Fred Lawrence Whipple Papers, \textit{circa} 1927-1983

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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title: Fred Lawrence Whipple Papers
Identifier: Record Unit 7431
Date: circa 1927-1983
Extent: 23.5 cu. ft. (23 record storage boxes) (1 document box)
Creator: Whipple, Fred L. (Fred Lawrence), 1906-2004
Language: Language of Materials: English

Administrative Information

Prefered Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7431, Fred Lawrence Whipple Papers

Historical Note

Fred Lawrence Whipple (1906- ), an astronomer, received his B.A. degree from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1927, and his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1931. In 1932, he joined the staff of Harvard University as an instructor of astronomy. By 1950, Whipple had received the title of professor and chairman of the Department of Astronomy at Harvard. Whipple was appointed director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) when it moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1955. Since his retirement in 1973, Whipple has continued his research as a senior scientist at SAO.

During his tenure as director, Whipple oversaw SAO research programs in stellar interiors, the upper atmosphere, meteorites, celestial mechanics, and geodesy studies. Major SAO projects under his direction included the Satellite Tracking Program, Project Celescope, the Radio Meteor Project, and the Meteorite Photography and Recovery Project, also known as the Prairie Network. In the late 1960s, Whipple selected Mount Hopkins, Arizona, as the site of a new SAO astronomical facility. Renamed the Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory in 1981, the facility houses the Multiple-Mirror Telescope (MMT), an innovative, low-cost telescope planned by Whipple and two colleagues.

Whipple is internationally recognized for his research on the moon, meteors, and comets. He has conducted pioneering research in photographically measuring the speeds and decelerations of meteors, computing the orbits of comets and asteroids, and describing the structure of comets. He is the author of more than 150 scientific books and papers, has served as editor of several publications, and has been a member and officer in numerous professional organizations. In 1975, the minor planet no. 1940 was named "Whipple" in recognition of his contributions to astronomy.
Introduction

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Descriptive Entry

The papers of Fred Lawrence Whipple document his astronomical research; his professional work in the field of astronomy; his career as director of the SAO; and, to a lesser extent, his activities as a Harvard University faculty member. They include a large file of correspondence with professional colleagues, amateur astronomers, SAO staff scientists, Smithsonian Institution officials, scientific societies and professional groups, government agencies, and Harvard University staff and officials. The papers concern Whipple's research interests, scientific publications, and editorial work; SAO research projects, particularly the Satellite Tracking Program, Project Celescope, the Radio Meteor Project, and the Meteorite Photography and Recovery Project; Whipple's work for professional organizations and government agencies and committees including the International Astronomical Union, the Committee on Space Research, the Committee on Space and Astronautics of the United States House of Representatives, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Science Foundation; SAO relations with the Smithsonian Institution; and his activities at Harvard University and the Harvard College Observatory. Also included are college papers, notes, and a copy of his Ph.D. dissertation; manuscripts of articles, lectures, radio talks, reviews, and notes from his research; research notes on comets; correspondence, notes, reports, minutes and related materials from Whipple's work with professional groups and committees; files documenting the development of the MMT at Mount Hopkins, Arizona; and a set of Whipple's publications. Researchers should also consult Record Unit 9520, Fred Lawrence Whipple Interviews, 1976.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
Asteroids
Astronomers
Astronomy
Astrophysicists
Astrophysics
Comets
Meteors

Types of Materials:
Manuscripts

Names:
COSPAR
Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory
Harvard College Observatory
Harvard University
International Astronomical Union
Mt. Hopkins Observatory
Multiple Mirror Telescope Observatory
National Academy of Sciences (U.S.)
National Science Foundation (U.S.)
Radio Meteor Project (Harvard College Observatory)
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Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. Project Celescope
Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. Satellite Tracking Program
United States. Congress. House. Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration
United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Los Angeles
Whipple, Fred L. (Fred Lawrence), 1906-2004

Geographic Names:

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Box 17 of 24  Physics 215, Birge, 1929-1930
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Box 17 of 24  Winds, 1953 & earlier. Papers and calculations by FLW on high-altitude winds.
Box 17 of 24  Visual v. Photographic Radiants, etc.? Notes and calculations, undated
Box 17 of 24  "The Case of the H2O Clouds on Venus." By Donald H. Menzel and FLW. Abstract, mss., and notes, c. 1954
Box 17 of 24  Lecture on the moon delivered before the APS, April 1970
Box 17 of 24  Comet and meteor orbit results, c. 1953. Calculations, notes, graphs, etc.
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Box 17 of 24  Satellite Geodesy - Royal Society, British National Committee on Space Research meeting, October 17-18, 1966
Box 17 of 24  Celescope Project, 1968-1969
Box 17 of 24  "A Revolution in Astronomy." By Whipple for Colliers, 1952.
Box 17 of 24  "Notes on Comets, Meteors, and Planetary Origin," undated

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Box 18 of 24  Meteor formulas, data, and calculations, 1938
Box 18 of 24  Geminids (?) collected, 1939-1946. Notes and data.

Box 18 of 24  Historical on S.S. Meteor Cameras and V-2 Biological (?), 1947

Box 18 of 24  Hoba West Meteorite, 1950-1951. Observations and calculations


Box 18 of 24  Jupiter a Planet. Appears to be drafts of articles for Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946.


Box 18 of 24  "Kinematics of Cosmic Clouds." Publication, mss. & notes by Whipple, 1946.

Box 18 of 24  Plans for research projects by Whipple, 1939

Box 18 of 24  Meteor widths, 1953

Box 18 of 24  Meteor Orbit Results (published). Observations and calculations, 1950-1953.


Box 18 of 24  Meteorites and Space Travel. Includes mss. on meteorites phenomena and meteorites (?) and meteorites and space travel, 1946-1951.

Box 18 of 24  Measuring engines, 1946


Box 18 of 24  Kuiper, Gerard P. Correspondence re: his four-volume "The Solar System Series," 1950-1953

Box 18 of 24  "Some Problems of Meteor Astronomy," mss. and notes, 1955

Box 18 of 24  Radio Meteors, 1946

Box 18 of 24  Rocket Atmosphere. Includes several papers on the topic by various authors. Includes mss. by Whipple on "Results of Rocket and Meteor Research," paper presented at Symposium on the Upper Atmosphere before the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics, Brussels, 1951. Includes notes, graphs, and charts.

Box 18 of 24  Standard Atmosphere. Various publications by others. (2 folders)

Box 18 of 24  Space Travel. "Why Conquer Space?" Typescript by Whipple, 1953.
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Record of experiments at the Eastman Kodak Labs, Rochester, N.Y., 1931

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Spectra and Colors of External Galaxies, undated. Notes, observations, and data.

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Inter-American Scientific Conference, Mexico City, Puebla, and Morelis Mexico, 1941-1942.

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Total Solar Eclipse, Lexington, Maine, August 31, 1932

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Silvering process. Directions for silvering mirrors, publications and mss. by E. T. King, c. 1932.

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"A Proposed Nebular Spectrograph of Relatively High Resolving Power" by Whipple, mss. and notes, undated

Miscellaneous Lectures and Radio Talks by Whipple. In no particular order.

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"The Significance of the 200-inch Telescope." Address given before the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Meridian, Conn., November 1, 1938. Includes photo of Whipple.

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Notes for a lecture on nebulae and star clusters, Herschel's Birthday Bicentenary, November 15, 1938

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Lecture, Sigma Xi, Brown University, April 14, 1941.

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Lecture for open house, November 8, 1937, "Meteors as Messengers from Space."

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Leo Goldberg's farewell party, 1941

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"From Stardust to Galaxies." Notes for talk at State Teachers College, Westfield, Massachusetts, 1942.

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Radio broadcast for WGY-GE, October 2, 1946, "The Forthcoming Meteor Shower."

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"A Star has Burst," undated.
Box 18 of 24  "Photography in Astronomy." Newspaper review for open night, November 1, 1935.

Box 18 of 24  Lecture to Skyscrapers, November 7, 1934, notes.

Box 18 of 24  "Comets," radio talk, February 7, 1933.


Box 18 of 24  "The Stars," Radio Lecture IV, WIXAL, May 8, 1937 (?)


Box 18 of 24  Round table discussion on Aurora Borealis, WEEI, January 1938.

Box 18 of 24  "Comets," WIXAL Radio Lecture III, April 23, 1937

Box 18 of 24  Lecture on Fresh Comets, Nond Club (?), May 6, 1937

Box 18 of 24  "Comet 1940d," WRUL, October 5, 1940

Box 18 of 24  "The Comets of 1940," undated, but probably 1940-1941.

Box 18 of 24  "What Keeps the Stars Shining," WRUL, February 1, 1941.


Box 18 of 24  "Novae and Supernovae," WRUL Radio, March 1, 1941

Box 18 of 24  "Comets and Meteors" - Radio broadcast, Science Service, "Adventures in Science" series, CBS, August 9, 1947


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Box 19 of 24  IAU, 10th General Assembly, Moscow, 1958

Box 19 of 24  IAU, 10th General Assembly, Moscow, 1958. Includes some records of the fifth CSAGI (?) meeting.


Box 19 of 24  IAU, General, 1961

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Box 21 of 24  National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, 1958
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