



Smithsonian
National Museum of African Art

Mary Marvin Breckinridge Patterson
Collection, EEPA 1985-009

Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art
Title:	Marvin Breckinridge Patterson Collection
Identifier:	EEPA.1985-009
Date:	1932
Extent:	113 Photographic Prints (silver gelatin and copy; black and white; 8 x 10 in. or smaller) 4 folders (manuscript materials) 47 pages (contact sheets) 3 photographs (color)
Creator:	Patterson, M. Marvin Breckinridge
Language:	English
Summary:	Photographs taken by M. Marvin Breckinridge Patterson during her trip with Olivia Stokes Hatch from Capetown, South Africa, to Cairo, Egypt in 1932. The photographs document the peoples of Africa in Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Uganda, Congo (Democratic Republic) and Zanzibar. They include the Baila, San, Shona, Xhosa and Zulu.
Container:	Box 1
Container:	Box 2
Container:	Box 3

Administrative Information

Provenance

The collection was donated to the National Museum of African Art by Mary Marvin Breckinridge Patterson in 1985.

Preferred Citation

Marvin Breckinridge Patterson Collection, EEPA 1985-009, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

Use of original records requires an appointment. Contact Archives staff for more details.

Conditions Governing Use

Permission to reproduce images from the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives must be obtained in advance. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical Note

Photographer, broadcaster, and filmmaker Mary Marvin Breckinridge Patterson (1905-2002), grandchild of Vice President John Cabell Breckinridge, was a photographer, broadcaster and filmmaker. Following graduation from Vassar College in 1928, Breckinridge worked for the Frontier Nursing Service (a group comprised mainly of women that provided medical services to remote areas in Appalachia), earned a pilot's license (the first woman in Maine to do so), and assisted in the office of the Democratic National Committee. In 1932 she traveled to Africa where she documented the peoples and places throughout the continent.

She enrolled in the Clarence White School of Photography in New York in 1933, taking trainings on photographic developing and printing. She then worked in the office of Democratic congresswoman, and distant relative, Isabella Selmes Greenway, but soon returned to the Clarence White School of Photography for a longer course of study. Following graduation, she began selling photographs and sometimes articles in several magazines, including LIFE, Harper's Bazar, and Town and Country. Her film credits include "She Goes to Vassar" (1931), a film that provides an overview of college life at Vassar, and "The Forgotten Frontier", a documentary about the activities of the Frontier Nursing Service, a group comprised mainly of women that provided medical services to remote areas in Appalachia.

Travelling to Europe in 1939 on photojournalism assignments, Breckinridge was in Switzerland when the Nazis invaded Poland, starting World War II. She traveled to London to photograph the evacuation of English children, one of only four American photographers in England for the first months of the war. Edward Murrow hired her as the first female news broadcaster for the CBS World News Roundup to report from Europe. As the only female member of "The Murrow Boys", an elite group of only eleven broadcasters handpicked by Murrow, she broadcasted 50 reports from seven countries.

While working in Berlin, she married Foreign Service Officer Jefferson Patterson. She resigned from CBS, hoping to resume her career in photojournalism, but State Department policies restricted her ability to publish. The couple was posted in Peru, Belgium, Egypt, the Balkans and Uruguay.

Scope and Contents

Photographs taken by M. Marvin Breckinridge Patterson during her trip with Olivia Stokes Hatch from Capetown, South Africa, to Cairo, Egypt, by boat, car and train in 1932. The book, *Olivia's African Diary: Cape Town to Cairo*, (Washington, D.C.: Eastern Press, 1980) recounts the details of the trip.

The photographs document the peoples of Africa in Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Uganda, Congo (Democratic Republic) and Zanzibar. They include the Baila, San, Shona, Xhosa and Zulu.

The images portray African peoples in a wide range of activities. These include a bride and groom at Lovedale, South Africa; dancers at the Crown Mine near Johannesburg, South Africa; flower vendors in Cape Town, South Africa; two leading elders at Amanzimtoti, South Africa; a craftsman making spears; a tanner in the Sudan; miners with their wives in Katanga (now Shaba), Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo); schoolboys in the Sudan; a Shona man; women lining-up to receive rations in

the Belgian Congo; workers pouring gold at the Crown Mine near Johannesburg, South Africa; and a Zulu woman at a market in Durban, Natal, South Africa.

Architecture includes the Queen Hatshepsut's room at Karnak, Luxor, Egypt; and the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. Images of the natural world include a mountain at Cape Town, South Africa; a park in Port Elizabeth, South Africa; and Victoria Falls, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Animals depicted include egrets, ostriches and wildebeests.

Photographs from the collection were published in the *Boston Herald* on July 31, 1933, and in the *Crown Colonist* in August, 1933.

Arrangement

Arranged by country.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Ila (African people)
- San (African people)
- Shona (African people)
- Xhosa (African people)
- Zulu (African people)

Cultures:

- Ila (African people)
- San (African people)
- Shona (African people)
- Xhosa (African people)
- Zulu (African people)

Types of Materials:

- Photographic prints

Names:

- Hatch, Olivia Stokes

Geographic Names:

- Africa
- Congo (Democratic Republic)
- Kenya
- Luxor (Egypt)
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zanzibar