

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**Donald Beaty Bloch
Papers**

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Summary

- Title:** Donald Beaty Bloch Papers, 1942-67.
- Size:** 3 boxes (1 lin. ft.)
- Access:** Unrestricted
- Source:** Gift of Marie Halun Bloch, 1991 and 1993
- Biographical Note:** Donald Beaty Bloch, an employee of the Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, was an active member of the Fortean Society.
- Description:** The bulk of the papers consists of letters received by Bloch as a member of the Fortean Society, from Tiffany Thayer, it's secretary, relating to the work of the Society and to Bloch's activities in furthering its goals. The Fortean Society was founded in 1937 by Thayer and others for the purpose of continuing the work of Charles Fort (1874-1932), an American journalist, writer, and investigator of occult phenomena. Included are a few letters to Bloch from other persons relating to Forteana and printed ephemera issued mainly by the Fortean Society. An addition to the papers consists of eighty-two letters by the New York author Alvin F. Harlow, who wrote *Steelways of New England* and many other books on historical and material culture subjects.
- Related Collections** Tiffany Thayer Papers (which contain papers by and relating to Charles Fort.

Biographical Note

Donald Beaty Bloch was employed during the 1940s - 1950s by the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior. He was posted at Bethesda, Maryland, and (from December 1943) at Denver, Colorado. He was evidently strongly influenced by the work of Charles Fort (1874-1932) the American journalist, writer and investigator of occult phenomena. In 1937 he participated with Tiffany Thayer (1902-59) and other writers including Ben Hecht, Burton Rascoe and Booth Tarkington, in the founding of the Fortean Society which was dedicated to the continuation of the work of Charles Fort, and to the encouragement of dissent from all forms of dogma in whatever field. During the 1940's and early 1950's Bloch took an active role in the affairs of the Society and corresponded regularly with its secretary, Tiffany Thayer. He made numerous contributions to the Society's data bank of occult phenomena, aided in the production of its journal *Doubt* (also named *The Fortean Society Magazine*) and helped to disseminate its publications and works by Forteans. He also assembled a large collection of Forteana.

Scope and Content Note

The bulk of the papers (1942-67) consists of typed letters signed (1942-59) to Don Bloch, at Bethesda (Maryland), and at Denver (Colorado) from Tiffany Thayer at New York, as secretary of the Fortean Society. (A few of the letters are handwritten and there are also a few postcards). The letters are written for the most part on the letterhead of the Fortean Society; however, a few are on the letterhead of J. Walter Thompson Company where Thayer was employed as a writer. There are also a few letters (1947-67) to Bloch (filed separately) from other persons relating to Forteana. There are no outgoing letters by Bloch and no correspondence from Thayer for the years 1950, 1957-58.

The correspondence from Thayer is written in a terse style and laden with iconoclasm and enigmatical references and allusions. For the most part it relates to the current business of the Society including the sale and distribution of its magazine and its stock of reprints and books by Forteans; donations of works by Forteans to the Society and to public libraries; the recruitment of new members; and other matters pertaining to the Society including the need to keep the names of its members confidential. Several letters relate to the sale and distribution (of a reprinted edition?) of *America Needs Indians* by Iktomi (first published in 1937). A few letters mention literary figures and associates of Thayer. One letter (Jan. 28, 1945) refers to the efforts of Thayer, Hecht and Dreiser to recruit H. L. Mencken as a member of the Society and how, in spite of his refusal, he was named one of its fellows. Three letters (Oct. 1, 1946, July 28, 1947, Apr. 28, 1951) mention Ezra Pound, his incarceration at St. Elizabeth's hospital where he was translating Chinese poetry, and the need for getting the poet transferred to a private nursing home. The last letter (dated Dec. 26, 1959) written by Kathleen Thayer, after Tiffany's Thayer's death, relates to the disposition of Bloch's library and to the carrying on of the work of the Fortean Society. At the end of the correspondence is a single typescript (8 p.) entitled "Bibliography of Charles Fort" [by Bloch?].

The letters are variously dated by Thayer. Some are dated with the standard calendar, others according to the Fortean calendar, and some bear both "OS" (old style) and "FS" (Fortean Society) dating. In the Fortean calendar A.D. 1931 = FS 1.

The bulk of the printed ephemera consists of book order forms, membership applications, dues notices, and other printed miscellany issued by the Fortean Society. Included are copies of the 13 month Fortean Society calendar; a copy of a pamphlet reprinted by the Society entitled *The Glacial Period and Drayson's Hypothesis*, by John Willis (reprinted from *Popular Astronomy*, Vol. XXIX, No. 10); a chapbook *Raiders of the Absolute* by Benjamin DeCasseres (N.Y., Blackstone Publishers, 1937); and a few bookplates and bookmarks of the Fortean Society. There are also two issues of *INFO* (Vol. 1, Nos 1 and 2, Spring and Autumn 1967) published by the International Fortean Organization.

An addition to the papers consists of eighty-two letters (1947-1964) to Bloch by the New York writer Alvin F. Harlow, author of *Steelways of New England* and many other works on historical and material culture subjects. Most of the letters pertain to Harlow's writings. Also included are clippings and ephemera relating to Harlow.

Container List

Box 1	Correspondence
Box 2	Printed Ephemera
Box 3	Alvin F. Harlow - correspondence and ephemera