



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Records, 1886-1978

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Records
Identifier:	Record Unit 250
Date:	1886-1978
Extent:	4 cu. ft. (4 record storage boxes)
Creator::	National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Electricity and Modern Physics
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 250, National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Electricity and Modern Physics, Records

Historical Note

The earliest artifacts in the United States National Museum's (USNM) collections relating to electricity, including Samuel F. B. Morse's telegraph, were curated by the staff of the Collection of Historical Relics, Department of Arts and Industries, Division of Anthropology. From 1891 to 1892 these artifacts were the responsibility of the Section of Transportation and Engineering. A Section of Physical Apparatus in the Department was organized in 1893, which maintained the electrical artifacts until 1895 when the Section of Technological Collections was created. A Section of Electricity, Division of Technology (Modern Phases), Department of Anthropology, existed from 1898 to 1903. From 1903 to 1919, the electrical collections were administered with the other technological collections by the Department of Anthropology, with a Division of Technology, 1904-1911, and Division of Mechanical Technology, 1912-1919, and from 1920 to 1939 by the Department of Arts and Industries. The latter department had a Division of Mechanical Technology (administered with the Division of Mineral Technology from 1921 to 1931) from 1920 to 1932 and a Section of Mechanical Technology, Division of Engineering, from 1933 to 1938. In 1939 a Department of Engineering and Industries was created, with the Section of Electrical Engineering and Communications, Division of Engineering, 1939-1946, and the Section of Electricity, Division of Engineering, 1947-1957, responsible for the electrical collections.

When the Museum of History and Technology (MHT) was created in 1957, the Division of Electricity, Department of Science and Technology, became responsible for collecting and preserving electrical artifacts. In 1969 MHT was renamed the National Museum of History and Technology, and the Division of Electricity was changed to the Division of Electricity and Nuclear Energy. In 1978 the Division was renamed the Division of Electricity and Modern Physics, under the newly organized Department of History of Science.

A. Howard Clark, assistant curator of the Collection of Historical Relics, was the first individual in charge of the USNM's electrical artifacts. In 1891, J. Elfreth Watkins was appointed curator of the Section of Transportation and Engineering. William Crawford Winlock, curator of Physical Apparatus, assumed responsibility for the electrical collections in 1893; the next year his title was changed to honorary curator. In 1895 Watkins was appointed curator of the Section of Technological Collections and retained that position until his death in 1903. George C. Maynard was appointed honorary curator of the Electrical Collections in 1896. Subsequently, he held positions as custodian of the Electrical Collections, 1897, and of the Section of Electricity, 1898-1903; aid, Division of Technology (Modern Phases), 1899-1901; assistant curator, Division of Technology, 1901-1911, and curator, 1912-1918. R. G. Paine served as aid in the Division of Mechanical Technology in 1919. From 1920 to 1931, Carl W. Mitman was curator of the Division of Mechanical Technology, and from 1943 to 1945, head curator in charge, Division of Engineering. In 1932, Frank A. Taylor was appointed assistant curator of the Section of Mechanical Technology and later held the positions of curator in charge of the Section of Mechanical Technology, 1933-1938; curator, Division of Engineering, 1933-1947; curator in charge, Section of Electrical Engineering and Communications, 1939-1946; and curator in charge, Section of Electricity, 1947-1948. Other curators have included Kenneth M. Perry, associate curator, 1948-1956; W. James King, Jr., associate curator, 1956-1958, and acting curator, 1958-1961; Robert P. Multhauf, acting curator, 1961-1963; and Bernard S. Finn, associate curator in charge, 1963-1965, and curator, 1965- .

Descriptive Entry

These records of the Division of Electricity and Modern Physics relating to electricity consist of some early general correspondence, primarily of George C. Maynard, but also including that of J. Elfreth Watkins and Carl W. Mitman, concerning the inventions of Alexander Graham Bell, Samuel F. B. Morse, Alfred Vail, and inventors of dynamos and incandescent electric lighting; general correspondence of more recent curators with manufacturers of electrical equipment, donors of artifacts, and historians and researchers concerning dates and patents of electrical equipment, objects in the Division's collection, and exhibits, particularly on early electrical appliances; reading files; annual reports and plans of operation; exhibit files consisting of exhibit scripts, photographs, correspondence and memoranda, and floor plans primarily for the Hall of Electricity; and requisitions.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Electricity -- History
- Museum curators
- Museum exhibits
- Museums -- Public relations
- Physics -- History

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white photographs
- Floor plans
- Illustrations
- Manuscripts

Names:

Bell, Alexander Graham, 1847-1922
Finn, Bernard S., 1932-
Forman, Paul
King, W. James (William James), 1915-
Maynard, George
Mitman, Carl Weaver, 1889-
Morse, Samuel Finley Breese, 1791-1872
Multhauf, Robert P.
Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Electricity
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Electricity and Modern Physics.
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Electricity and Nuclear Energy.
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Hall of Electricity.
Perry, Kenneth M.
Taylor, Frank A. (Frank Augustus), 1903-2007
United States National Museum. Department of Arts and Industries
United States National Museum. Department of Engineering and Industries
United States National Museum. Division of Engineering
United States National Museum. Section of Electrical Engineering and Communications.
United States National Museum. Section of Electricity
United States National Museum. Section of Steam Transportation
Vail, Alfred, 1807-1859
Watkins, J. Elfreth (John Elfreth), 1852-1903

Container Listing

Series 1: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1886-1927

Box 1

Box 1 of 4	A, 1891, 1910-1913.
Box 1 of 4	B, 1896-1927.
Box 1 of 4	C, 1912-1914.
Box 1 of 4	D, 1904-1916.
Box 1 of 4	E, 1891-1910.
Box 1 of 4	F, 1907-1917.
Box 1 of 4	G, 1896-1914.
Box 1 of 4	H, 1892-1925.
Box 1 of 4	L, 1913.
Box 1 of 4	M, 1886-1906.
Box 1 of 4	N, 1912.
Box 1 of 4	O-P, 1886-1900.
Box 1 of 4	R, 1900-1913.
Box 1 of 4	S, 1889-1913.
Box 1 of 4	T, 1908-1914.
Box 1 of 4	V, 1889-1916.
Box 1 of 4	W, 1890-1915.
Box 1 of 4	Miscellany, 1906-1907.

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Series 2: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1939, 1952, 1955-1974.

Box 1

Box 1 of 4	A, 1956-1973.
Box 1 of 4	B, 1939, 1952, 1957-1974.
Box 1 of 4	C, 1955-1974.
Box 1 of 4	D, 1955-1969.
Box 1 of 4	E, 1955-1969.
Box 1 of 4	F, 1955-1968.
Box 1 of 4	General Electric, 1952, 1955-1961.
Box 1 of 4	G, 1955-1968.
Box 1 of 4	H, 1955-1969.
Box 1 of 4	I, 1957-1966.
Box 1 of 4	J, 1957-1967.
Box 1 of 4	K, 1955-1967.
Box 1 of 4	L, 1955-1968.
Box 1 of 4	Mc, 1959-1968.
Box 1 of 4	M, 1955-1968.
Box 1 of 4	N, 1957-1963.
Box 1 of 4	O, 1956-1962.
Box 1 of 4	P, 1955-1961.
Box 1 of 4	R, 1955-1966.
Box 1 of 4	S, 1955-1966.

Box 1 of 4 T, 1955-1963.

Box 1 of 4 U, 1957-1963.

Box 1 of 4 V, 1955-1964.

Box 1 of 4 W, 1955-1967.

Box 1 of 4 Z, 1956.

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Series 3: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1962-1978.

Box 1

Box 1 of 4 A, 1965, 1968-1977.

Box 1 of 4 B, 1965, 1968-1977.

Box 1 of 4 C, 1964-1977.

Box 2

Box 2 of 4 D, 1963-1977.

Box 2 of 4 E, 1963-1977.

Box 2 of 4 F, 1963-1977.

Box 2 of 4 G, 1964-1977.

Box 2 of 4 H, 1964-1977.

Box 2 of 4 I, 1963-1971.

Box 2 of 4 J, 1965-1971.

Box 2 of 4 K, 1969-1971.

Box 2 of 4 L, 1964-1977.

Box 2 of 4 M, 1964-1977.

Box 2 of 4 N, 1963-1977.

Box 2 of 4 O, 1965-1975.

Box 2 of 4 P, 1963-1978.

Box 2 of 4 R, 1965-1977.

Box 2 of 4 S, 1962-1977.

Box 2 of 4 T, 1964-1976.

Box 2 of 4 U, 1963-1969.

Box 2 of 4 V, 1964-1968.

Box 2 of 4 W, 1962-1977.

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Series 4: APPLIANCE EXHIBIT CORRESPONDENCE, 1970-1977

In 1971 the Division of Electricity and Nuclear Energy used various forms of media to announce that it needed small kitchen and household appliances for an exhibit in the Hall of Electricity. The correspondence in this series consists of citizen and business responses to that appeal.

Box 2

Box 2 of 4	A, 1971-1972, 1976-1977.
Box 2 of 4	B, 1971-1974.
Box 2 of 4	C, 1970-1972, 1977.
Box 2 of 4	D, 1971-1973, 1977.
Box 2 of 4	E, 1971, 1974.
Box 2 of 4	F, 1971-1975.
Box 2 of 4	G, 1971-1976.
Box 2 of 4	H, 1971-1976.
Box 2 of 4	J, 1971-1972.
Box 2 of 4	K, 1971-1975.
Box 2 of 4	L, 1971-1974.
Box 2 of 4	M, 1971-1975.
Box 2 of 4	News Release, 1971.
Box 2 of 4	N, 1971-1972.
Box 2 of 4	O, 1971-1973.
Box 2 of 4	P, 1971-1973.
Box 2 of 4	R, 1971-1976.
Box 2 of 4	S, 1971-1976.

Box 2 of 4 T, 1971-1974.

Box 2 of 4 U, 1971.

Box 2 of 4 V, 1971-1972.

Box 2 of 4 W, 1971-1973.

Box 2 of 4 Y, 1971.

Box 2 of 4 Z, 1971-1972.

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Series 5: READING FILES, 1970-1975.

Box 2

Box 2 of 4	Reading File, June 1970-December 1970.
Box 2 of 4	Reading File, 1971.
Box 2 of 4	Reading File, 1972.
Box 2 of 4	Reading File, 1973.
Box 2 of 4	Reading File, 1974.
Box 2 of 4	Reading File, 1975.

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Series 6: ANNUAL REPORTS AND PLANS OF OPERATION, 1954-1970.

Box 3

- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Section of Electricity, FY 1954.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Section of Electricity, FY 1956.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Section of Electricity, FY 1957.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1958.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1959.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1960.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1962.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1963.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1964.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1965.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1966.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1967.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity, FY 1968.
- Box 3 of 4 Annual Report, Division of Electricity and Nuclear Energy, FY 1969.
- Box 3 of 4 Plan of Operation, FY 1958.
- Box 3 of 4 Plan of Operation, FY 1959.
- Box 3 of 4 Plan of Operation, FY 1960.
- Box 3 of 4 Plan of Operation, FY 1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Plan of Operation, FY 1962.

Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1963.
Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1964.
Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1965.
Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1966.
Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1967.
Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1968.
Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1969.
Box 3 of 4	Plan of Operation, FY 1970.

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Series 7: EXHIBIT FILES, 1896-1973.

Box 3

Early Exhibits

- Box 3 of 4 Docents, 1960-1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Edison Exhibit, 1936.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Robert A. Chipman Visit, January 1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity Comments, 1958-1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guidebook, 1965.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Introduction.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Memoranda, 1958-1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Plans, 1962.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity Script, January 1958.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guenter Schwarz Exhibits.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guenter Schwarz Visit, September 1960.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guenter Schwarz Visit, November 1960.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guenter Schwarz Visit, December 1960.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guenter Schwarz Visit, January 1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guenter Schwarz Visit, March 1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - Guenter Schwarz Visit, May 1961 (?).
- Box 3 of 4 "Industry Aids the Smithsonian," 1957.
- Box 3 of 4 Langmuir Exhibit, 1957.
- Box 3 of 4 Maynard's Plan for Electrical Exhibits, 1896.

Box 3 of 4 Miscellaneous Electrical Exhibits, 1900-1957.

 Regular Exhibits

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity Memoranda and Correspondence, 1957-1965.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for AB Section, 1967-1969.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for AC, AD Section, 1967.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, "The Story of Radio Tubes," Area BA, circa 1965.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, B Area, 2nd draft, W. James King, Jr., and Robert A. Chipman (BA, BB - TV and Radio).

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity - B Area, 1st draft, W. James King, Jr., and Robert Chipman (Area BB - TV).

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for "Electron Tube Systems," Area BB, by R. A. Chipman, circa 1964.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script, Area BC - Electronic Properties of Matter.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Lester Lewis' Comments on BC and BD.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for "Concept of Electron," Area BD, by R. A. Chipman, 1964.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for Area BF - Television.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, B Area, Lester Lewis' Comments.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for Section CA, by R. A. Chipman, Revision of December 15, 1961.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Area CA, Photographs of Exhibit Items.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Photographs for Sequence CB.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Reports on Areas CB, CC, and CD, 1961.

Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Specifications for Exhibits, Areas CCI-1 and CCI-4, by R. A. Chipman, circa 1963.

- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, fragments of script for sequences CC-4, CC-5, CC-6, CC-7, and CD-4.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Photographs of Specimens for Design Area CC.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for CC Motors and Generators and CD Meters. Note on original folder: "Original by R. Chipman. Many modifications by B. F. In Hall of Electricity, 1965. Removed 1968 for remodelling" by Bernard Finn.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, C Area (CC and CD), King draft revised by Robert Chipman with Peter Schladermundt Associates' additions, 1959.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, CD Area, Chipman comments, 1961.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Section C, Notes on Scripts submitted by Robert A. Chipman, 1961-1962.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, C Area, W. James King, 1st draft, 1959.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, C Area, W. James King, 2nd draft, 1959.
- Box 3 of 4 Hall of Electricity, C Area, King-Chipman draft (3rd, edited), 1961.
- Box 4
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Scripts, Introduction and Quadrant C.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, D Area, King-Chipman draft, 1959.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, DD-3, Chipman, February 1963, with revisions of March 1963 by B. Finn. Note on original folder: "This exhibit was produced. Taken out for Person-to-Person Telephone Exhibit in summer 1976" B. Finn.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Area DA - Microwave Technology, circa 1965.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script, Section DB.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Area DB-3, Photographs of Exhibit Items.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, "Electromagnetic Waves," Area DD, April 1963.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, "Modern Radio Communication" Script, Area DE-1, by R. A. Chipman, April 1, 1963.

- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, DE-1, Script to Accompany Slides.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, E, G, H Areas, King, circa 1959.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, Script for Radio Astronomy, by R. A. Chipman, July 15, 1963.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, "Radio Astronomy," Script and Comments by R. A. Chipman, July 15, 1963.
- Box 4 of 4 Hall of Electricity, 1961.
- Special Exhibits
- Box 4 of 4 "Edwin Armstrong," "Atlantic Cable," and "Energy Conservation" Exhibit Scripts, 1969, 1972.
- Box 4 of 4 "Atlantic Cable" Exhibit, 1972.
- Box 4 of 4 "Communication in Space" Exhibit Script, 1964.
- Box 4 of 4 Exhibit Script on Electrical Communications, circa 1957.
- Box 4 of 4 "Energy Conservation" Exhibit Photographs, 1969.
- Box 4 of 4 Operating Instructions for Apollo 11, Hall of News Reporting, 1973.
- Box 4 of 4 ITT Satellite Exhibit.
- Box 4 of 4 "Laser 10" Exhibit Script, 1970.
- Box 4 of 4 Music Exhibit, 1970-1973.
- Box 4 of 4 "Telephone" Exhibit, 1956.
- Box 4 of 4 "Telephone" Exhibit, March 1957.

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Series 8: REQUISITIONS, 1963-1974.

Box 4

Box 4 of 4 Memoranda regarding book purchases, 1963-1968.

Box 4 of 4 Requisitions, 1969-1974.

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