



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the S. Colum Gilfillan Papers

NMAH.AC.0461

Don Darroch

1992

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	S. Colum Gilfillan Papers
Date:	1921-1978
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0461
Creator:	National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Science and Technology Kranzberg, Melvin, Dr., 1917-1995 Gilfillan, Seabury Colum (college instructor)
Extent:	1 Cubic foot (5 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection documents S. Colum Gilfillan, a charter member of the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) in 1958 and his SHOT correspondence, particularly with Melvin Kranzberg.

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by S. Colum Gilfillan to Wesley C. Williams, curator, History of Science and Technology Collection, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio in November 1971. Melvin Kranzberg, formerly of Case Western Reserve, transferred it to the National Museum of American History where it was received by Archives Center May 20, 1992.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Don Darroch, 1992

Preferred Citation

S. Colum Gilfillan Papers, 1921-1978, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Check for usage or copyright restrictions.

Biographical Note

Seabury Colum Gilfillan was born (1889) in St. Paul, Minnesota and was graduated (AB in Social Science) from the University of Pennsylvania (1910). He served in the U.S. Army (1917-1919) and received master and doctorate degrees in sociology from Columbia University (1920). He was acting assistant professor and associate professor of social science at the University of the South (1921-1924). He was curator of transportation and social science at the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago (1929-1930) and assistant

professor of social science, Purdue University (1937-1938). In 1940 he was a lecturer at Northwestern University and in 1941-1950 a research associate at the University of Chicago.

Gilfillan worked as an investigator for the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, 1930-1932 and for the Natural Resources Committee, 1936. He was a charter member of the Society for the History of Technology and a member of the Sociology Association and the Eugenics Society.

Scope and Contents

The collection includes Gilfillan's correspondence during 1951-1978 and a number of papers written by him and (in some cases) published or delivered to professional societies; the dates of the papers range from 1921 to 1972. Gilfillan was a charter member of the Society for the History of Technology in 1958. His SHOT correspondence, particularly with Melvin Kranzberg, concerning several articles by Gilfillan published in SHOT's journal "Technology and Culture" constitutes a segment of the correspondence, 1957-1978. Gilfillan had made an unsuccessful attempt to organize a similar group, the Society for the Social Study of Invention in 1947. Some of the draft documents for this society are included.

Much of the correspondence concerns the ideas incorporated in Gilfillan's major work, *Sociology of Invention* (1935) and the Supplement to it published in 1971. Gilfillan's letters to others are complicated by his use of his own method of spelling using contractions of words and phonetic techniques to increase the number of words per page.

Also included in the collection are three "shoeboxes" of 3" x 5" cards filed alphabetically by author, representing a bibliography of writings on inventions and inventors. These cards, numbering several thousand, represent Gilfillan's research notes on his reading in his area of professional interest. Unfortunately their use is made difficult by Gilfillan's unique spelling system and the scrawled handwriting used on many of them.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into three series.

Series 1: Correspondence, 1951-1978

Series 2: Major Papers and Projects, 1921-1978

Series 3: Invention Authors and Bibliographic Notes, undated

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Inventions -- 20th century
- Inventors -- 20th century
- Social sciences -- 20th century
- Sociology -- 20th century

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence -- 1930-1950

Names:

Society for the History of Technology

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1951-1978

Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1951
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1952-1956
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1957-1958
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1959-1960
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1961-1962
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1963-1965
Box 2	Correspondence, 1966-1967
Box 2	Correspondence, 1968-1970
Box 2	Correspondence, 1971-1972
Box 2	Correspondence, 1973-1974
Box 2	Correspondence, 1975-1978

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Series 2: Major Papers and Projects, 1921-1978

Box 2	Growth of Invention 1921, 1921
Box 2	Inventiveness by Nation 1930, 1930
Box 2	Inventions Affecting the Food Supply of the Future, 1931
Box 2	On the Social Causation of Invention, 1936
Box 2	Patent Pooling and Its Betterment, 1939
Box 2	Invention and Its Prevention, circa 1943
Box 2	Society for the Social Study of Invention, 1947
Box 2	Correspondence: Society for the History of Technology, 1957-1978
Box 2	Inventions and Discoveries (Encyclopedia Brit.), 1962
Box 2	Invention and the Patent System, 1965
Box 2	Clippings, 1970-1979
Box 2	Supplement to the Sociology of Invention, 1972
Box 2	Social Insights on the Patent System, 1973

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Series 3: Invention Authors and Bibliography Notes, undated

Box 3	Abbot, Charles G. Guyot, Ives, undated
Box 4	Habakkuk, H. Russell, Bertrand, undated
Box 5	Sachs, Hans Who's Who in the West, undated

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