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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title: Records
Identifier: Record Unit 383
Date: 1926-1930, 1954-1988
Extent: 10.5 cu. ft. (10 record storage boxes) (1 document box)
Creator: National Museum of American History. Division of Armed Forces History
Language: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 383, National Museum of American History. Division of Armed Forces History, Records

Historical Note

The Division of Naval History was created in 1881 as part of the Section of Historical Collections, later the Division of History, which reported to the Department of Arts and Industries as well as the Department of Anthropology within the United States National Museum until 1938. In 1939, when the Division of History was established and began reporting to the Department of Engineering and Industries, Naval History was transferred to its control. The Division of History became the Department of History in 1949. In 1957, the Division became the Department of Armed Forces History which included the Divisions of Naval History and Military History and came under the supervision of the Museum of History and Technology (MHT).

In 1969, the Department of Armed Forces History became the Department of National and Military History and, in 1978, the Department of National History. In 1980, the Division of Naval History reported to the Department of the History of Science and Technology. The Division of Naval History and the Division of Military History merged in 1985 to form the Division of Armed Forces History.

The main purpose of the Division of Naval History was to trace the historical development of the United States Navy, beginning with maritime operations during the colonial and Revolutionary War period through subsequent years of change leading to the advent of the modern navy. Research mainly focused on United States naval personnel, vessels, weapons, uniforms, insignia, navigational instruments, and flags. The Division was also involved in staff marine archeology, publishing biographies, attending conferences, and collecting maritime artifacts. Curators and staff of the Division included Mendel L. Peterson, Acting Curator, 1958-1960; Philip K. Lundeberg, Associate Curator, 1959-1961, Curator, 1962-1986, and Curator Emeritus, 1987-; Melvin H. Jackson, Associate Curator, 1962-1965; Harold D. Langley, Curator, 1969-; and Lee Houchins, Research Associate, 1978-1984.
Descriptive Entry

These records include correspondence and memoranda documenting research activities, planning exhibitions for the Hall of Naval History, construction of ship models such as the USS Constitution, arrangements for acquiring the gunboat Philadelphia, studies of the submarine Nautilus and the Sperry Gyro-compass, presentation in 1965 of Sir Francis Drake’s Cadiz Letter to the National Museum of History and Technology (NMHT), and involvement with the restoration of the USS Constellation. The records also consist of administrative files of the Division, public inquiries, blueprints for the Hall of Naval History, exhibition scripts, and photographs of ship models, naval vessels, exhibitions, and staff.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Historical museums
- Military history
- Military museums
- Museum curators
- Museum exhibits
- Naval history

Types of Materials:
- Black-and-white photographs
- Floor plans
- Illustrations
- Manuscripts

Names:
- Constellation (Frigate)
- Constitution (Frigate)
- Drake, Francis, 1540?-1596
- Houchins, Lee
- Jackson, Melvin H.
- Langley, Harold D.
- Lundeborg, Philip K.
- National Museum of American History (U.S.). Department of the History of Science and Technology
- National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Naval History
- Nautilus (Submarine : SS-73)
- Peterson, Mendel
- Philadelphia (Gunboat)
- Sperry Gyrocompass
- United States National Museum. Section of Historical Relics
- United States. Navy
Container Listing

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Box 1 of 11  Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970, 1972
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Box 1 of 11  National Archives Conference, 1967-1971
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Box 1 of 11  Training Program for Foreign Museum Personnel, 1968
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Box 1 of 11  Academic Program Notes, 1968-1969
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Box 1 of 11  Move to Museum of History and Technology, 1961-1964 [includes photographs of museum]
Box 1 of 11  Museum Computer Network: Stony Brook, 1974
Box 1 of 11  Openings, 1971
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https://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_216950

Box 1 of 11  Television Scripts, 1961
Box 1 of 11  Requests for Quotations, 1963-1966

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Box 2 of 11  Committee on Completion of the Armed Forces Hall, 1978
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Box 2 of 11  Colonial Heritage
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Box 4

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Portsmouth (King), 1965

Alabama: Lee, William E.

Models, Half, Repair of

"Model" Correspondence, 1961

Half Model: Photographs

Accessions, FY 1972-1981 (2 folders)

Annual Report, 1957-1959 (3 folders)

Books and Other Publications, 1958-1960 (2 folders)

Collections Committee Memos, 1974-1983 (2 folders)

Intramural Transfers up to 1973

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Library Requisitions, 1960-1963

Inactive Loans to Smithsonian Institution

Inactive Loans from Smithsonian Institution

Inactive Loans to Smithsonian Institution (Naval), 1967-1974

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Inactive Loans from Smithsonian Institution (Naval), 1968-1973

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Memoranda, Packing, 1926-1930

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Leonard Carmichael, 1959-1963

U.S.S. Constitution, 1964

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Box 7 of 11   Atkins and Merrill, Inc.
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Box 8 of 11  Legislation, Naval
Box 8 of 11  Library of Congress, 1961-1964
Box 8 of 11  Space Report, 1968
Box 8 of 11  Major Reinstallation Program, 1983
Box 8 of 11  Material for Loan to Outside Museums, 1975
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Confederate Flags

Centennial Flags: Thirty-seven to Thirty-eight Star

Unofficial Flags: Thirty-nine to Forty-two Star

Thirty-seven to Forty-five Star Flags, 1976-1987

Forty-six to Fifty Star Flags

J.L. Hudson Flag

Hudson Flag

Silverfine and Great American Flag, 1979-1982

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Twenty-one Salute to Flag: June 14-July 4

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