



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Carl W. Mitman Papers, 1937-1946, 1949

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

Smithsonian Institution Archives
Washington, D.C.
Contact us at osiaref@si.edu

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Historical Note.....	1
Descriptive Entry.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	3
Series 1: Smithsonian War Committee, 1942-1945.....	3
Series 2: Subject Files, 1937-1942, 1946, 1949.....	5

Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Carl W. Mitman Papers
Identifier:	Record Unit 7386
Date:	1937-1946, 1949
Extent:	1 cu. ft. (2 document boxes)
Creator::	Mitman, Carl Weaver, 1889-
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7386, Carl W. Mitman Papers

Historical Note

Carl Weaver Mitman (1889-1958) was born in Newberg, Pennsylvania. He joined the United States National Museum (USNM) in 1914 as an Aid in the Division of Mineral Technology. He was promoted to Curator in the Division of Mechanical Technology in 1919, and served as Curator of the Divisions of Mechanical Technology and Mineral Technology from 1921. He was made Head Curator of the Department of Arts and Industries in 1932. In addition to his responsibilities at the museum, Mitman organized Smithsonian exhibits at fairs and expositions in the United States and abroad. In 1942 he was appointed chairman of the Smithsonian War Committee, and served until 1944. On August 12, 1946, President Truman signed a bill creating the National Air Museum within the Smithsonian Institution. Mitman was relieved of his duties at USNM and was appointed Assistant to the Secretary for the Air Museum on March 7, 1948. He worked on planning the new museum until his retirement in 1952.

Descriptive Entry

Almost all of the papers in this collection deal with Carl Weaver Mitman's role as chairman of the Smithsonian War Committee. Loyal B. Aldrich, William N. Fenton, Herbert Friedmann, and Webster P. True also served on the committee. Minutes of the committee's meetings, correspondence and notes document the committee's projects. In addition to the War Committee files, small groups of correspondence and miscellaneous materials on other projects that Mitman was involved in are included in Series 2. There is no material covering the many expositions that Mitman coordinated or his research and curatorial duties. There is only one newspaper clipping relating to the founding of the National Air Museum. Additional information on Mitman's career may be found in Record Units 84, 162, 239, 250 and 297 in the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautical museums
Mineralogists
Mineralogy

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographs
Manuscripts

Names:

Aldrich, Loyal Blaine, 1884-1965
Fenton, William N. (William Nelson), 1908-2005
Friedmann, Herbert, 1900-1987
Lehigh University
Mitman, Carl Weaver, 1889-
National Air Museum (U.S.)
National Resources Committee
Princeton University
Smithsonian Institution Building (Washington, D.C.)
Smithsonian War Committee
True, Webster Prentiss, 1892-
United States National Museum. Department of Arts and Industries
United States National Museum. Division of Mineral Technology
United States. Canal Zone Biological Area, Barro Colorado Island
United States. Interdepartmental Committee on Cooperation with the American Republics
United States. National Youth Administration

Container Listing

Series 1: Smithsonian War Committee, 1942-1945.

The Smithsonian War Committee was appointed by Secretary Charles G. Abbot in 1942, to receive suggestions, explore possibilities, and make recommendations as to how the Smithsonian could make its scientific resources available to the military community. The Smithsonian received thousands of requests for war-related information--mostly geographic, but also in the areas of biology, geology, physics, engineering and anthropology. Among other things, the War Committee created a detailed roster of areas of expertise of its scientific staff, maintained a file on sources of photographs, published a series of papers on war-related topics, and co-founded the Ethnogeographic Board. Made up of representatives of the Smithsonian, the National Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Social Sciences Research Council, the Ethnogeographic Board acted as a clearinghouse for scientific information of use to the armed services. In May 1944, the War Committee felt that it had exhausted all possibilities of involving the Smithsonian in the war, and was dissolved.

These papers include correspondence, recommendations and other materials relating to the projects of the War Committee. There is little material on the War Background Studies series or the Ethnogeographic Board. Interested researchers should consult Record Unit 87 for records of the Ethnogeographic Board.

Box 1

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 1 Correspondence, 1942-1945. Includes general correspondence of Secretary Charles G. Abbot, John Enos Graf and members of the War Committee. Topics covered include museum tours, specimen collecting by soldiers, project ideas, useful publications, requests for information, and the War Background Studies series. Arranged chronologically. |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 2 Minutes of meetings of the War Committee, April 3, 1942-April 11, 1944 |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 3 Reports of the War Committee, contains summaries and reviews of activities |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 4 "A Roster of Personnel, World Travel, and Special Knowledge" |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 5 Memorandum no. 1, April 4, 1942, and response to question 1, arranged alphabetically |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 6 Responses to question 2 of memo no. 1 |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 7 Responses to question 3 of memo no. 1 |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 8 Responses to question 4 of memo no. 1 |
| Box 1 of 2 | Folder 9 Memorandum of October 14, 1942, and responses, arranged alphabetically |

Box 2

- Box 2 of 2 Folder 1 Recommendations of the War Committee. Topics include identification of biological specimens, special exhibits and lectures, a welcome brochure for service men, proposed War Background Studies, and extending the hours of museums.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 2 Photograph Project. Includes materials relating to an index made in May 1942 of staff members' photographs of strategic value to the military.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 3 "Smithsonian Personnel in the Armed Forces"
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 4 "Resources of the Smithsonian Institution Library"
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 5 Ethnogeographic Board. Includes a few letters relating to publications of the Board and the minutes of the Board's meeting of March 25, 1944.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 6 Miscellaneous

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Subject Files, 1937-1942, 1946, 1949.

This series includes materials on a few projects not relating to World War II. The National Resources Committee was organized to compile a report on federal research facilities. The papers here relate to a report made by the Smithsonian to include in the larger project. The National Youth Administration asked the Smithsonian for help in preparing instructional pamphlets on topics of interest to youth and in locating pictures. The Interdepartmental Committee on Cooperation with the American Republics, a cooperative effort among several government agencies, was designed to promote good relations with other North American countries when war broke out in Europe. The papers in this group deal with the translation of scientific publications into Spanish and Portuguese. In 1941 an exhibit was installed in the main hall of the Smithsonian Building illustrating the organization and research activities of the Institution. A full set of exhibit photographs are included in this series.

Box 2

- Box 2 of 2 Folder 7 National Resources Committee, 1937
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 8 National Youth Administration, correspondence, 1938-1939
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 9 Interdepartmental Committee on Cooperation with the American Republics, 1940-1942
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 10 Main Hall Exhibit Photos, 1941
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 11 Miscellaneous. Includes a news clipping of August 4, 1946, on the National Air Museum and photographs of September 1949 of the Smithsonian's Canal Zone Biological Area on Barro Colorado Island with Adela A. Gomez and Carl B. Koford.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)