



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Felix Webster McBryde films, circa 1940

Human Studies Film Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Human Studies Film Archives
Title:	Felix Webster McBryde films
Date:	circa 1940
Identifier:	HSFA.2009.08
Creator:	McBryde, F. Webster (Felix Webster), 1908-1995
Extent:	Film reels (color silent; 9,030 feet; 16mm) Linear feet
Language:	Moving image materials are silent; supplementary materials are in English.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Received from John M. McBryde in 2008.

Preferred Citation

Felix Webster McBryde films, Human Studies Film Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Please contact the archives for information on availability of access copies of audiovisual recordings. Original audiovisual material in the Human Studies Film Archives may not be played.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical / Historical

F. Webster McBryde was a geographer who earned his geography degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1940. In 1943 he founded the American Society for Professional Geographers (ASPG). Aside from his research of markets in villages in the Gautemalan Lake Atitlan area and his teaching geography at Ohio State University from 1937 to 1942, his career was primarily as a consultant.

During WWII he worked as a senior geographer in military intelligence in the War Department. After the war he became director of the Smithsonian Institution's Institute of Social Anthropology in Lima, Peru. After three years in that position he became chief geographer for the Latin American program of the United States Bureau of the Census that included his establishing the Ecuadorian Institute of Anthropology and Geography in Quito. He also took on consulting work in ecology and environmental issues that included being the chief of the physical and cultural branch of the natural resources division of the Inter-American Geodetic Survey of the U.S. Army and field director of the Bioenvironmental Program of the Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Sea Level Canal Studies in Panama and Colombia for the Battelle Memorial Institute.

In 1970 he founded the McBryde Center for Human Ecology and continued working for the Battelle Memorial Institute as well as other clients. New consulting work included preparing ecological studies affecting the tourist industry in Jamaica and the environmental problems of the Cerro Colorado Copper Mine in Panama for the United Nations. He conducted personal research in the domestication of plants, particularly the origin of maize in several Latin American countries.

Because of his extensive knowledge of Central American he occasionally served as advisor to government officials from those countries. He also worked on and developed new world map projections that more accurately portrayed the curvature of the earth.

Scope and Contents

Papers, films and photographs of Felix Webster McBryde, cultural geographer, mostly related to his work in South and Central America. Also some papers of wife, Frances McBryde.

Supplementary materials: water colors, paper records.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or Anthropology Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Selected Bibliography

Cultural and Historical Geography of Southwest Guatemala, Felix Webster McBryde, 1945, Smithsonian Institution Institute of Social Anthropology Publication No. 4.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

- Travelogs
- silent films

Places:

- Central America
- Guatemala

Container Listing

Travel Footage of Guatemala, circa 1940
1 Film reel (color silent; 1,030 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Footage shot during travel with his wife, Frances, for research purposes on markets of the villages around Lake Atitlan. Film opens with aerial views flying into and out of Tampico, Mexico, and on the way to Guatemala showing terrain of coastlines and mountains. The film primarily documents markets and daily life activities in the villages in the Lake Atitlan area including, most likely, Antigua. Film footage includes Danza de los Voladores, a Mesoamerican ceremony, that appears to be held at a race track (Guatemala City?); women weaving including back strap looms, floor loom and men weaving narrow belts; many views of Lake Atitlan and the volcanoes; agriculture activities including haying, hoeing, planting, threshing wheat using horses and ; indian markets, traveling by foot on dirt roads laden with various burdens strapped to back or on head and traveling around Lake Atitlan by boat; a number of markets held in villages around Lake Atitlan, often including the church; man making base of basket; pottery making; cutting traseries on blackened tree calabash by turning it against a sharp carving tool; Sacapulas woman making salt rounds in molds; washing clothes on lake shore; man playing old-type marimba with gourd sound-boxes. His wife, an artist, is shown sketching a weaver. ; Based on his research work in the village markets surrounding Lake Atitlan, the villages filmed probably include Solala, Panajachel, Chichicastenango, and San Sebastian Coatán. It is likely that he used the film for live lectures.

Legacy keywords: Language and culture ; Lakes ; Volcanoes ; Landscape country side ; Formations (Geology) ; Rites and ceremonies ; Weaving loom weaving ; Spinning-wheel ; Pottery ; Musical instruments ; Architecture Religious ; Architecture Guatemala ; Marketplaces ; Women's clothing

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