



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Richard O. Marsh papers, 1923-1994

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Richard O. Marsh papers
Date:	1923-1994
Identifier:	NAA.1997-18
Creator:	Marsh, Richard O. (Richard Oglesby), 1883-1953
Extent:	7 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	Richard Oglesby Marsh (1883–1953) was an engineer, American diplomat and amateur ethnologist who participated in several engineering and ethnological expeditions to Panama. He helped draft the <i>Declaration of Independence and Human Rights of the Tule People of San Blas and the Darien</i> and was the author of <i>White Indians of Darien</i> and several popular articles on Panama.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Marsh papers were donated to the archives by Richard O. Marsh, Jr. in 1997.

Related Materials

Additional material relating to the Marsh Darien Expedition is included in MS 4550 in the National Anthropological Archives. Additional Marsh correspondence is contained in the Aleš Hrdlicka papers. On Marsh's adventures in Panama, see James Howe, *A People Who Would Not Kneel: Panama, the United States, and the San Blas Kuna* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

Preferred Citation

Richard O. Marsh papers, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The Richard O. Marsh papers are open for research.

Access to the Richard O. Marsh papers requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Richard O. Marsh (1883-1953) was an engineer, U.S. State Department employee, and ethnologist who made numerous engineering and scientific expeditions around the world. He was the author of *The White Indians of Darien* [c1934]. The Marsh-Darien expedition of 1924-1925, the focus of this collection, was sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution together with the American Museum of Natural History, the University of Rochester, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, the Military Intelligence Division of the U.S. Army, the Canal Zone administration, and the government of Panama.

Chronology

1883	Born in Illinois
1901	Enrolled in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
1903	Employed by the Army Corps of Engineers in Texas
1905	Enrolled in the University of Lausanne, Switzerland
1909	Married Helen Cleveland in September
1910	Appointed First Secretary of the U.S. legation in Panama in April
1912	Secretary, American Embassy, St. Petersburg, Russia
1915	Elected mayor of Warsaw, Illinois
1923	Returned to Panama as employee of engineer George Goethals in June
1924	Headed Marsh-Darien expedition to Panama in January
1925	Returned to San Blas, Panama
	Published "Blond Indians of the Darien Jungle" in <i>The World's Work</i>
1931	Traveled to Nicaragua
1933-1935	Public Works Administration
1934	Published <i>White Indians of Darien</i> (New York: Putnam)
1935-1939	Chief engineer, Land Utilization Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1941	Reconnaissance engineer, U.S. Military, North Africa, in December
1949-1952	State Road Department, Florida
1953	Died, Vero Beach, Florida, on September 4

Scope and Contents

The Marsh Darien expedition of 1924-1925, the focus of this collection, was sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution together with the American Museum of Natural History, the University of Rochester, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, the Military Intelligence Division of the U.S. Army, the Canal Zone administration, and the government of Panama. Expedition members included John L. Baer (Smithsonian Institution ethnologist), Paul Benton (Rochester Times-Union reporter), Charles M. Breder, Jr. (New York Aquarium biologist), Raoul Brin (botanist), Charles Charlton (Pathé News cinematographer), Herman L. Fairchild (University of Rochester emeritus geologist), Harry Johnson (taxidermist) Omer Malsbury (Canal Zone Administration), Lieut. Glen Townsend (U.S. Army) and Francisco Pinzón, the expedition cook.

The Marsh Papers include diaries, photographs, correspondence, maps, articles in draft and published form, and miscellaneous papers, chiefly relating to Marsh's experiences as leader of the Marsh Darien expedition to Panama

in 1924-1925 and his contacts with the Kuna (also known as Tule). The collection also features materials on the negotiations that took place on the U.S.S. Cleveland with representatives of the U.S. and Panamanian governments and the Kuna Indians during the Kuna uprising of 1925, in which Marsh served as a mediator.

Correspondents include Marsh's wife, Helen Louise Cleveland Marsh; his son Richard O. Marsh, Jr.; and C.L.G. Anderson.

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:

Guna (Kuna)

Cultures:

Guna (Kuna)

Places:

Darien (Panama : Province)