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## John Brooks Howard, Jr., Collection

1892-1939

4 boxes, 3 framed photographs (2.75 linear feet)

Call no.: RG 050/6 1930 H69



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Read collection overview

John Brooks Howard, Jr., known by his family as Brooks (and as J. B. or "Gibby" to his classmates), was a popular and vivid presence on the campus of Massachusetts Agricultural College from 1926 until 1929. Born in November 1908, he arrived from Reading, Mass., as part of the class of 1930; majored in biology; was elected editor-in-chief of the student newspaper the Collegian; was a member of the honor society and the rifle team; and loved wildlife and the outdoors, especially birds. Early one morning, in the spring of his junior year, he climbed to the high branches of a tree to collect specimens. His death at age 20, after falling from the tree, stunned the campus community and broke his mother's heart, haunting his family for a long time after.

This collection provides glimpses into the life of a MAC student in the late 1920s, with some documentation of his observations of birds and nature and campus activities. It contains an assortment of Brooks's own papers and possessions, as well as items kept by his family after his death: three diaries, correspondence, mementos and ephemera, photographs including three larger ones in frames, newspaper clippings, a pair of wooden shoes that was a gift from his Dutch friend Hans Van Leer '32, and a small field microscope apparently issued to Howard by the college.

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### Background on John Brooks Howard, Jr.

John Brooks Howard, Jr., known by his family as Brooks (and as J. B. or "Gibby" to his classmates), was a popular and vivid presence on the campus of Massachusetts Agricultural College from 1926 until 1929. He was born on November 20, 1908, in Medford, Mass., the oldest of three sons. His parents

were John B. Howard, who had worked as a hunting and fishing guide before becoming a salesman, and Mary Ellen Pelrine Howard, who had immigrated from Nova Scotia

Howard graduated from Reading High School in Reading, Mass., in 1926 (voted "most original") and arrived at MAC as part of the class of 1930. An accomplished student deeply admired by his classmates and professors alike, he loved wildlife and the outdoors, especially birds, and he majored in biology. He was a member of the Honor Council, Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, and the rifle team, as well as the editorial board of the student newspaper the Collegian, which elected him editor-in-chief.

Early on the morning of April 27, 1929, in the spring of his junior year, he went out with a friend to collect specimens. Seeking a crow's nest he spotted, he climbed to the high branches of a pine tree whose height was later said to be 70 feet. Brooks Howard's death at age 20, after falling from the tree, stunned the campus community and broke his mother's heart, haunting his family for a long time after. He was posthumously elected to the honor society Phi Kappa Phi with his graduating classmates in 1930.

## Scope of collection

This collection provides glimpses into the life of a Massachusetts Agricultural College student in the late 1920s, including documentation of his observations of birds and nature and campus activities. It contains an assortment of Brooks's own papers and possessions, as well as items kept by his family after his death: three diaries from his college years, correspondence from members of the college faculty and administration and from Brooks's friend Dutch friend Hans Van Leer '32, mementos and ephemera, photographs including three larger ones in frames, newspaper clippings, a pair of wooden shoes that was a gift from Hans, and a small field microscope apparently issued to Howard by the college. There are also a few items that belonged to family members.

## Inventory

Biographical

1928

Box 1: 1

Correspondence: Massachusetts Agricultural College

1928-1930

Box 1: 2

Correspondence: Hans Van Leer

1930

Box 1: 3

Correspondence: unidentified

undated

Box 1: 4

Diary

1926

Box 2

Diary

1927

Box 2

Diary

1928

Box 2

Diplomas and certificates: Washington Grammar School (John B. Howard)

1892 June 23

Box 4

Diplomas and certificates: Medford High School (John B. Howard)

1895 June 26

Box 4

Diplomas and certificates: Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity (John B. Howard, Jr.)

1927 Feb

Box 4

Diplomas and certificates: Phi Kappa Phi (John B. Howard, Jr.)

1929 Nov 21

Box 4

Field microscope

1926

Box 2

In wooden case. Apparently issued to Howard by the college's zoology lab, as evidenced by a sticker on the front of the manual.

Field microscope manual and instructions

1902, undated

Box 1: 5

Funeral and memorial tributes

1926-1929

Box 1: 6

Includes a poem (handwritten draft and printed version) written by Brooks Howard for his high school class.

Funeral and memorial tributes

1929

Box 1: 7

Newsclippings

1928-1929

Box 1: 8

Newsclippings

1929-1930

Box 1: 9

Photographs: candid; portrait

ca.1910, 1922

Box 1: 10

Photographs: high school play; portrait

1925, undated

Box 1: 11

Photographs: portraits

ca.1926

Box 1: 12

Photographs: Amherst, Mass.

ca.1927-1928

Box 1: 13

Photographs: portraits

undated

Box 1: 14

Photograph, large-format: candid full-length portrait (removed from frame)  
ca.1910  
Box 4  
Photograph, large-format: portrait (removed from frame)  
1926 June  
Box 4  
Photograph, large-format: portrait (removed from frame)  
ca.1927  
Box 4  
Printed materials: Massachusetts Agricultural College/Massachusetts State College  
1928, 1939  
Box 1: 15  
Printed materials: Parker Junior High School  
1932  
Box 1: 16  
Printed materials: Reading High School  
1925-1926  
Box 1: 17  
Printed materials: Reading High School  
1926  
Box 1: 18  
Unidentified optical device  
ca. 1928  
Box 2

In wooden case. Instrument has inscription on the back of a mirror: Carl Zeiss, Jena.

Wooden shoes  
ca.1928  
Box 3

Gift of Hans Van Leer, class of 1932.

## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Gift of John B. Howard, James H. Howard, Jr., and Mary Kathleen (Howard) Rady, August 2021.

### Processing Information

Processed by Caroline J. White, January 2022.

### Language:

English

### Copyright and Use ([More information](#))

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## Search terms

### Subjects

- Massachusetts Agricultural College--Students

### Contributors

- Howard, John Brooks, Jr. [main entry]

### Genres and formats

- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Ephemera
- Microscopes
- Photographs
- Wooden shoes

### Link to similar SCUA collections

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