



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Paul Lemen Cooper papers, 1909-1962

Jacqueline Saavedra

June 2012

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

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Arrangement.....	4
Biographical Note.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	3
Names and Subjects	4
Container Listing	5
Series 1: Correspondence, 1933-1960 (bulk 1950-1953).....	5
Series 2: Research, 1945-1954.....	7
Series 3: Writings, 1950-1958.....	9
Series 4: Personal, circa 1909-1962 (bulk 1938-1954).....	10
Series 5: Photographs, circa 1950s.....	11

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Paul Lemen Cooper papers
Identifier:	NAA.1988-01A
Date:	1909-1962
Extent:	3 Linear feet (5 boxes)
Creator:	Cooper, Paul L. (Paul Lemen), 1909-1961 River Basin Surveys
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 <i>Nebraska Archaeology</i> 1(1): 5-145. |
| 1937 | with A. T. Hill. The Schrader, Champe, and Fremont I Sites. <i>Nebraska History Magazine</i> 17(4): 221-292. |
| 1938 | with A. T. Hill. The Archaeological Campaign of 1937. <i>Nebraska History Magazine</i> 18(4): 237-359. |
| 1940 | Report of Explorations. <i>Nebraska History Magazine</i> 20(2): 94-151. |
| 1946 | The Institute Explores the Norton Site. <i>Cranbrook Institute of Science News Letter</i> 15(6):71-73. |
| 1949 | Recent Investigations in Fort Randall and Oahe Reservoirs, South Dakota. <i>American Antiquity</i> 14(4): 300-310 |
| | An Archaeological Survey of the Fort Randall Reservoir, South Dakota. <i>Proceedings of the Fifth Plains Conference for Archaeology, University of Nebraska Laboratory of Anthropology, Note Book</i> 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.

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

Geographic Names:

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

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
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
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
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
Reflexion copies included
- Box 1 [Robert T. Hatt], 1946-1954
- Box 1 [Donald J. Lehmer], 1950-1952
Reflexion copies included
- Box 1 [Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr.], 1946-1955
Reflexion copies included
- Box 1 [Robert L. Stephenson], 1953-1955
Reflexion copies included

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Research, 1945-1954

6 Inches

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

- Includes reflexion copies
- Box 2 [Site Recommendations], 1950-1952
Includes reflexion copies
- Box 2 [Maps], Undated
Includes reflexion copies
- Box 2 [Miscellaneous Research], 1935, 1951-1954, Undated
Colleague research and newspaper clippings

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Writings, 1950-1958

1 Inche

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
Published in the Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections in 1955; includes photographs

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

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

4 Inches

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Photographs, circa 1950s

1.8 Linear feet

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
Personal photos included |
| Box 5 | [Rolled aerial print of 39STI and 39ST10], circa 1950s |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)