



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Correspondence, 1972-1974

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Correspondence
Identifier:	Record Unit 519
Date:	1972-1974
Extent:	1 cu. ft. (1 record storage box)
Creator::	National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Costume and Furnishings
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 519, National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Costume and Furnishings, Correspondence

Historical Note

For an administrative history of the furnishings component of the Division of Costume and Furnishings prior to 1969, see Record Unit 261.

In 1883 a Section of Costumes was established under the Department of Arts and Industries, Division of Anthropology, United States National Museum (USNM), but was abolished in 1884. Costume collections subsequently were curated by the Section of Historical Relics and its various successors through to the Division of History, under the direction of A. Howard Clark until 1918 and Theodore T. Belote, 1919-1948. Otis T. Mason of the Department (later, Division) of Ethnology aided Clark with costumes of ethnological importance.

The Period Costume Collection was established in 1911 and featured a series of dresses worn by former First Ladies. Collector and donor Mrs. Julian James and Walter Hough, Head Curator of the Department of Anthropology, acted as co-supervisors. When Mrs. James died in 1922, Belote curated the collections. Upon its formation in 1943, the Civil Section of the Division of History assumed responsibility for the costume collections. Until 1969, they remained under that Section and its various successors through to the Division of Political History, Section of American Costume. Curators Margaret Klapthor and Anne W. Murray were chiefly concerned with costumes, establishing the First Ladies Hall and the Hall of American Costume during these years. For additional details on the history of the Section under the Division of Political History, see Record Unit 252.

When the Museum was reorganized in 1969, the new Division of Costume and Furnishings and the existing Division of Political History each curated portions of the costume collections. Staff for the new Division was assembled from the Divisions of Cultural History (now defunct) and Political History. Rodris

C. Roth served as Associate Curator (chiefly furnishings), 1969-1971, and Curator, 1972- , and Claudia B. Kidwell as Assistant Curator (chiefly costume), 1969- . Murray continued as Curator Emerita, 1969- .

Research of the Division of Costume and Furnishings primarily focused on the history of clothing and household objects in America with emphasis on the industrial period. It studied how changing economic, social, and technological factors affected the clothing and appearance of Americans. In addition, the Division was concerned with documenting and interpreting everyday wares used in the home, and the activities surrounding them. The Division staff and their predecessors collected a wide range of artifacts for study including clothing of men, women and children; jewelry; military and diplomatic uniforms; heating and lighting devices; clothing and gowns of Presidents and First Ladies; metal, synthetic and wooden wares; theatrical garments; furniture and accessories; household appliances; working class apparel; and architectural elements.

Descriptive Entry

These records chiefly consist of curatorial responses to public inquiries. Included is correspondence from private collectors, museum curators, clothing manufacturers, college professors, historical associations, and individuals.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Costume -- History
- House furnishings
- Museum curators
- Museums -- Public relations
- Women museum curators

Types of Materials:

- Manuscripts

Names:

- Belote, Theodore T.
- Clark, A. Howard
- Hough, Walter, 1859-1935
- James, Julien, Mrs.
- Kidwell, Claudia Brush
- Klapthor, Margaret Brown
- Mason, Otis Tufton, 1838-1908
- Murray, Anne Wood
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.) Hall of American Costume
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Cultural History
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Political History
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Political History
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). First Ladies Hall
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Section of American Costume
- Roth, Rodris

United States National Museum. Department of Anthropology
United States National Museum. Department of Arts and Industries
United States National Museum. Division of Ethnology
United States National Museum. Division of History
United States National Museum. Period Costume Collection
United States National Museum. Section of Costumes
United States National Museum. Section of Historical Relics

Container Listing

Box 1

Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: A-H, 1972
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: I-Q, 1972
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: Q-Z, 1972
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: A-H, 1972-1973
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: I-Q, 1972-1973
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: R-Z, 1972-1973
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: A-G, 1973-1974
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: H-M, 1973-1974
Box 1 of 1	Correspondence: M-Z, 1973-1974