



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the River Basin Surveys records, 1928-1969

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	River Basin Surveys records
Date:	1928-1969
Identifier:	NAA.1973-13
Creator:	River Basin Surveys
Extent:	424 Linear feet
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Related Materials

The National Anthropological Archives holds the Bureau of American Ethnology records. Information about the Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains may be found in the Frederick Johnson papers.

Preferred Citation

River Basin Surveys records, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The River Basin Surveys records are open for research.

Access to the River Basin Surveys records requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Historical Note

The creation of the River Basin Surveys (RBS) grew out of preliminary work by the Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains, an ad hoc group of anthropologists sponsored by the American Anthropological Association, Society for American Archaeology, and the American Council of Learned Societies, with liaison members from the Smithsonian Institution and the National Research Council. The committee's concern was the preservation of archaeological evidence threatened by public works programs, especially the construction of dams and reservoirs, that were carried out after World War II.

The result of the committee's work was a cooperative arrangement, called the Inter-Agency Salvage Program, among the Smithsonian, the National Park Service, the Corps of Engineers, many universities, and other public and private organizations to exchange information and finance and carry out salvage archaeological work throughout the United States. The RBS was organized in 1946 to carry out the Smithsonian's part of the program. It was particularly active in field work in the Missouri Basin, states of the West Coast, Texas, and southeastern states. Initially, the arrangement was for the National Park Service to handle the financing of the work, using its own funds

and requesting additional funds from other agencies. In time, the Park Service bore virtually all direct costs in its own budget, providing the RBS with funds and making contracts with state and other organizations to carry out part of the archeological work. In the mid-1950s, the Park Service became increasingly involved in field work and took over some of the field offices of the RBS.

Through most of its existence, the RBS was an autonomous unit of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Headquarters were in Washington, D. C. and from that office were carried out many of the projects not within areas of field offices. There was a major field office in Lincoln, Nebraska, that directed work in the Missouri Basin, and there were also field offices for relatively short periods of time in Austin, Texas, and Eugene, Oregon, that directed work in Texas and parts of the West Coast. When the Bureau was disbanded in 1965, the RBS became a unit of the Smithsonian Office of Anthropology (Department of Anthropology since 1968). In 1966, the headquarters were moved to Lincoln and, in 1968, the RBS was placed administratively under the director of the National Museum of Natural History. In 1969, the RBS was transferred to the National Park Service, but provision was made for the deposit of its records and manuscripts in the Smithsonian.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of the files of the central office and field offices, including many administrative files. Also included are several site files that include photographs and completed forms for data collected in the field and the laboratory. Mostly these include material collected by Smithsonian employees. There are also materials collected by archeologists outside the Smithsonian. For the most, however, this later type of material was retained by the many institutions that sponsored the work. The files of Harold A. Huscher and Carl Miller were separated because of their continued work on the data they contain.

Huscher's material largely concerns work along the Chattahoochee River. Miller's files mainly concern work in Virginia and North Carolina. Both of these men's papers also include material concerning some of their earlier work. Miller's papers, for example, include data concerning his archeological work for the Work Projects Administration. Similarly, some of Director Frank Harold Hanna Robert's documents concerning work not related to the RBS have been incorporated in the records of the Washington office.

Much of the material regarding sites is controlled by the system for designating sites developed by the Smithsonian. This consists of a three-part code that includes a number to indicate the state, an alphabetical abbreviation to indicate county, and a number for each site within a county.

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 National Anthropological Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Archaeology

Names:

Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains
United States. Army. Corps of Engineers
United States. Bureau of Reclamation
United States. National Park Service

United States. Work Projects Administration

Places:

North America