



Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Helena M. Weiss Papers, 1923-2001

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# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Historical Note.....	1
Descriptive Entry.....	1
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	3
Series 1: Helena Weiss.....	3
Series 2: Ray S. Bassler.....	5
Series 3: Smithsonian Institution.....	6

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Helena M. Weiss Papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	Accession 05-112
<b>Date:</b>	1923-2001
<b>Extent:</b>	1 cu. ft. (1 record storage box)
<b>Creator::</b>	Weiss, Helena M., 1909-2004
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 05-112, Helena M. Weiss Papers

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## Historical Note

Raised in Shipman, Illinois, Helena M. Weiss attended the Butler Business College in Butler, Pennsylvania as well as graduated from the Wheeler Business College in Birmingham, Alabama before she began her career as a museum registrar and administrator. Her work began as a stenographer for the Veterans Administration in 1930. A year later she was appointed Junior Clerk-Stenographer in the Office of Correspondence and Documents (renamed the Office of Correspondence and Records in 1947) of the United States National Museum (USNM) and in 1935 Weiss transferred to the Department of Geology. By 1948 Weiss returned to the Office of Correspondence and Records as an Administrative Assistant and later that year would advance to Chief after the retirement of Herbert S. Bryant. In 1956 her title was changed to Registrar and she remained in that position until her retirement in 1971.

As one of the first women managers at the Smithsonian Institution, Weiss was responsible for the central filing system of the USNM, public inquiry mail, mail service, accession reports, loans and exchanges, shipping, foreign travel, customs regulations, insurance, and workman's compensation. During her tenure, Weiss was involved in the acquisition of such museum specimens as the Wright Brothers' plane, "Kitty Hawk," the Hope Diamond, and the Fenykovi elephant.

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## Descriptive Entry

The materials in this accession document Weiss' work in the Office of Correspondence and Documents, the Department of Geology, and as Registrar for the USNM. Among those represented in the collection are Ray S. Bassler, Alexander Wetmore, Herbert S. Bryant, and Leonard Carmichael. Of interest are two diaries of Bassler which cover the time period from 1942-1947 and passport photographs of administrators, scientists, curators, and other individuals within the Smithsonian.

The collection is organized into the following subseries: 1) Helena Weiss; 2) Ray S. Bassler; 3) Smithsonian Institution. Materials include correspondence, memoranda, a scrapbook, notebooks, record books, diaries, black-and-white photographs, postcards, certificates, awards, and ephemera.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Museum registrars  
Museums -- Administration  
Museums -- Collection management

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographs  
Diaries  
Ephemera  
Manuscripts  
Picture postcards  
Scrapbooks

Names:

Bassler, Ray S. (Ray Smith), 1878-  
Bryant, Herbert S.  
Carmichael, Leonard, 1898-1973  
Weiss, Helena M., 1909-2004  
Wetmore, Alexander, 1886-1978

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Helena Weiss

#### Box 1

- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, 1932-1981
- Box 1 of 2 Education materials, 1923-1929
- Box 1 of 2 Job descriptions, appointments, and testing results, 1929-1944
- Box 1 of 2 Record book, 1937-1942
- Box 1 of 2 Notebook, 1948-1965
- Box 1 of 2 General science problems notebook
- Box 1 of 2 Letter of Introduction by Leonard Carmichael, 1963
- Box 1 of 2 Hand-illustrated birthday card from Edward A. Chapin, Ray S. Bassler, J. F. Gates Clarke, Clyde E. Bauman, and David H. Dunkle  
[Digital Content: Hand-illustrated birthday card from Edward A. Chapin, Ray S. Bassler, J. F. Gates Clarke, Clyde E. Bauman, and David H. Dunkle \[Image nos. SIA2013-02862 ND SIA2013-02863\]](#)
- Box 1 of 2 Smithsonian Institution - Certificate of Award, 1960
- Box 1 of 2 Certificates and awards, 1961-1965  
[Digital Content: Certificate Given to Helena Weiss by Secretary S. Dillon Ripley, October 11, 1965. \[Image no. \[https://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris\\\_sic\\\_14859\]\(https://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris\_sic\_14859\)\]](#)
- Box 1 of 2 Photographs, 1955-2001  
[Digital Content: Portrait of a young Helena Weiss in a portfolio, c. 1920s or 1930s. \[Image no. SIA2013-02865\]](#)
- Box 1 of 2 Retirement scrapbook, 1971
- Box 1 of 2 Retirement materials, 1971-1973
- Box 1 of 2 Smithsonian presentation materials, 1972-1989

#### Box 2

- Box 2 of 2                      Memoranda, 1953-1971
- Box 2 of 2                      Postcards, 1934-1970 (2 folders)
- Box 2 of 2                      Alexander Wetmore holiday cards, 1944-1969

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 2: Ray S. Bassler

### Box 2

Box 2 of 2	Photographs
Box 2 of 2	Diary, 1942-1946
Box 2 of 2	Diary, 1947
Box 2 of 2	"A Geologist's Paradise" by Ray. S. Bassler, 1933
Box 2 of 2	"Geologic Exhibits in the National Zoological Park" by Ray S. Bassler, 1939
Box 2 of 2	"Memorial to Ray S. Bassler" by Kenneth, E. Caster, 1965

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 3: Smithsonian Institution

### Box 2

- Box 2 of 2                    Smithsonian Institution Bowling League, 1948-1968 (3 folders)
- Box 2 of 2                    Photographs - Hebert S. Bryant
- Box 2 of 2                    Photographs - Mrs. Hanako Kobayashi, 1947
- Box 2 of 2                    Photographs - Smithsonian staff event for Alfred Hewitt and Lucil McCain
- Box 2 of 2                    Photographs - Smithsonian, general, 1948-1976
- Box 2 of 2                    Photographs - The 20th Century Club presentation of the "Happy Frog" statue to the National Zoological Park
- Box 2 of 2                    Passport photographs, A-L
- Box 2 of 2                    Passport photographs, M-Z
- Box 2 of 2                    20th Century Club - Centennial Gift to the National Zoological Park, 1987-1991
- Box 2 of 2                    Smithsonian Institution - Bicentennial Celebration Commemorating the Birth of James Smithson, 1965
- Box 2 of 2                    Programs and invitations, 1948-1988
- Box 2 of 2                    "Narrative of the 1958 Smithsonian-Bredin Caribbean Expedition" by Waldo L. Schmitt, 1959
- Box 2 of 2                    "The 1968 Collapse of Fernandina Caldera, Galapagos Islands" by Tom Simkin, 1968
- Box 2 of 2                    Smithsonian Information Leaflet 357, "Blue Whale," 1963
- Box 2 of 2                    Ephemera, 1965-1985
- Box 2 of 2                    Miscellaneous materials, 1932-1988

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*