

# Vincenzo Petruccio expedition records

1126

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University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Petrullo, Vincenzo, 1906-1991
<b>Title</b>	Vincenzo Petruzzo expedition records
<b>Call number</b>	1126
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	1931-1935
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1928-1971
<b>Extent</b>	1.8 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Vincenzo M. Petruzzo was born in Italy in 1906, entered the United States in 1913, and eventually became a citizen in 1930. Petruzzo represented the Penn Museum as the anthropologist for the Matto Grosso Expedition from late 1930 until 1931. Petruzzo did archaeological excavations at the expedition headquarters at Descalvados, while waiting five months for governmental permission to conduct research in the Brazilian interior. In 1933 Petruzzo returned to South America, his purpose to establish a Latin American Research Institute in Venezuela, with support from that government and the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Petruzzo visited South America once again in 1935 in a joint Columbia University-University of Pennsylvania Museum expedition.</p>

**Cite as:**

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. Vincenzo Petruccio expedition records. Penn Museum Archives.  
Accessed [Date accessed].

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## Biography/History

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Vincenzo M. Petruccio was born in Italy in 1906, entered the United States in 1913, and eventually became a citizen in 1930. He was educated at the University of Pennsylvania, graduating with a B.A. in chemistry (1927) and Ph.D. in anthropology (1934). His dissertation “Delaware Peyotism” (1934) was later published as the monograph “The Diabolic Root, a Study of Peyotism, the New Religion Among the Delawares” (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934.)

After getting his undergraduate degree, Petruccio was hired first as an assistant and then as instructor (1928-33) and was Research Associate at the Museum from 1930-33. He represented the Museum as the anthropologist for the Matto Grosso Expedition from late 1930 until 1931. This was a commercial venture whose purpose was to capture both the sounds and moving images of the natives’ language, music, and culture using modern camera and sound recording equipment. Its goal was to record a popular and scientific account of the human, animal, and plant life in that region. The 1931 Expedition to Descalvados in south-central Brazil at the head of the Paraguay River was led by Captain Vladimir Perfileeff of the Explorer’s Club and Alexander Siemel, a hunter-adventurer. In addition to Petruccio, the expedition comprised scientific representatives from medicine (a doctor and expert in tropical diseases) and James A. G. Rehn, a naturalist from the Academy of Natural Sciences. They were accompanied by several technicians to handle the film and sound equipment and several amateur naturalists—among them one of the financiers of the trip, E. R. Fenimore Johnson—a taxidermist, and amateur archaeologist.

Petruccio did archaeological excavations at the expedition headquarters at Descalvados, while waiting five months for governmental permission to conduct research in the Brazilian interior. In June he and cameraman and photographer Arthur Rossi left on a trip to the Xingu River, a tributary of the Amazon River. Petruccio intended to return later in August to study the Bororo tribe on the Sao Lorenço and Araguaya River. They traveled by pack animals to the Kuluseu River and, using canoes, went northward, connecting to other rivers. On one excursion a native capsized one of the canoes, resulting in the loss of Petruccio’s notes and photographic equipment. The trip had also been hindered by a lack of interpreters, so that observation was the only method of gathering data.

When Rossi and Petruccio returned to Descalvados, they discovered that E. R. Fenimore Johnson had taken charge of the expedition, which had run out of money due to mismanagement, personal bickering, and lack of leadership. In Petruccio’s absence other expedition workers brought back film, photographs, and

recordings from the Bororo on the Sao Lorenço River. The expedition ended and Petruccio returned home in September 1931. The Museum Journal published his ethnography "Primitive Peoples of Matto Grosso" in 1932.

In 1933 Petruccio returned to South America, his purpose to establish a Latin American Research Institute in Venezuela, with support from that government and the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Part of this proposal was to establish a Venezuelan national museum, with Petruccio in charge of field work. He failed in his attempt, however, due to the economic and political climate in the country, even though the government seemed enthusiastic about its possibilities. Petruccio felt that he failed to receive adequate moral and financial support from the Museum. To compensate for this failure, he conducted fieldwork among the Yaruro Indians, nomadic hunting-fishing people living along the Capanaparo River. The ethnography "The Yaruros of the Capanaparo, Venezuela" was published by the Smithsonian Institution (1937).

Petruccio visited South America once again in 1935 in a joint Columbia University-University of Pennsylvania Museum expedition. This trip to the Guajira Peninsula in Venezuela intended to study the ethnology, archaeology, and linguistics of the natives of the region, in particular the Guajiro and their technology, arts, social organization, religion, and legal system. The expedition was to capture in motion pictures the life and customs of the tribe and return with some representative artifacts. Petruccio's previous goal—to establish a Latin American Institute in Venezuela and Colombia—was another goal of the expedition.

This expedition was troubled from the beginning. Petruccio was forced to send home one of his personnel, believing her unbalanced. Academic rivalry developed between Paul Kirchoff, Columbia University's representative, resentful of Petruccio's role as expedition leader. Kirchoff set off on his own to work on the Colombian side of the peninsula. Petruccio complained about his personnel's inexperience, their inability to speak Spanish, and the Museum's lack of financial support and reported that little real work had been done. Later, the recently-arrived wife of one of the expedition members, Lewis Korn, reported to Museum Director, Horace H. F. Jayne, that Petruccio had personality problems, and the expedition was in jeopardy due to internal dissension. Mrs. Korn also reported that Petruccio desired to travel into the field unescorted with Lydia DuPont, the expedition photographer whose father was a major contributor to the enterprise. Jayne was extremely unhappy with this course of events, believing Petruccio to have little control over his crew due to his inexperience as a field director, and terminated the Museum's fieldwork August 25, 1935.

Petruccio remained a month longer working for the Gulf Oil Company, who had been having difficulty with the Motilone Indians. Petruccio hoped that a study of the tribe would pacify them. He terminated his work and returned home September 23, 1935.

On his return to Philadelphia, Petruccio discovered that Horace H. F. Jayne and the Museum had withdrawn his financial backing and dismissed him, considering him immature and lacking necessary leadership qualities.

In 1937-1939, Petruccio worked for the WPA as an archaeological consultant. He spent 1940 in Mexico studying the socio-economic aspects of the Mexican Revolution and returned to America to warn the U.S. government of secret organizations being set up by Nazi Germany. Petruccio worked for the OSS from 1941 to 1944 as an intelligence analyst, assigned first to Latin America and later Italy. After the war he worked for a year on a research project for the Governor of Puerto Rico and was a visiting scholar

at Columbia University. Subsequently he became a Wenner Gren Foundation fellow (1947–1950) and studied the effects of the war on Sicily.

From 1950 until 1953 Petruccio was Professor of International Affairs and Director of Area Studies at Colgate University; in 1954 he was a visiting professor at the University of Alabama and Director of Archaeological Projects at the University of Georgia. From 1955 until his retirement, Petruccio was a consultant to business organizations, in the field of applied anthropology, focusing on communications and human relations.

Vincenzo Petruccio was named Honorary Curator of the American Section of the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1990.

He died February 23, 1991 in Philadelphia.

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## Scope and Contents

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The textual records of the University of Pennsylvania Museum expeditions of Vincenzo Petruccio consist of 1.8 linear feet of correspondence, field notes, manuscripts, reports, diaries, and financial records. The material has been divided into the following series: Correspondence, Field Notes, Financial Records, and Reports and Manuscripts.

The textual records, along with visual materials (photographs and films), are an amalgam of a 1991 bequest of the personal papers of Petruccio and Museum Archives records previously arranged within the American Section Record Group, South America Expeditions sub-group. These Museum records were minimal (.25 feet) and were listed only by the series name of Vincenzo Petruccio. The bequest consisted of twelve boxes of textual documents, photographs, and films. They covered Petruccio's Museum career and his later archaeological work with the WPA, his work for the U.S. government, his tenure at Colgate University and final work for several companies as a consultant in human resources management. The textual documents representing the work of Petruccio for the Museum were extracted from the personal papers. Film and photographs from the personal collection will be added to the Photographic Archives at the Museum.

Much of the correspondence is between Petruccio and his colleagues and friends, notably E. R. Fenimore Johnson, contacts with foreign government officials, and Horace H. F. Jayne, then Museum Director. Correspondence from Petruccio's tenure at the Museum has been placed in miscellaneous files, arranged chronologically by expedition.

Field Notes consist of diaries, miscellaneous notes, and reports. They are arranged by expedition. Financial Records consist of personal account statements, bank statements, and a few receipts.

Reports and Manuscripts consist of a lengthy and complete unpublished manuscript on the Matto Grosso Expedition, assorted titled pieces on other expeditions, and miscellaneous untitled pieces.

## Administrative Information

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University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials note

See also Anonymous Collection of Matto Grosso Records (PU-Mu. 1158).

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Form/Genre(s)

- Correspondence
- Field notes
- Manuscripts for publication

### Geographic Name(s)

- Mato Grosso (inhabited place)

**Personal Name(s)**

- Petruzzo, Vincenzo, 1906-1991

**Subject(s)**

- Mato Grosso (Brazil : State)--Description and travel



## Correspondence

## Collection Inventory

### Correspondence, 1928-1935.

#### Scope and Contents note

Letters to and from Museum Director Horace H. F. Jayne concerning the progress, financial status, and activities of the expeditions. Includes contact letters with South American government officials, businessmen, and other anthropologists. Also includes cables and telegrams while in transit via ship. Includes four years of letters from Petruccio's personal friend E. R. Fenimore Johnson, who accompanied him on the Matto Grosso Expedition. Arranged chronologically within each expedition.

	Box
Matto Grosso, Pre-Expedition.	1
Matto Grosso Expedition (two folders).	1
Matto Grosso, Follow-up (two folders).	1
Matto Grosso-E. R. Fenimore Johnson.	1
Venezuela (Yaruro), Pre-Expedition.	1
Venezuela (Yaruro) (three folders).	2
Venezuela (Yaruro), Follow-up.	2
Venezuela (Guajira) (three folders).	2
Museum, Miscellaneous (three folders).	2

## Field Notes

**Field Notes, 1931-1935.****Scope and Contents note**

Diaries, reports on daily activities, notebooks, miscellaneous notes on linguistics, and inventories of archaeological and photographic collections. Arranged by expedition.

	Box
Matto Grosso Expedition ("Report on activities") 1931.	3
Matto Grosso Expedition Book I, IV, V 1931.	3
Matto Grosso Expedition Book II 1931.	3
Matto Grosso Expedition Book III 1931.	3
Matto Grosso Expedition Notebook 1931.	3
Matto Grosso Expedition Photograph Catalog.	3
Matto Grosso Expedition Miscellaneous Notes (two folders).	3
Matto Grosso Expedition Linguistic Notes.	3

**Financial Records, 1931-1935.****Scope and Contents note**

Statement of expense accounts, financial statements, receipts, and cancelled checks. Arranged by expedition.

	Box
Matto Grosso Expeditions 1931.	4

## Reports and Manuscripts

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Venezuela Expeditions 1933, 1935. 4

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### Reports and Manuscripts, 1931-1959.

#### Scope and Contents note

Completed manuscript from the Matto Grosso Expedition, lecture slide notes, assorted manuscripts from the Venezuela (Yaruro) expedition, correspondence with and a paper on the Yaruro people by another anthropologist (Anthony Leeds), and the first memorandum of the Latin American Institute for Race and Culture Studies.

	Box
"A Journey to Matto Grosso," 1940 pp. 1-120.	4
"A Journey to Matto Grosso," 1940 pp. 121-240.	4
"A Journey to Matto Grosso," 1940 pp. 241-359.	4
"A Journey to Matto Grosso," 1940 pp. 360-463.	4
Matto Grosso Expedition Lecture Slide Notes.	4
Papers [two] on Yaruro by Anthony Leeds.	4
Venezuela (Yaruro) "Kuma's Children".	4
Venezuela (Yaruro) "The Man on Horseback".	4
Venezuela (Yaruro) "My Journey to and Life with the Yaruros".	4
Venezuela (Yaruro) "The Llanos of Venezuela".	4
Venezuela (Yaruro) Miscellaneous Manuscripts.	4

## Films

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Venezuela (Yaruro) Latin American Institute for Race and Culture Studies Memorandum.

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### **Films, 1930-1955 (Bulk, 1930-1931) . Six films..**

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Our collections include a copy of Primitive peoples of the Matto Grosso c. 1955 by Tom Nesmith, narrated by Lowell Thomas; two fragments from the completed film; and three films of documentary footage from the expedition.