COLLECTION SUMMARY
of the
THOMAS V. SKAGGS PAPERS 1878-1960

Thomas V. Skaggs signed his will on October 1, 1947 in San Angelo. The will left all real and personal property to the Everett E. Townsend family with five percent of the claims of the estate to go to Dorothy Knolle of El Paso, Texas. All pictures and historic relics were to go to the West Texas Historical and Scientific Society Museum in Alpine. On June 29, 1978, an old trunk was acquired from H.D. Heaton of Alpine. Contained in the trunk were correspondence, literary productions, photographs, maps, and assorted materials relating to Thomas V. Skaggs (described here) and to Everett E. Townsend and Mrs. Everett E. Townsend (E.E. Townsend Collection Appendix III, 1915-1954).

Thomas Verner Skaggs was born March 31, 1887 in Beeville, Texas to Thomas Jasper and Josephine Wilson Skaggs. He attended A&M College of New Mexico for two years, Valparaiso University of Valparaiso, Indiana in 1909 and 1910, and received training in art. He was employed in the real estate and loan office of Dwight B. Heard in Phoenix, Arizona. While in Phoenix, he served as Sergeant of Company "A" in the Arizona National Guard. Skaggs came to Brewster County at the time of his brother's death in February of 1915. The Lajitas Trading Post-Store was being operated under the partnership of Benavides and Garcia. He purchased this stock in 1919 and began an expansion program by increasing the number of items on the inventory. In March of 1915, Skaggs formed a farming partnership with H. W. McGuirk, the founder of Lajitas. They acquired a grist mill to produce corn meal and flour from corn and wheat that was produced on the farm. Thomas Skaggs' father died in Lajitas in October of 1915.

Skaggs was appointed Postmaster of Lajitas on October 31, 1916 and served as Postmaster for ten years. In August of 1917 he purchased the McGuirk interest and remained the single owner until 1945. After purchasing the McGuirk interest, he imported Poland China breeding hogs and developed a hog farm. He and Wayne R. Cartledge purchased a registered bull to service their cows to improve the grade of their livestock and increase profits. Skaggs and Lieutenant Herbert B. Wheeler of the U.S. Military Service, who was stationed at Lajitas, acquired stock in a number of oil companies, which were prospecting in the area. They invested in the Marfa Oil Company which was active in Presidio County and purchased leases in the Green Valley area of Brewster County.

In June of 1919, Skaggs formed a partnership with Ignacio Artega to enter into a contract with the West Texas Products Company of San Antonio, Texas. They were to take control of a wax plant that the company had set up in Lajitas and were to deliver seven tons of refined wax. Due to a disagreement, Artega left. Skaggs then operated the Lajitas Wax Company under an agreement with the West Texas Products Company where he was to pay for the plant as he delivered the wax. He was in full operation in February of 1920 but discontinued his wax activities in the summer of 1925. After the summer of 1925 he turned over the operation of the Lajitas Wax Company, Lajitas Trading Post-Store, and farm to his aides and left for California.
In August of 1919 Skaggs was named Trustee for the Common School District No. Four, which included Terlingua, Santa Helena, and Lajitas. During the summer of 1920 he promoted and taught the short summer session of school at Lajitas.

In 1925 Skaggs moved from Lajitas to Los Angeles where he was employed at the Bank of Italy and was teaching classes in shorthand at the Y.M.C.A. School. He remained in Los Angeles until 1927 when he came to Alpine, Texas. Skaggs went to Sierra Blanca, Texas in 1929 where he and Howard E. Perry were partners in the lease of the Bonanza Silver Mine until 1934. The mine produced nothing and the partnership broke up due to disagreements. He then went to El Paso in 1935. There he had a working agreement to lease the St. Regis Hotel. Skaggs quit the management of the Hotel and left for San Angelo in 1936. He remained in San Angelo until 1941. His will was signed in San Angelo on October 7, 1941, leaving all real and personal property to the Everett E. Townsend family, with five percent of the claims of the estate to go to Dorothy Knolle of El Paso, Texas.

While in San Angelo he had been involved in the oil business. In 1942 he came to Terlingua, Texas and was Postmaster there in 1943. He returned to Lajitas after resigning in June of 1943 and remained there until his death on May 25, 1945. He is buried at Elm Grove Cemetery in Alpine, Texas along with his father and brother. Skaggs was an artist who painted landscape scenes of the Big Bend country in oil and watercolor. He also wrote short stories for correspondence courses. There is not much record of Skaggs having a wife. Correspondence dating 1907 names Altheda Harrison Oliver, a concert singer, as Skaggs’ fiancée. Correspondence dating 1914 refers to a decree (divorce?) granted to him on September 16. He corresponded with several women, the latest being Dorothy Knolle, a correspondence which began in 1928. January 23, 1935 correspondence concerns his marriage to Dorothy Knolle, but she is still addressed as “Miss” in 1938.

The Townsends leased the Lajitas land to L. Lewenthal. In 1949 the properties were sold to Rex Ivey, Jr. He operated the Store until 1969 when it was leased out and operated by various individuals.

The materials are housed in folders, contained in three archival boxes. Materials are also housed in albums and flat files. The albums contain photographic material, the flat files contain maps and oversized materials, and the folders contain papers. The papers are arranged in chronological order by folder.

By: Jerri Garza
Assistant Archivist
NHPRC Grant Project
April 8, 1981

August 2002
Photographs described and placed in Album boxes, guide revised and retyped.

August 6, 2018
Correspondence envelopes returned to Skaggs Collection from Casey Collection
THOMAS V. SKAGGS PAPERS 1878-1960 BIOGRAPHICAL/ BUSINESS PROFILE

Thomas Verner Skaggs, 1887-1945

Date of Birth: March 31, 1887
Place of Birth: Beeville, TX

Date of Death: May 25, 1945
Place of Death: Lajitas, Texas

Mother: Josephine Wilson Skaggs 1860-1894 (Bee Co. Hist)

Father: Thomas Jasper Skaggs, 1853-1915

Brother: James Sterling Skaggs, 1885-1915

Primary Residences: Beeville, TX 1887
Farmington, New Mexico
Valparaiso, Indiana c.1909, 1910
Phoenix, Arizona 1913-1916
Lajitas, TX 1916-1925
Los Angeles, CA 1925-1927
Alpine, TX 1927-1929
Sierra Blanca, TX 1935
El Paso, TX 1935
San Angelo, TX 1936-1941
Terlingua, TX 1942, 1943
Lajitas, TX 1943-1945

Principal Occupation Merchant.


Lajitas Wax Company. Formed in 1919 for the production and sale of candelilla wax. At set-up the Skaggs-Artega partnership was to take control of a wax plant in Lajitas owned by West Texas Products Company of San Antonio, Texas and to deliver seven tons of refined wax to that company in payment of the purchase price.

Thomas V. Skaggs-Ignacio Artega, partnership June 1919-
Thomas V. Skaggs, single owner 1919-1945
Everett E. Townsend 1945-1949
L. Lewenthal, lease
Rex Ivey, Jr. 1949-
Memberships, Professional Affiliations, Offices Held:

Assistant Editor of "The Round-Up", a weekly newspaper published by the students of A & M College of New Mexico. Literary Editor of a College paper while he attended Valparaiso University. Served as Sergeant in the Arizona National Guard (Company "A"). Appointed Postmaster of Lajitas on October 31, 1916 (served 10 years). Named Trustee for the Common School District No. 4 (included Terlingua, Santa Helena, and Lajitas) in August of 1919. Taught the short summer session at Lajitas in 1920. Served as Postmaster of Terlingua in 1943 (resigned in June).

Marital Status:

In 1907 Miss Altheda Harrison Oliver was named as the fiancé of Thomas V. Skaggs. Reference is made to a decree (divorce?) granted to him on September 16, 1914. Reference is made in 1925 correspondence to Altheda as having been his wife. Skaggs corresponded with several women, the latest being Miss Dorothy Knolle, beginning in 1928. Correspondence in 1935 concerns his marriage to her but she is still addressed as "Miss" in 1938.

Family History:

Thomas Jasper Skaggs, father of Thomas Verner, was born in Morgan, Georgia in 1853, and was a newspaperman. Thomas Jasper's father (Lemuel Skaggs) and his two brothers were killed in the Civil War. Thomas Verner's mother, Josephine Wilson Skaggs, was a sister of Jim P. Wilson. James Sterling Skaggs, Thomas Verner's brother, was employed by the Pullman Company and promoted to traveling auditor for the Mexican Central Railroad. James Sterling came to Brewster County and operated a store with Clyde Buttrill at Santa Helena until his death on February 21, 1915. Thomas Jasper had been residing in Farmington, New Mexico until the death of James Sterling. He then came to Lajitas to clear up the estate of his son and died there on October 5, 1915. Thomas Verner Skaggs was a businessman, school trustee and teacher, postmaster, photographer, and river guide (see Scobee Collection) in the Big Bend in the first quarter of the 20th Century. He was also a friend of Brewster County Sheriff E.E. Townsend, to whom he willed his estate. Thomas Verner Skaggs, his father and brother, are buried in Elm Grove Cemetery in Alpine, Texas.
THOMAS V. SKAGGS PAPERS 1878-1960

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following sources were used for the compilation of the Collection Summary for the Thomas V. Skaggs Papers:


The Alpine Avalanche. Alpine, Texas (newspaper) February 25, 1915, October 7, 1915, June 1, 1945

ARRANGEMENT

Correspondence 1878-1945 (3,151 leaves)
Personal Items 1909-1942 (2 unbound, 168 leaves; 34 leaves)
Financial Records 1912-1943 (148 leaves)
Literary Productions, undated (472 leaves)
Printed Material & Notes 1894-1960 (21 unbound, 556 leaves; 278 leaves)
(map in flat file)
Photographs 1904-1914 (662 leaves, in 5 albums)

APPENDIX I
Certificate 1916 (1 leaf) in oversize folder in flat file
THOMAS V. SKAGGS PAPERS 1878-1960

THOMAS VERNER SKAGGS [TVS] FAMILY & COMMUNITY

Folder 1  Skaggs & Wilson families 1878-1945
Folder 2  J. Sterling Skaggs & T. Jasper Skaggs 1909-1915 & undated
Folder 3  TVS Personal Papers, Memoranda, & Associated 1909-1942 & undated
Folder 4  TVS Bank Accounts 1912-1943
Folder 5  Postmaster and associated matters: Lajitas / Terlingua 1909-1943
Folder 6  Lajitas School Board 1920-1924 & undated

THOMAS VERNER SKAGGS [TVS] CORRESPONDENCE

Folder 7  TVS Personal Correspondence 1913-1928
Folder 8  TVS Personal Correspondence 1940-1944 & undated
Folder 9  Altheda Harrison Oliver & F. H. Oliver 1914-1925 & undated
Folder 10  Dorothy Knolle 1928-1931
Folder 11  Dorothy Knolle 1932
Folder 12  Dorothy Knolle 1933
Folder 13  Dorothy Knolle 1934-1935 & undated
Folder 14  Billy 1915-1920
Folder 15  Margaret, Louanna & Marion Buttrell 1919-1921 & undated
Folder 16  Phyl 1917-1918
Folder 17  W. W. Kennedy 1923-1925
Folder 18  E. E. Townsend 1921-1945 & undated
Folder 19  Howard E. Perry 1924-1927
Folder 20  Howard E. Perry 1932-1934 & undated
Folder 21  Howard E. Perry 1942-1943
Folder 22  Howard E. Perry 1944-1945
Folder 22a  Correspondence Envelopes
THE WRITING LIFE OF TVS

Folder 23  Writing and Writers 1918-1942 & undated

Folder 24  Radio Scripts & Associated Materials 1925-1926 & undated
Also see Folders 40 and 41

1933-1934 & undated

Folder 26  "Lost/ Black/ White Woman's Gold" & "Sea Chest," undated

Folder 27  "At Sunrise!" "Cabarets & Cattle," "El Chinati," "Over in Juarez," & untitled,
undated

undated

BUSINESS PAPERS

Thomas V. Skaggs's business activities before 1916 include farming in Farmington, NM
and hotel management in Phoenix, Arizona. From 1916-1925, he is engaged in farming
and ranching and mercantile enterprises in Lajitas, Texas, including an international
trade in candelilla wax and furs. Some of the correspondence is in Spanish. In Los
Angeles from 1925-1927, Skaggs worked for the Bank of Italy as a bond salesman and
at the YMCA as a secretary. Throughout his business life, he speculated in mining,
oil and gas, and real estate, including a partnership with Howard E. Perry in a mine at
Sierra Blanca, Texas in the mid-thirties and various ventures with Bob Reid in San
Angelo in the later thirties. In the early 1940s, he returned to Terlingua, where he looked
after Howard Perry's interests and served briefly as postmaster before returning to
Lajitas. Also see the Skaggs-Perry correspondence in Folders 19-21 for additional
information on the business activities of these two men.

Folder 29  Business Papers 1907-1918

Folder 30  Business Papers Jan-Oct 1919

Folder 31  Business Papers Nov-Dec 1919 & undated

Folder 32  Business Papers Jan-Feb 1920

Folder 33  Business Papers Mar-May 1920

Folder 34  Business Papers Jun-Aug 1920

Folder 35  Business Papers Sep-Dec 1920
Folder 36  Business Papers Jan-Mar 1921
Folder 37  Business Papers Apr-Jun 1921
Folder 38  Business Papers Jul-Dec 1921
Folder 39  Business Papers 1922-1923
Folder 40  Business Papers 1924-1925
          Also see scripts in Folder 24
Folder 41  Business Papers 1926-1927
          Also see memoranda notebooks in Folder 3
Folder 42  Business Papers 1928
Folder 43  Business Papers Jan-Apr 1929
Folder 44  Business Papers May-Dec 1929
Folder 45  Business Papers 1930
Folder 46  Business Papers 1931
Folder 47  Business Papers 1932-1933 & undated
Folder 48  Business Papers 1934
Folder 49  Business Papers 1935-1936
Folder 50  Business Papers 1937-1939
Folder 51  Business Papers 1940-1942
Folder 52  Business Papers 1943-1944
Folder 53  Business Papers 1945 & undated
Folder 54  Maps 1882-1930 & undated
          Folder contains hand drawn maps relating to Skaggs's ventures, including a map of the "First Lindsay Pocket."
Also see the following OVERSIZE MAPS IN FLAT FILE:

M912.764 (260) [Cumberland Mining Claims (Hudspeth Co. TX)] 1930

M912.764 (261) [Alta Group Mining Claims (Quitman Mtns, Hudspeth Co. TX)] 1927

M912.764 (262) [Survey of lands around Sierra Blanca, Texas] undated

M912.764 (263) [Beason/Mabry/McLean surveys of lands on Moore-Hutchinson Co. line] 1874 & 1882

M912.764 (264) [Survey of lands in Coleman Co. TX for TVS] undated

M912.764 (265) [Survey of lands in Runnels Co. TX, 1928]
Photographs c.1905 - 1920s

Photographs collected by Thomas Verner Skaggs. Both he and his brother J. Sterling were photographers. The first album was assembled by J. Sterling Skaggs. Albums 2 through 5 are archival album boxes containing prints and contacts of nitrate negatives from the estate of Thomas Verner Skaggs as arranged by Archives staff into the series described. Counts are of prints; there are duplicates of some images.

ALB 1  J. Sterling Skaggs's album

The preface in the album states: "This book was found among the effects of Thos. V. Skaggs, who died May 26, 1945. They were taken by his brother J. Sterling Skaggs, long since deceased, in the years indicated. The scenes mostly show the Jim P. Wilson family, who was an uncle of Skaggs, the Wilson Ranch near Alpine, now owned by John Lane. Clyde Buttrill and other old timers are shown in the pictures (old timers around Alpine, Texas) this note made by E. E. Townsend, July 19, 1945. and album donated to Museum at Sul Ross, by EET."

In addition to those named by Townsend, subjects include J. Sterling Skaggs, Jim P. and Ella Wilson and sons Jim and Anja, Mr. and Mrs. Martin and Ima, the DAT Walton and N. L. Dugat families, people and scenes in and around El Paso (includes picnic on Mt. Franklin, Maggie and Alice Dolan at San Elizaro) and Colorado Springs, Colorado. Album box includes 2 CDs-use CDs for Circulating Copy of album 1-30, 51-101.

ALB 2  Family photographs.

Josephine Wilson Skaggs, mother of J. Sterling and Thomas Verner, was the sister of Jim P. Wilson. Mrs. Jim P. Wilson (Aunt Ella) was the daughter of D.A.T. Walton. E. E. Townsend, though not related, was the beneficiary of the estate of Thomas Verner Skaggs.

Includes J. Sterling and Thomas Verner Skaggs and their father, Thomas Jasper Skaggs (11); J. Sterling Skaggs and the Georges (aviators), the Walton and the Dugat families (Sabinal), and unidentified people (31); J. Sterling Skaggs and the Jim P. Wilson family at Wilson Ranch, Green Valley Ranch (Brewster County, TX), goats on Oak Grove Ranch, E. E. Townsend (32)
Photographs c.1905 - 1920s

ALB 3  J. Sterling Skaggs and the Cavalry on the border, 1913 & undated. (26) An inscription on the back of one photo identifies J. Sterling Skaggs in his tent in Ysleta [TX], but others appear to be of the unit stationed at Lajitas, Texas.

Thomas Verner Skaggs in Uniform
Under this heading is a series of Thomas Verner Skaggs in uniform, but so far as is known, he was not in the Cavalry. He was in the National Guard (see Collection Summary). In the final photograph of the series is an unknown man in civilian dress standing in the same place, presumably the same day, as Skaggs in the previous print. (7)

Lajitas, Texas and life along the Rio Grande. Includes a celebration at the Trading Post, a series of portraits that appear to be taken against the side of the store, a swimming party, what is perhaps a candelilla wax operation, horseback riding, picnics and scenes along the river. Persons identified include Thomas Verner Skaggs and Petra Alvarado. The man driving the car and in the swimming party in this series may be H. W. "Pat" Patterson [oral history on file]. (110)

ALB 4  Entertainment. Includes J. D. Jackson at the Supper for the Alpine Summer Normal students at the Jackson-Harmon Ranch, 1915? (1) and scenes at Edwards Natatorium (a pool in south Alpine), c.1920 (5)

In a letter to Barry Scobee (Barry Scobee Collection, Series 11), Thomas Verner Skaggs describes visits to San Carlos, Mexico, and visits to the hacienda of General Alvino Arranda at Falomir, Chihuahua: "I was there in 1922-1923 I made two trips at that time from Marfa to Chihuahua, Torreon, Saltillo and Monterrey and return...and I took scores of pictures of the men, women and children, etc., at the hacienda, including many of Gen. Arranda, his officials, etc." An attempt has been made here to group photographs that could have been taken along such a route.

ALB 4  Borderlands of United States and Mexico. Includes scenes identified as Shafter and nearby (5), Fort Leaton?, rock ruins (San Vicente, MX?), railroad scenes (11), Hispanic homes and community activities, including scenes at a funeral (13), scenes identified as Ojinaga, Mexico (4), scenes tentatively identified as San Carlos, Mexico, city scenes in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, and scenes in Saltillo, Mexico. (106)
Photographs c.1905 - 1920s

ALB 5  El Paso, Texas and Arizona. (37)
A few have identifications on the reverse. The rest are tentatively identified as part of a series with them.

People and Places. (42)
A few are identified (Thomas V. Skaggs appears in one image which is a companion to another with unidentified person; the woman outside the Sul Ross building may be Dorothy Knolle; Katherine Mitchell Hord has been identified in a couple labeled Biloxi, Mississippi, April, 1932; Roy Wrigley, Olivet, Michigan; 502 W. Roosevelt [no city]; Banner Springs, Kansas; New Meadows, ME) but most are not.