

Thomas Hunt Morgan papers, ca. 1919-1947
Circa 1919-1947
Mss.B.M824, BM824.1

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945
Title	Thomas Hunt Morgan papers, ca. 1919-1947
Date [inclusive]	Circa 1919-1947
Call number	Mss.B.M824, BM824.1
Extent	1.0 Linear feet
Extent	Ca. 800 items
Location	LH-B-21-4
Language	English
Container	1-2
Abstract	The principal letters in this collection are to Otto L. Mohr and concern problems and progress in genetics, the Nobel Prize, and some account of Mohr and his family under the Nazi occupation of Norway, 1940-1945. Included with this group is a partial biographical essay on Calvin Blackman Bridges.

Background note

Thomas Hunt Morgan was a geneticist and embryologist. He was Professor of Experimental Biology at Columbia University (1904-1928) and Professor of Zoology at California Institute of Technology (1928-1945).

Morgan received a thorough grounding in animal morphology, especially of marine invertebrates, under W. K. Brooks at Johns Hopkins, and as a postdoctoral fellow for a year at the famed Naples Zoological Station. In his first academic position, at Bryn Mawr College, he collaborated in teaching the basic course in biology with Jacques Loeb, who was later to attain renown as an experimental physiologist. A leave of absence from Bryn Mawr enabled Morgan to spend another year (1894-1895) at the Naples laboratory, working especially with Hans Driesch, who became a lifelong friend. It was then that Morgan declared his independence of the descriptive method of studying animals, so characteristic of W. K. Brooks, and determined to be an experimentalist -- specifically, an experimental embryologist.

Morgan began going to the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory almost from its founding in 1888, while he was still a graduate student. He became a member of its Board of Trustees in 1897, and he remained on the Board as an active member until 1937. Woods Hole was an ideal place for the sort of investigations in embryology Morgan wished to pursue, for it was there that one could study marine animals while they were still alive.

There were other attractions, too. One of Morgan's children is said to have believed that E. B. Wilson dragged a reluctant Morgan from his research one day to meet "his brightest student" at Bryn Mawr College, Lilian Vaughan Sampson. In any case, they met, and in 1891, when Morgan arrived as a new faculty member at the college, Lilian enrolled as a graduate student and Morgan became her adviser. She received an M.A. degree in 1894. Romance came slowly. They did not become engaged until 1903, and were married in 1904, just before Morgan accepted his friend E. B. Wilson's invitation to fill a professorship at Columbia University. Morgan's interests were centered at this time upon problems of heredity and sex determination. He was, however, notoriously skeptical of the validity of Mendelism and the chromosomal theory of heredity advocated by Boveri and by Wilson and his graduate student W. S. Sutton.

While he was at Naples, Morgan had tried to repeat Boveri's experiment on the fertilization of enucleated sea urchin eggs, which Boveri said led to wholly paternal inheritance; and Morgan could not confirm the result. As a consequence, Morgan discounted Boveri's work all too heavily. Yet why he should have disregarded the superb analysis made by Sutton, which tied together the events of meiosis -- the reduction of the chromosome number in the formation of male and female gametes -- with the Mendelian segregation of alternative characters and the random fertilization of egg cells by male germ cells (sperms or pollen), is truly hard to conjecture. In any case, Morgan wrote a number of skeptical papers about Mendelism that he was later to regret -- one, in fact, that he actually deleted in later years from his bibliography. In 1908 he selected the tiny fruitfly *Drosophila melanogaster* in order to test where those variations important in evolution come from -- from DeVriesian mutations, as he then thought. In 1910, however, he found a recessive sex-linked mutation, white eye color. [In the Davenport Papers there is a highly interesting letter from Morgan to Davenport, dated June 11, 1910, a letter in which Morgan reports

his discovery and analysis of its "sex limited inheritance," while saying not a word of the dispelling of his doubts of Mendelian inheritance or his abandonment of the dictum, "Once crossed, always mixed," which he had applied to the results obtained by Cuenot in his breeding of yellow-coated mice. The letter was sent to Davenport almost a month before Morgan submitted the paper to Science for publication. See B. Glass, "An Exciting Find: Thomas Hunt Morgan Letters," *Mendel Newsletter* 26: 6-7, August 1986.]

So the great *Drosophila* era of genetics, with its verification of the Chromosome Theory of Heredity, its mapping of genes according to linkage and recombination values, had begun. Already, too, in the "fly room" in Schermerhorn some extraordinary students, both graduate and undergraduate, were at work -- among them Bridges, Sturtevant, and Muller, who collaborated with Morgan in writing the book of the time, *The Mechanism of Mendelian Heredity*. A number of foreign holders of fellowships also arrived to join the heady atmosphere of novel theories and methods of genetical research. The first of these was probably Otto Lous Mohr, from Norway, who with his wife Tove became especially warm, lifelong friends of the Morgan family. In the late 1920s came Curt Stern and Theodosius Dobzhansky. In 1927 Morgan received an invitation to come to the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, to establish and head a Biology Division. He accepted, and took Bridges and Sturtevant with him. In planning and administrative work, however, Morgan lost his zest for *Drosophila* genetics, and when he resumed experimental work, it was to return to his first love, embryology, to seek once again to unite it with genetics and thereby provide a more solid basis for evolutionary theory.

Scope & content

The core of the Morgan collection at the APS is comprised of twenty-eight letters and one telegram written by various members of the Morgan family and the Otto Lous Mohr family.... After his return to Norway, Mohr became professor of anatomy, and later rector, at the University of Oslo. He was a member and president of the Norwegian Academy of Sciences, and did pioneering work in human genetics and the inheritance of genetic diseases. The letters, written between 1919 and 1945, reflect all aspects of the relationship between the two families: general family gossip, news of friends and colleagues, politics, and of course work in progress. They chronicle the Mohrs' nightmarish experiences during the German occupation of Norway, and the Morgan family's trip to Scandinavia for the awarding of the Nobel Prize. Two drafts of letters nominating Morgan for the Prize, in Norwegian, from Mohr to the Nobel Committee are included in the collection, as well as letters concerning financial support of ongoing research, descriptions of the progress in mapping chromosomes, and discussions of new ideas and theories.

Also of importance are the financial and estate records of Morgan, his wife Lilian V. S. Morgan (d. 1952) and his sister Ellen K. H. Morgan (d. 1956). These papers include not only wills, passports, letters, and other documents which detail the financial status of the family, but numerous letters between the Morgan children, Edith M. Whitaker, Howard K. Morgan, Isabel M. Mountain, and Lilian M. Scherp, letters which concern many aspects of their lives beyond the settlement of the estates.

Three letters written to Morgan during the 1920s are contained in the collection, all of which are comments on his published work. R. R. Gates, Richard Palmer, and W. P. Thompson wrote to him, about *The Physical Basis of Heredity*, *The Mechanism of Mendelian Heredity*, and *The Theory of the Gene*, respectively. A fourth letter, from Julian Huxley to Richard Shryock in 1963, describes some of Huxley's memories of Morgan. Finally, there is a five-page biographical sketch of C. B. Bridges which is anonymous and may well have been written by Bridges himself.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Presented by Otto L. Mohr through Leslie C. Dunn and accessioned 01/--/1963 (1963 81ms). One additional item presented by L.C. Dunn and accessioned, 1963 (1963 1259ms). Financial papers presented by Isabel Morgan Mountain and accessioned, 12/15/1975 (1975 1478ms).

Related Materials

Related Material

Additional letters to and from T.H. Morgan may be found in the [Blakeslee Papers](#), (34 items, 1904-1934), [Davenport Papers](#), (279 items, 1893-1930), [Dunn Papers](#), (21 items, 1918-1945), [Jennings Papers](#), (23 items, 1907-1924), [Pearl Papers](#), (64 items, 1911-1931), and [Stern Papers](#) (32 items, 1927-1952).

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Passports.

Geographic Name(s)

- Norway -- History -- German occupation, 1940-1945.

Personal Name(s)

- Bridges, Calvin B. (Calvin Blackman), 1889-1938
- Gates, R. Ruggles, (Reginald Ruggles), 1882-1962
- Morgan, Ellen K. H.
- Morgan, Lilian V.

Subject(s)

- Genetics.
- Nobel Prizes.
- Zoology.

Other Finding Aids

See also Mardi Bettes Fuller, "Thomas Hunt Morgan Papers," *Mendel Newsletter* 21: 6-8 (1981); Bentley Glass, "An Exciting Find: Thomas Hunt Morgan Letters," *Mendel Newsletter* 26, 6-7 (1986).

Other Descriptive Information

This collection contains materials which relate to the history of genetics.

Author	Format	Date
Huxley, Julian	Correspondence (1 item)	1963
Mohr, Otto Louis	Correspondence (1945, n.d.)	2 items
Mohr, Otto Louis -- Concerning publications of Thomas Hunt Morgan to the Nobel committee on medicine	Manuscripts (14 pages)	1924
Mohr, Otto Louis -- Concerning Thomas Hunt	Manuscripts (5 pages)	1922

Morgan to the Nobel
committee on medicine

Morgan, Thomas Hunt

Correspondence (26 items)

1919-1945

Selected Inventory from Genetics Subject Guide

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Huxley, Julian	1963	Correspondence (1 item)
Mohr, Otto Louis	1945, n.d.	Correspondence (2 items)
Mohr, Otto Concerning publications of Thomas Hunt Morgan to the Nobel committee on medicine	1924	Manuscripts (14 pages)
Mohr, Otto Concerning Thomas Hunt Morgan to the Nobel committee on medicine	1922	Manuscripts (5 pages)
Morgan, Thomas Hunt	1919-1945	Correspondence (26 items)

Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 **1919-1945**

Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

D. 31 items. Various sizes. Presented by Otto L. Mohr through Dr. Leslie C. Dunn; Jan. 1963. Table of contents available.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 1919-1945

B M824 Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

D. 31 items. Various sizes. Presented by Otto L. Mohr through Dr. Leslie C. Dunn; Jan. 1963. Table of contents available.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 March 6, 1919 8x5-1/4

B M824 Letter to Dr. [Otto L.] Mohr;

New York, Typed L.S. 2p. (see T.H. Morgan papers.) Friendly letter. Concerning his new arrangements at Columbia University and how much he likes it.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 May 19, 1919 10-1/2x8

B M824 Letter to Otto [L.] Mohr, Christiana, Norway;

Typed L.S. 2p. (see Morgan papers.) Informs him that he [Mohr's] paper is to be published. Friendly letter. Will miss him at Woods Hole.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 July 7, 1919 6-1/2x5-1/4

B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;

Woods Hole, Mass., A.L.S. 2p. (see Morgan papers.) Will take of the proof-reading of his paper.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 Oct. 21, 1919 10-1/2x8

B M824 Letter to Otto L. Mohr, Christiana, Norway;

Typed L.S. 1p. (see T.H. Morgan papers.) Concerning reprints of his article.

Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Oct. 29, 1919	10-1/2x8, 10-1/4x6-1/2
B M824 Letter to O[tto] L. Mohr. Christiana, Norway;		
Typed L.S. 4p., largely in autograph. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Concerning his reprints. Educational events in the U.S. and interest in genetic		
Morgan, Lilian Vaughan	[1919?]	11x8-1/2
B M824 Letter to Mrs. Mohr;		
New York City; Typed L.S. 1p. with 2p. P.S. in A.L.S. by T.H.M[organ] to Dr. Mohr. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Concerning honorary degrees at Columbia Friendly letter. Hopes they will visit in California. Plans for visit to California.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	March 1, 1920	10-1/2x8
B M824 Letter to O[tto] L. Moore [Mohr], Christiana, Norway;		
Typed L.S. 2p. (see T.H. Morgan papers.) Are awaiting their visit, while in California.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	June 30, 1920	8-1/2x5-1/2
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		
A.L.S. 1p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Want him to stay with them while he is visiting.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Aug. 22, 1920	8x5
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		
A.L. 4p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Hopes he is enjoying seeing America. Family news.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Aug. 26, 1920	6-3/4x8-1/2
B M824 Telegram to Otto L. Mohr;		
Pacific Grove, Cal., D. 1p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Bon voyage and news of their child. Enclosed originally in letter from T.H. Morgan to O.L.Mohr; Dec. 3, 1920.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Dec. 3, 1920	8-1/2x5-1/2
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		

Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

A.L.S. 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Hopes his son is well. They are anxious about him. Encloses telegram, dated: Aug. 26,1920, which was not delivered on ship.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 May 4, 1921 11x8-3/4
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;

Stanford, Cal., Typed L.S. 2p. (see T.H. Morgan papers.) California is beautiful but they will return to New York. Current work in genetics. Friendly letter.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 May 31, 1921 11x8-1/2
B M824 Letter to Otto [L. Mohr];

Stanford, Cal., Typed L.S. 2p.and sketch:"No-wings". (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Genetics experiment on flies. Concerning other experiments in genetics.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 Sept. 6, [1921?] 11x8-1/4
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;

Typed L. 1p.and enc.of 1p.concerning grasshoppers. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Genetic studies and study on grasshoppers.

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 Jan. 10, 1922 10-1/2x8
B M824 Letter to Otto L. Mohr, Christiana,
Norway;

Typed L. 1p. (see T.H. Morgan papers.) News of work. Plans for travels.

Mohr, Otto Lous, 1886- Jan. 26, 1922
B M824 Concerning Thomas Hunt Morgan,
to the Nobel Committee on Medicine;

Christiana, Norway, Typed D. 5p. Various sizes. (see T. H. Morgan papers.)

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945 March 16, 1922 10-1/2x8
B M824 Letter to Otto [L.] Mohr,
Christiana, Norway;

Typed L. 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) His plans for the summer, in Europe. Change in personnel. Friendly letter.

Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	July 4, 1922	11x8-1/2
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		
Woods Hole, Mass., Typed L.S. 1p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Questions on his paper concerning radium on genetics.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Jan. 18, 1923	10-1/2x8
B M824 Letter to Otto L. Mohr, Christiana, Norway;		
Typed L.S. 1p. (see T.H. Morgan papers.) Concerning his [Mohr's] proposed publication.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	March 1, 1923	10-1/2x8
B M824 Letter to Otto L. Mohr, Christiana, Norway;		
Typed L.S. 1p. (see T.H. Morgan papers.) Recommends he have his paper published in Germany, since charts, etc., for genetics papers cost so much to publish in the U.S.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Nov. 5, 1923	10-1/2x8
B M824 Letter to Otto [L.] Mohr, Christiana, Norway;		
Typed L.S. 1p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Forwards results of genetics experiment. Friendly letter.		
Mohr, Otto Lous, 1886-	Jan. 10, 1924	13-3/4x8-1/4, 11x8-1/2
B M824 Concerning publications of Thomas Hunt Morgan, to the Nobel Committee on Medicine;		
Christiana, Typed D. 2p. Carbon copy. In Norwegian. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) ----Original draft. 12p.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Sept. 19, 1924	10-1/2x8
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		
Woods Hole, Mass., A.L.S. 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) News of the family. Are leaving for New York City.		

Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	March 26, 1934	11x8-1/2
B M824 Letter to Otto [L.] Mohr, Oslo, Norway;		
Pasadena, Cal., Typed L.S. 1p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Plans for his trip to Europe.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	[1934]	10x7-3/4
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		
Cambridge, Eng., A.L.S. 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Refuses to make an address when they meet. Plans for the trip to Oslo.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	Dec. 31, 1938	11x8-1/2
B M824 Letter to Otto [L.] Mohr, Oslo, Norway;		
Pasadena, Cal., Typed L. 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Concerning the death of Bridges. Friendly letter.		
Mohr, Otto Lous, 1886-	June 20, 1945	12x8-1/4
B M824 Letter to Dr. L[eslie] C[larence] Dunn, New York City;		
Oslo, Norway, A.L.S. 8p.and add. (see T.H.Morgan papers.) Life under Nazi occupation. His work on genetics. Refers to T.H.Morgan. Presented by Dr. L.C.Dunn; 6/6/63.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	June 21, 1945	11x8-1/2
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		
Pasadena, Cal., A.L.S. 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Glad to hear of them, now that war in Europe is over. Family news, and news of events in the U.S.		
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 1866-1945	July 14, 1945	11x8-1/2
B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;		
Pasadena, Cal., A.L.S. 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Glad they got through the war well. Family news. Friendly letter.		
Huxley, Julian, 1887-1975	April 3, 1963	10-3/4x8

Series One: Correspondence with Otto Louis Mohr;

B M824 Letter to R[ichard] H. Shryock,
Philadelphia;

Typed L.S. 1p.and add. (see T.H.Morgan papers.) His remembrances of T.H.Morgan.

Morgan, Lilian Vaughan

Undated

10-1/2x8 and

B M824 Letter to [Otto L.] Mohr;

8x6

Typed L. 1p.and enc.of 2p. (see T. H. Morgan papers.) Forwards genetic material. Jan. 25.

Unidentified

Undated

B M824 Biographical essay of Calvin
Blackman Bridges

T.D. 5p.

Unidentified

Undated

B M824 Note pertaining to letter received
by Dr Morgan by Otto L. Mohr

A.N. 1p.

Series Two: Financial Records and Correspondence

**B M824.1 Series Two: Financial Records
and Correspondence****1.0 Cubic
feet**

Papers concerning financial affairs of T.H. Morgan's estate, Mrs. Lilian Vaughan Morgan's estate, Ellen K. H. Morgan's estate, and letters of M. Caullery, R.R.Gates, Richard Palmer and W.P.Thompson. D. ca.750 pages. Various sizes. Presented by Mrs. Isabel Morgan Mountain: 15 December 1975.

Caullery, Maurice, 1868-1958

Undated

B M824.1 Postcard to Dr. Morgan

Postcard. In French.

Chaudary, M. A.

Dec. 30, 1952

B M824.1 Letter to T.H. Morgan.

T.L.S: M.A. Chaudary. Encloses copy of work *Physical Hybridisation of Plants*, asks that he be recommened for the Nobel Prize by Dr. Morgan based on this work.

**Gates, R. Ruggles, (Reginald Ruggles),
1882-1962**

Aug. 4, 1922

B M824.1 Letter to T. H. Morgan

A.L.S. 4p.

B M824.1 Finacial Records of Mrs. L. V.
Morgan Estate.

25.0 folders

25 folders.

B M824.1 Finacial Records -- Maps of
Woods Hole land

2.0 Map

2 Printed maps of Woods Hole land.

B M824.1 Financial Records to Children

1928-1932

A.L.s 10p.

B M824.1 Finacial Records of T.H. Morgan
Estate

11.0 folders

Series Two: Financial Records and Correspondence

11 folders

B M824.1 Financial Records. Estate 1946-1947
1946-1947

T.D. ca. 13p.

Palmer, Richard May [?] 16, 1923
B M824.1 Letter to "Dear Sir"

A.L.S. 1p. Letter to publisher of Morgan's work, pointing out "confusing misprint" in diagram.

United States. -- Dept. of State. June 4, 1894
B M824.1 Passport

P.D. filled in Ms. Passport for T.H. Morgan.

Thompson, W. P. Nov. 17, 1929
B M824.1 Letter to T.H. Morgan

T.D. 1p. Thompson points out "slight errors" in Morgan's article, "Theory of the Gene," in case Morgan wants "to correct them in a future edition."
