



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Records, circa 1883-1984

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu |
| Title: | Records |
| Identifier: | Record Unit 529 |
| Date: | circa 1883-1984 |
| Extent: | 10 cu. ft. (10 record storage boxes) |
| Creator:: | National Museum of American History. Division of Photographic History |
| Language: | English |

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 529, National Museum of American History.
Division of Photographic History, Records

Historical Note

The history of photography at the Smithsonian Institution dates from the 1850s. In 1859, Secretary Joseph Henry proposed that a photographic record be assembled of Native American delegations visiting Washington, D.C. In 1867, with the support of Ferdinand V. Hayden, a geologist, and William H. Blackmore, a wealthy English collector and speculator, Washington photographers Alexander Gardner and Antonio Zeno Shindler began photographing the Native American delegates. These images and others formed the earliest Smithsonian photograph collection.

In 1883, the Section of Photography was established in the Department of Preparation, with Thomas William Smillie as photographer. Smillie, a former photographer at the United States Fish Commission, had been employed by the Institution as its official photographer since 1870. Smillie was named custodian of the Section in 1896, but also continued to function as the Institution's photographer until his death in 1917. His successors also retained these dual responsibilities until 1943, when the duties were separated and Gurney I. Hightower became the Institution's official photographer.

In 1897, the Section became a part of the Division of Graphic Arts, where it remained until 1969. At that time, the Division was redesignated Graphic Arts and Photography. In 1972, the two functions divided, and the Division of Photographic History was established in the Department of Applied Arts. At that time, Eugene N. Ostroff, associate curator and curator of photography under the previous divisions, was made curator of photographic history. Successively, the Division was affiliated with the Department of History of Technology, 1978-1980, and then the Department of the History of Science and Technology.

The Division of Photographic History and its predecessors primarily documented the history of photographic science and technology in America since the nineteenth century. The Division collected

cameras, patent models, motion picture apparatus, and photographs such as daguerreotypes, tintypes, and calotypes.

Curators and staff of the Division included Thomas W. Smillie, photographer, 1871-1895, custodian and photographer, 1896-1917; Loring W. Beeson, custodian and photographer, 1917-1920; Arthur J. Olmsted, custodian and photographer, 1920-1930, assistant curator and photographer, 1931-1941, associate curator and photographer, 1942, associate curator, 1943-1946; Alexander I. Wedderburn, associate curator, 1947-1960; Eugene N. Ostroff, associate curator of photography, 1960-1966, curator, 1966-1972, curator of photographic history, 1972- , and David E. Haberstich, assistant curator, 1970-1976.

Descriptive Entry

These records consist mostly of curatorial and staff correspondence and memoranda documenting activities of the Division and its predecessors, especially during the tenures of Thomas W. Smillie, Alexander J. Wedderburn, and Eugene N. Ostroff. The records also include information on the Hall of Photography, organized by Ostroff; newspaper clippings pertaining to the field of photography; historic photographs; annual reports; and administrative files.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Graphic arts
- Museum curators
- Museum exhibits
- Photography -- History

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white photographs
- Brochures
- Manuscripts

Names:

- Beeson, Loring W.
- Blackmore, William, 1827-1878
- Gardner, Alexander, 1821-1882
- Haberstich, David
- Hayden, F. V. (Ferdinand Vandever), 1829-1887
- Henry, Joseph, 1797-1878
- Hightower, Gurney I.
- National Museum of American History (U.S.). Department of the History of Science and Technology
- National Museum of American History (U.S.). Hall of Photography
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Department of Applied Arts
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Department of History of Technology
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Graphic Arts and Photography
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Photographic History
- Olmsted, Arthur J.
- Ostroff, Eugene

Shindler, A. Zeno (Antonio Zeno), 1823-1899
Smillie, Thomas William, 1843-1917
United States Fish Commission
United States National Museum. Department of Preparation
United States National Museum. Division of Graphic Arts
United States National Museum. Division of Graphic Arts. Section of Photography
Wedderburn, Alexander J.

Container Listing

Box 1

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Box 1 of 10 | Building management services, 1961-1967 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Property and supplies, 1963-1973 (2 folders) |
| Box 1 of 10 | Purchase requests, 1961-1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Library and other requests, 1960-1967 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Smithsonian <i>Torch</i> : Photographic History |
| Box 1 of 10 | Annual Reports, 1963-1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Association of Curators, 1965-1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Biennial Reports, 1962-1966 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Budget Estimates, 1961-1967 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Collections, 1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Communications, 1963-1968 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Conservation, 1967-1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Correspondence, 1960-1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Exhibitions, 1957-1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Magazine Articles, 1911, 1922, 1969 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Memoranda, 1961-1968 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Museum Techniques, Cataloging and Registration, 1958-1959 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Newspaper Clippings, 1911-1915, 1923, 1956-1957 and 1962-1967 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Patents, 1938, 1946-1953, 1961-1968 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Photographic Center, 1962-1968 (2 folders) |
| Box 1 of 10 | Photographs, 1965-1967 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Press Releases, 1962-1966 |
| Box 1 of 10 | Regents Meetings/Exhibition Scripts, 1946, 1949, 1954-1965 |

Box 1 of 10 Security, 1966-1969

Box 1 of 10 Special Events, 1965-1966

Box 1 of 10 Staff Meeting Minutes and the Smithsonian Council, 1964-1966

Box 1 of 10 Symposia, Seminars, and Conferences, 1963-1969

Box 1 of 10 Tours, 1967, 1969

Box 1 of 10 Workshops, Research, training, and Internships, 1961-1969

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1886-1908

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1909-1914

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1915

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1916

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1917

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1918

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1919

Box 1 of 10 Correspondence, 1920

Box 2

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - A, 1960-1969

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - B, 1947, 1957-1970

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - C, 1960-1970

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - D, 1959-1968

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - E, 1961-1968

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - F, 1948, 1961-1968

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - Ga-Ge, 1957-1968

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - Gi-Gu, 1961-1968

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - H, 1960-1968

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - I, 1960-1968

Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - J, 1963-1968

- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - K, 1960-1969
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - L, 1956, 1961-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - M, 1947, 1961-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - N, 1958-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - P, 1960-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - R, 1961-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - Sa-Sh, 1961-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - Si-Sy, 1957-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - T, 1958
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - V, 1958
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - W, 1961-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - Y, 1961-1968
- Box 2 of 10 Correspondence - Z, 1962, 1968
- Box 2 of 10 History of the Section of Photography
- Box 2 of 10 Clippings - Federal Photographers Elect, 1915
- Box 2 of 10 Clippings, 1927-1964 (4 folders)
- Box 3
- Box 3 of 10 Clippings - 2nd International Competition, 1948
- Box 3 of 10 Clippings, 1922-1924, 1939-1934, 1961-1964
- Box 3 of 10 Clippings - Publicity
- Box 3 of 10 Clippings - Photograph exhibitions, 1911-1959
- Box 3 of 10 Clippings - National Snapshot exhibition, 1940
- Box 3 of 10 Photographic articles, 1948-1949
- Box 3 of 10 Local press notices - British Societies show, 1924
- Box 3 of 10 Scientific Monthly, 1947-1951
- Box 3 of 10 International Photographic Exposition, 1956-1957

Box 3 of 10 Correspondence, 1888-1922 (2 folders)
Box 3 of 10 Correspondence - A, 1969-1979 (3 folders)
Box 3 of 10 Correspondence - American Museum of Photography, 1962-1977
Box 3 of 10 Correspondence - B, 1963-1982 (5 folders)
Box 3 of 10 Correspondence - C, 1968-1979 (Folders 1-2 of 6)

Box 4

Box 4 of 10 Correspondence - C, 1968-1979 (Folders 3-6 of 6)
Box 4 of 10 Correspondence - D, 1968-1979(2 folders)
Box 4 of 10 Correspondence - E, 1969-1980
Box 4 of 10 Correspondence - F, 1963-1979 (3 folders)
Box 4 of 10 Correspondence - G, 1968-1979 (3 folders)
Box 4 of 10 Correspondence - H, 1969-1979 (5 folders)

Box 5

Box 5 of 10 Correspondence - I, 1964-1978
Box 5 of 10 Correspondence - J, 1968-1979 (2 folders)
Box 5 of 10 Correspondence - K, 1968-1983 (4 folders)
Box 5 of 10 Correspondence - L, 1929, 1963-1981 (4 folders)
Box 5 of 10 Correspondence - M, 1960-1979 (5 folders)
Box 5 of 10 Correspondence - Museum of Modern Art, 1960-1975

Box 6

Box 6 of 10 Correspondence - N, 1961-1979 (3 folders)
Box 6 of 10 Correspondence - O, 1962, 1969-1979
Box 6 of 10 Correspondence - P, 1968-1979 (4 folders)
Box 6 of 10 Correspondence - Q, 1970, 1972, 1978
Box 6 of 10 Correspondence - R, 1967-1979 (5 folders)
Box 6 of 10 Correspondence - S, 1962-1986 (Folders 1-5 of 8)

Box 7

- Box 7 of 10 Correspondence - S, 1962-1986 (Folders 6-8 of 8)
- Box 7 of 10 Correspondence - T, 1965-1979 (3 folders)
- Box 7 of 10 Correspondence - U, 1963-1976
- Box 7 of 10 Correspondence - V, 1946-1979
- Box 7 of 10 Correspondence - W, 1963-1982 (5 folders)
- Box 7 of 10 Correspondence - X, Y, Z, 1966-1979
- Box 7 of 10 Chronological file, 1961-1962 (2 folders)
- Box 7 of 10 Chronological file, July-December 1962 (2 folders)

Box 8

- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, January-March 1963
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, April-December 1963 (2 folders)
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, January-December 1964 (3 folders)
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, January-December 1965 (2 folders)
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, January-December 1966 (2 folders)
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, January-December 1967 (2 folders)
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, 1968 (2 folders)
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, July 1968 - June 1969 (2 folders)
- Box 8 of 10 Chronological file, 1969 (2 folders)

Box 9

- Box 9 of 10 Design and Production Incorporated, 1955-1974 (3 folders)
- Box 9 of 10 General correspondence, 1955-1964
- Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - A, 1980-1984
- Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - B, 1980-1984 (2 folders)
- Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - C, 1980-1984
- Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - D, 1980-1984

Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - E, 1980-1984
Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - F, 1980-1984
Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - G, 1980-1984
Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - H, 1980-1984 (2 folders)
Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - I, 1980-1984
Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - J, 1980-1984
Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - K, 1980-1984 (2 folders)
Box 9 of 10 Correspondence - L, 1980-1984

Box 10

Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - M, 1980-1984 (3 folders)
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - N, 1980-1984
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - O, 1980-1984
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - P, 1980-1984
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - Q, 1982
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - R, 1980-1984 (2 folders)
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - S, 1980-1984 (3 folders)
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - T, 1980-1984
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - U, 1980-1984
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - V, 1980-1984
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - W, 1980-1984 (2 folders)
Box 10 of 10 Correspondence - X, Y, Z, 1980-1984