



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Paul Lemen Cooper papers, 1909-1962

Jacqueline Saavedra

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National Anthropological Archives
Museum Support Center
4210 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, Maryland 20746
naa@si.edu
<http://www.anthropology.si.edu/naa/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Paul Lemen Cooper papers
Date:	1909-1962
Identifier:	NAA.1988-01A
Creator:	Cooper, Paul L. (Paul Lemen), 1909-1961 River Basin Surveys
Extent:	3 Linear feet (5 boxes)
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Related Collections

Other materials relating to Paul Lemen Cooper at the National Anthropological Archives can be found in the William Duncan Strong papers, the Frederick Johnson papers, Manuscript 4846, the Records of the Bureau of American Ethnology, and the River Basin Surveys Records.

Processing Note

The papers of Paul Lemen Cooper were received partially organized. The processing archivist kept most of the existing groupings and arrangement and organized the collection into five series. Original folder titles were retained with titles assigned by the archivist placed within square brackets. The photographs are unprocessed.

Processed by Jacqueline Saavedra, 2012

Encoded by Katie Duvall, 2018

Preferred Citation

Paul Lemen Cooper papers, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The Paul Lemen Coopers papers are open for research.

Access to the Paul Lemen Cooper papers requires an appointment.

Restrictions on Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Paul Lemen Cooper was born February 11, 1909 in Cuba City, Wisconsin. Shortly after receiving his B. A. in sociology and anthropology from the University of Wisconsin in 1931, Cooper traveled to the Southwest as part of an archaeological expedition from the Field Museum of Natural History. This experience piqued

his interest in archaeology, and for the next two decades he would spend at least a portion of each year conducting field work.

During the 1930s Cooper's field research was largely conducted in Illinois, the Tennessee Valley, and Nebraska. He specifically worked as an archaeologist with the Nebraska State Historical Society under the direction of A. T. Hill, with whom he collaborated on several publications. It was also at this time that Cooper developed the site numbering system still used in archaeology today. In addition, Cooper also worked for a time as a graduate assistant in the Anthropology Department at the University of Nebraska.

In 1938, Cooper was designated the Supervisor and State Director of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Archaeological, Paleontological and Museum Project. It was here that he gained the necessary skills to create an adequate laboratory and administration with a limited budget, skills that would become necessary in later field research. After three years with the WPA, Cooper returned to school. He worked as an assistant at Columbia University, while completing coursework towards a Ph.D. At the same time, Cooper also acted as editorial assistant for the Society for American Archaeology.

From 1946 to 1954 Cooper devoted the majority of his time to the Missouri Basin Project of the River Basin Survey (RBS) in Lincoln, Nebraska. A large portion of his research and publications reflect his work in this particular area. From 1950 to 1952, Cooper was the Field Director of the Missouri Basin Project under the Director of the RBS, Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr. Despite some minor problems Cooper faced with personnel, he was able to appraise entire sites on the basis of a limited collection, as well as work proficiently on a small budget.

Cooper spent the last few years of his life in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, working with the firm of Robert G. Cooper and Associates. He passed away on April 14, 1961, at the age of 52.

Sources Consulted: Kivett, Marvin, F. 1962. Paul Lemen Cooper 1909-1961. *American Antiquity* 27(4): 571-572.

Selected Bibliography

- 1936 Archaeology of Certain Sites in Cedar County, Nebraska. Chapters in *Nebraska Archaeology* 1(1): 5-145.
- 1937 with A. T. Hill. The Schrader, Champe, and Fremont I Sites. *Nebraska History Magazine* 17(4): 221-292.
- 1938 with A. T. Hill. The Archaeological Campaign of 1937. *Nebraska History Magazine* 18(4): 237-359.
- 1940 Report of Explorations. *Nebraska History Magazine* 20(2): 94-151.
- 1946 The Institute Explores the Norton Site. *Cranbrook Institute of Science News Letter* 15(6):71-73.
- 1949 Recent Investigations in Fort Randall and Oahe Reservoirs, South Dakota. *American Antiquity* 14(4): 300-310
- An Archaeological Survey of the Fort Randall Reservoir, South Dakota. *Proceedings of the Fifth Plains Conference for Archaeology, University of Nebraska Laboratory of Anthropology, Note Book* 1.
- 1955 The Archaeological and Paleontological Salvage Program in the Missouri Basin, 1950-1951. *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 126(2).
- 1958 Archaeological Investigations in the Heart Butte Reservoir area, North Dakota. *River Basin Surveys Papers No. 9, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin* 169: 1-40.

Chronology

- 1909 Born February 11 in Cuba City, Wisconsin

1931	Works in the Southwest as a member of the archaeological expedition from the Field Museum of Natural History Receives B.A. from the University of Wisconsin in Sociology and Anthropology
1933-1935	Conducts field research in Illinois
1934	Graduate assistant in Anthropology at the University of Nebraska
1936-1938	Serves as archaeologist for the Nebraska State Historical Society, where he originates the site numbering system
1938-1941	Supervisor and State Director of the WPA Archaeological, Paleontological and Museum Project
1941-1944	Acts as an assistant in Anthropology at Columbia University while completing his Ph.D.
1943-1946	Editorial Assistant for the Society of American Archaeology
1946-1955	Archaeologist with the Missouri Basin Project of the River Basin Survey in Lincoln, Nebraska
1950-1952	Acts as Field Director to the Missouri Basin Project
1955-1961	Associated with the firm of Robert G. Cooper Associates of Rice Lake, Wisconsin
1961	Dies on April 14 at the age of 52

Scope and Contents

This collection is comprised of the professional papers of archaeologist Paul Lemen Cooper, who conducted extensive field work in Nebraska, the Dakotas, and the Missouri River Basin. Included are correspondence, field notes, survey forms, published writings, photographs, maps, research materials, and clippings from periodicals, as well as various personal documents. Though the collection spans Cooper's entire life, the majority of the papers focus on his work as archaeologist and field director of the Missouri Basin Project (a division of the River Basin Survey).

A significant portion of the correspondence and River Basin Survey files are duplicates created through reflex copying, a process that creates a negative copy. These materials are consequently difficult to read.

Please note that the collection contains images of human remains.

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.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into the following series: 1. Correspondence, 1933-1960 (bulk 1950-1953); 2. Research, 1946-1954; 3. Writings, 1950-1958; 4. Personal, 1909-1962 (bulk 1938-1954); 5. Photographs, circa 1950s.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Names:

Cranbrook Institute of Science
University of Chicago -- archeological expeditions

Places:

Colorado -- Lawry Ruin -- archeology
Illinois -- Fulton County -- archeology
Illinois -- Massac County -- Kinkaid Site -- archeology
North Dakota -- Heart Butte Reservoir -- archeology
South Dakota -- Fort Randall Reservoir -- archeology

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1933-1960 (bulk 1950-1953)

4 Inches

Language: English.

Scope and Contents: This series contains Paul Lemen Cooper's correspondence. The majority of the correspondence is in relation to Cooper's position as Field Director of the Missouri Basin Survey.

Folders are arranged alphabetically by correspondent's last name; those colleagues with a substantial amount of correspondence are given their own folders. Correspondence relating to the 9th Plains Conference is filed at the end of the series.

Box 1	[Correspondence A-H], 1933-1955 Notes: T. W. Abbott, Earl H. Bell, Frank H. Bowles, Ralph D. Brown, T. W. Cape, Bertha T. Carwithen, Rhoton P. Clift, Fay-Cooper Cole, Robert G. Cooper, Thorne Deuel, Lloyd C. Emmons, Lynd J. Esch, Clifford Evans Jr., Herbert Evison, Philip M. Hayden, . T. Hill, Harold A. Huscher, and George R. Hyde. Reflexion copies included.
Box 1	[Correspondence I-N], 1935-1954 Notes: Jesse D. Jennings, C. L. Johnson, Frederick Johnson, Marvin Kivett, M. N. Lewis, W. F. Libby, Ralph Linton, Robert F. Maher, Ray H. Mattison, Lawrence C. Merriam, Robert E. Merrill, Carl F. Miller, Georg Neumann, Jack B. Newman, Marshall (Bud) T. Newman, and Dow Norton. Reflexion copies included.
Box 1	[Correspondence O-Z], 1936-1960 Notes: Paul F. Oehser, A. B. Piesinger, Edgar F. Puryear, S. P. Rigler, John H. Rowe, Irving Rouse, Bertrand C. Schiltz, Carlyle S. Smith, William Duncan Strong, Lawrence L. Tomsyck, William Webb, A. Whetmore, and Richard P. Wheeler. Reflexion copies included
Box 1	[J. E. Graf], 1946-1954 Notes: Reflexion copies included
Box 1	[Robert T. Hatt], 1946-1954
Box 1	[Donald J. Lehmer], 1950-1952 Notes: Reflexion copies included
Box 1	[Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr.], 1946-1955 Notes: Reflexion copies included
Box 1	[Robert L. Stephenson], 1953-1955

	Notes: Reflexion copies included
Box 1	[Waldo R. Wedel], 1946-1959 Notes: Reflexion copies included
Box 1	[Unknown], 1949-1950, 1946 Notes: Reflexion copies included
Box 1	9th Plains Conference, 1 of 2, 1952 Notes: Includes registrant information, colleague research, and handwritten notes all pertaining to the conference
Box 1	9th Plains Conference, 2 of 2, 1952

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Series 2: Research, 1945-1954

6 Inches

Language: English.

Scope and Contents: Cooper conducted extensive field work in the Midwest for almost twenty years. The majority of this series concerns his archaeological work for the River Basin Survey in the 1940s and 1950s in South Dakota. These materials include field notes, RBS site forms, maps, photographs, colleague's research, and newspaper clippings. This series is unarranged.

Box 1	Field Notes- Fort Randall, 1947 Notes: RBS forms and field specimen inventories
Box 1	Field Notes- Fort Randall, 1948 Notes: Field specimen inventories, RBS forms, handwritten field notes, and photograph
Box 2	Fort Bennett Reports (Copies), 1952 Notes: Includes handwritten reports
Box 2	[Fort Randall], Undated, 1954 Notes: Includes map
Box 2	[Fort Lookout], 1954, Undated
Box 2	[39CH4], 1947, 1953
Box 2	[39CH7], 1947
Box 2	[39CH9, 1 of 3], 1948 Notes: Includes several maps and photographs
Box 2	[39CH9, 2 of 3], 1946-1950, 1953
Box 2	[39CH9, 3 of 3], Undated
Box 2	[32GTI], 1948, Undated
Box 2	[Daily Planner], Undated Notes: Field notes as well as personal notes, the majority organized by location
Box 2	[Notebooks], Undated Notes: Six small notebooks containing field notes
Box 2	[Miscellaneous Field Notes], Undated Notes: Research, notes, and forms without a specified location
Box 2	[Reports], 1949, 1951-1953 Notes: Includes reflexion copies

Box 2 [Site Recommendations], 1950-1952
Notes: Includes reflexion copies

Box 2 [Maps], Undated
Notes: Includes reflexion copies

Box 2 [Miscellaneous Research], 1935, 1951-1954, Undated
Notes: Colleague research and newspaper clippings

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Series 3: Writings, 1950-1958

1 Inche

Scope and Contents: Cooper published analyses of his archaeological work throughout his life. This series contains two copies of his later publications, along with accompanying photographs. Both publications refer to surveys conducted in the Midwest.

Box 3 The Archaeological and Paleontological Salvage Program in the Missouri Basin, 1950-1951
Notes: Published in the Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections in 1955; includes photographs

Box 3 Archaeological Investigations in the Heart Butte Reservoir Area, 1958
Notes: Published in the Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin in 1958; includes photographs

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Series 4: Personal, circa 1909-1962 (bulk 1938-1954)

4 Inches

Scope and Contents: This series contains Cooper's diplomas, university transcripts, employment files, and office notes. Materials relating to his obituary can also be found here. Files are arranged chronologically.

Box 3	[Academic Records], 1909, 1919, 1931, 1936, 1940-1941 Notes: Includes Social Security card and birth certificate
Box 3	[Employment Records], 1938-1954 Notes: Federal employment applications; reflexion copies included
Box 3	[River Basin Survey Personnel Records], 1946-1954 Notes: Reflexion copies included
Box 3	[Personal Notes], 1948-1951 Notes: Includes shorthand notes and reflexion copies
Box 3	[American Antiquity Memorial], 1962 Notes: Copies and correspondence pertaining to Cooper's obituary in American Antiquity

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Series 5: Photographs, circa 1950s

1.8 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The majority of Cooper's photographs relate to his field work in the Midwest. The pictures include archaeological findings and aerial views of dig sites, as well as photographs of personnel working at the archaeological sites. There are also a few personal photographs of family members and friends. This series is unprocessed.

Box 4	Prints, negatives and slides of artifacts and archaeological sites. Also a photo of Paul L. Cooper, circa 1950s
Box 5	[Photo album] , circa 1950s Notes: Personal photos included
Box 5	[Rolled aerial print of 39STI and 39ST10], circa 1950s

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