir's papers at the University of the Pacific even though we didn't have legal title. We worked with the family to develop an arrangement where we had use of the papers. That was the crucial question. We could use the papers, we could in fact work with the papers, we could organize, develop, process, issue finding aids, and invite scholars. That was our intention and I pressed Coke on this. If the library was to have any credibility at all, we needed name recognition, we needed important papers, we needed to draw scholars there by having a professional organization and staff that knew what they were doing and develop a facility that would not only encourage scholars to come but would have important papers that would indeed draw scholarship to the campus. In a larger context the university was trying to build credibility, it was trying to build its status as an academic institution. The library was trying to upgrade. We wanted accreditation, we wanted status, we wanted the visibility, we wanted to draw students and I thought all of that would fit in well with upgrading the status of the Stuart library, as it was originally known, or the Pacific Center for Western Studies as it became known. These were paper titles without substance until we really began to develop a legitimate research facility. So all of this is a background for understanding why we decided to work with the Muir family to develop a long standing custodial arrangement. We couldn't acquire legal title, we knew that wouldn't work. The family was adamantly against that and they told us that even Bancroft library was unsuccessful in trying to acquire a legal title. Legal title always remained with the Muir-Hanna families; so we worked up an arrangement whereby the Muir-Hanna families would in fact register their legal title by taking copyright in the papers. To do that they would have to bring in all the papers under one roof. So the process took essentially ten years or so to get this done but that was the incentive, to bring the papers under one roof, to register copyright in all the papers and to then for UOP to act as custodian and repository. What

we got out of this was a professionalization of our program and visibility globally because of this tremendous collection of materials.

The first step as I said was to go to Bancroft library and to pick up those papers. There was nothing secretive, there was nothing underhanded about this. Either Jean Clark or Richard Hanna wrote a letter to Bancroft saying that UOP reps would come over and pick them up. We made direct arrangements after that letter was received with the Bancroft library people. I remember the University didn't have any official cars or certainly the Stuart library didn't have anything that could carry papers of this kind. So in that period we had a very good friend and patron and benefactor in Hugh Hayes who had a station wagon. He was a good friend of the University. He was working on his masters; I was directing his Master's program so he worked with me considerably. We became good friends and he was also a good friend with Coke Wood who was a Westerner and a Clamper (by the way I joined the Clampers and the Westerners too) and we were all together in a kind of a collegial group. So Coke calls, or I don't know who called Hugh, and said look, we need to go to Bancroft library and pick up some papers will you use your car and help us out. And of course Hugh was very happy to do it. So we piled in, I guess it ended up being just Hugh and I. We drove over one morning; we made arrangements with Bancroft who would be there at certain time. We drove right onto the campus, drove right up to the Bancroft Library, backed our car to the door of the Bancroft library and the Bancroft library people brought out the papers, put them in the station wagon. There were probably fifteen or twenty document boxes of material: correspondence, the drawings, journals, everything that Bancroft had that had come in from the Pacific School of Religion essentially. All of it was put in the back of the station wagon and we drove it back to UOP and incorporated into what became known as the Muir-Hanna family collection. We did essentially the same thing with the Yosemite collection. The National Park folks were very unhappy. They tried desperately to keep from losing their papers that they had had for 20 or 30 years but the Muir-Hanna families were insistent. It was sometime later, probably the next year, maybe even two years after we went to Bancroft that we drove to Yosemite--I think I drove down myself, spent a night and the next day loaded my car up with Muir papers and brought them back. That was a smaller collection. There was probably no more than 4, 5, or 6 document boxes of material but it were very choice, especially Muir's drawings and early journals. One of the most important things that we got from Yosemite I believe was Muir's journal on his Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf, his most radical journal I think of all. We also got the Yosemite journal that became, that was incorporated into *My First Summer in the Sierra*. All that original material came back to UOP.

Now let me get back to your questions. "Monday May 11<sup>th</sup> 1970 that Coke Wood and Hugh Hayes went to Cal." Well, maybe Coke was involved initially, but I believe only Hugh and I actually drove to Bancroft to pick up the papers.

"What was the size of the collection." The files list seventeen large cartons; those were mostly document boxes; I think there may have been some other storage cartons. "The letter suggested people at Cal were very cooperative"; indeed they were cooperative. They were resigned to turning them over after they had failed to acquire a legal title.

“What was the condition of the papers at Bancroft?” They were all in good shape. They were not urine stained. The urine stained papers were those that had come from the Clark family collection that had been stored in Jean Clark’s garage in Carson City.

“Why a loan? What did you think of the agreement?” Well the loan was – we wrote up that loan. In fact I think I made the first draft as I said. We did this simply because we had no other alternative. We could not acquire a legal title, the Muir-Hanna families insisted that we were just the custodians, but we negotiated usage and the terms of that usage I spelled out rather specifically including the split of fees 50/50 that if we were going to use the collection or at least have the responsibility for handling the papers we at least got some money from the use of those papers. So we wrote up the 50/50 split and notice that the collection allows a fair use – has a fair use clause. I sat down and worked through copyright law and I figured that 300 words were about the average size of the page and that had been the accepted standard up to that point in the early 1970s. This was before the revision of the copyright law later on, I think 1978 or so. But I sat down and counted up the number of words that would go on a standard page and so we developed a usage fee formula that made a lot of people mad. I remember for example William Goetzmann at Univ. of Texas wrote us a blistering letter saying “What are you charging us for; this is supposed to be a scholarly collection. You’re supposed to have standards of usage and here you’re asking us to count up words and charge by the word. That’s ridiculous.” He thought it was all very unprofessional in his opinion but those were the terms we made up, and the agreement held up over the years. I don’t know whether it’s still the operating guidelines today. You know that. But at least we worked with the family, and developed a pragmatic solution. We were very opportunistic. We decided here is what we needed, here is what they needed and we sat down and drafted a document on those terms.

“Ok what was the Kimes role?” Bill and Maymie Kimes were both graduates of UOP. They were, I guess, also donors to UOP. I’m not sure about to what extent they were donors, but they were also collectors, very avid collectors of Muiriana most of their adult lives. They acquired whatever he published and whatever else they could get their hands on. They had clippings, they had lots of books, original first editions. They were, you know, avid antiquarian book collectors and they had made their acquaintance with Jean Clark as I said earlier. They had worked with Jean to help organize her family collection up in Carson City and it may be that when Jean asked – was thinking about all the concerns that she was having about the Bancroft Library, with Yosemite and trying to bring the collection together it may be that she first contacted the Kimes and the Kimes recommended UOP. I don’t know that for sure. I worked with the Kimes on a number of occasions but not in this initial phase and it may be that Bill and Maymie Kimes had worked with Coke. And the director’s files might have that information or correspondence in which the Kimes acted as the intermediaries between Jean Clark and the University. I’m not sure, that’s possible. I did not work with them directly as I said in the initial phases. They were certainly helpful at first. They came to UOP frequently; they were anxious to help us organize the papers or at least give us some tips on the status of the collection. I’m sorry we didn’t write things down a little more clearly and precisely as

to their role but at least they were – they wanted to be good patrons and users of the material, especially after we began to pull it together from Bancroft Library and from Yosemite. They didn't have easy access to either Bancroft or Yosemite materials. They did at UOP because Jean Clark allowed them to use the collection. Remember, she was still the legal custodian – the legal title holder. She could, in fact she did come down to UOP a number of times after the material got together, sorted it through herself and I'm convinced that she pulled some letters that she deemed sensitive out of the collection after it had been acquired from Bancroft. There were some things that turned up missing from our initial inventory when we began processing the papers for microfilming and I believe that material disappeared when Jean was on campus looking at the papers.

“Ok, why did the books, cases, desk did not come as a loan?” Well, when Wanda Muir decided to distribute her property before she died, it was Richard Hanna who was always the one interested in the books of his grandfather. He'd read some of them, of course they'd gotten scattered around over the years but Wanda, I think willed Richard all of Muir's books including the cases that they were stored in. John Muir back in the 'teens had in fact ordered special bookcases made for the big house over in Martinez. I think if you look on the back of those bookcases you will find some inscriptions and the maker's name and the company. I think it was a San Francisco firm that helped build some of those bookcases, not necessarily all of them but nevertheless they were all intact. The books were in those cases and Richard Hanna had separate custody of those. He was the owner of those legally from the estate of Wanda Muir-Hanna, his mother. After all the papers came to UOP, Richard decided, well he was up in years, this was late 70s maybe early 80s that he called us up one day or wrote us a letter and said “I have decided to donate all of my grandfather's books and cases to UOP if you'll take them.” And we, at that time, we were just opening up the new Holt-Atherton Library. The regents were very interested in making this one room in the Holt-Atherton Library the regents meeting room and so they wanted a nice facility there and they had it all decorated with lush carpeting and tables and chairs and they thought that would be an ideal place for the Muir bookcases. I think Richard Hanna was the one who wanted to make this an outright donation. He wanted it for tax purposes and there was in fact a separate independent audit, appraisal I should say of that book collection made by an independent auditor and we got a copy I believe of that audit or that appraisal. It also should be in the Muir papers somewhere or in the director's files or perhaps over in the tower where all of the legal documents for the donations are kept.

“1976 more Hanna Wanda material at Cal. What was this?” I'm not sure what you mean by 1976 perhaps you mean more material came in from Cal? I'm not exactly sure what that refers to. It may be that Cal found other material and sent it over just to be part of our collection since they didn't have legal title to it.

“1976 material in Yosemite, James Hart what was a story there?” Well I just told you that.

“And then the Muir-Hanna trust. How did you feel about the copyright arrangement?” Well as I said it was essential that we work out a legal agreement between the Muir-

Hanna families and the Muir-Hanna trust. In fact, the copyright was registered as late as possible because the Muir-Hanna families wanted the copyright protection to last as long as possible and before the copyright law was changed it had only I think a 20 or 30 year life. I believe after we had made the arrangement we sent in the copyright to the copyright office in DC on behalf of the Muir family members unless maybe they did it themselves. I'm not exactly sure, I just don't remember.

"The Muir microfilm project. Any intrigue there?" Not at all. In 1979 or 80 or so after we had worked with the papers and the word got around that the university had the collection, I got a call from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission. There were a couple of guys-- unfortunately I don't remember their names now but they're in the record. They came to me and said "We'd like to see University of the Pacific do a microfilm of all of these papers" and so I thought about it and we decided to apply. So we applied with their encouragement and help. We indeed got the grants starting I think around 1981 and continuing over a period of years and I was the editor-in-chief. I went back to Washington DC for some training. Then we went to Wisconsin for some training and I was the chief UOP rep for that project. I think it turned out that we raised about \$250,000 from the government. NHPRC was a branch of the National Archives. The microform project put the university on the map because of the international importance of the Muir papers. Let me just say that it indeed followed through from our initial belief that we had something very important to the University. We believed that good things would happen if we worked with the family. These papers had been closed to scholarly access for more than thirty years and in fact had really been closed to scholars outside of two, Badè and Linne Marsh Wolfe, since Muir died. The papers had never been open to the public and we were the first to get scholars to use the collection. We worked with the family and encouraged their open-mindedness about the scholarly use of the papers. I think it also helped after about two or three generations when the initial emotional response to the sensitivity of Muir's peccadilloes and Yosemite and around was over with. The first generation died and they were very devout as I have written about, and the second and third generations were much less concerned about Muir's reputation because as we pointed out a number of times, the humanity of Muir outshines all of the ups and downs in his career and you wouldn't be human without having some interesting components that make up the human condition. So at any rate the Muir microform project put us on the map around the world, not only as the custodian of the papers but also as the people that put the collection together and made it available in a very usable, user-friendly format for scholars around the world. It has been one of the best things I think the university did in the way of scholarship in all that period of time.