



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Robert Tyler Davis Papers, 1918-1977 and undated

by Smithsonian Institution Archives

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Creator:	Davis, Robert Tyler
Title:	Robert Tyler Davis Papers
Dates:	1918-1977 and undated
Quantity:	4 linear meters.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7439, Davis, Robert Tyler, Robert Tyler Davis Papers

Access Restriction

Use of this record unit requires prior arrangement with the Archives staff.

Historical Note

Robert Tyler Davis (1904-1978) was born in Los Angeles, California. He was a museum administrator and an educator in art and art history, specializing in Pacific Northwest Native American art, and decorative arts, particularly tapestries. He graduated from Franklin High School, Los Angeles, and studied art history, drawing, and painting at the University of California at Los Angeles, and at Harvard, A.B., 1926, A.M., 1928. He was a Carnegie Fellow (1927-1929), and studied fine arts abroad, taking courses at the Sorbonne. He taught drawing, painting and art history at the University of Rochester, in New York (1929-1933), and at the Erskine School for Girls, Boston, when he returned to Harvard for graduate museum studies between 1933 and 1934.

On September 6, 1934 Davis married mystery novelist Lillian Soskin, and became Director of Education at the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, New York. In 1939 Davis was named Director of the Portland Art Museum in Oregon, where he researched and collected Native American art. His book, *Native Arts of the Pacific Northwest*, was published in 1949. From 1947 to 1952 Davis was Director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and Professor of Fine Arts at McGill University in Montreal. Davis was Director of the Vizcaya-Dade County Art Museum, 1953-1957, Interim Director of the Joe and Emily Lowe Gallery, University of Miami, 1955-1956, and Coordinator of Humanities and Professor of Art at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, 1956-1959. Lillian Davis died October 12, 1957. Davis was remarried January 29, 1959 to Janet Evans Golby.

In 1960 Davis was hired as museum consultant and liaison for the French and Company art dealership in New York. In September 1968 Davis became Assistant Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.; Acting Director, June 1969-January 1970; and later Special Assistant for the Collections, 1972-1975. His son, Martin M. Davis, died in 1969, and Janet Davis died in 1973. In 1975

Robert Tyler Davis retired to Lily Dale, New York, and traveled extensively. He died in 1978 in Pasadena, California.

Descriptive Entry

These papers document Robert Tyler Davis' education and career, 1918-1977. The majority of the material is dated 1937- 1977. A fair amount of incoming correspondence illustrates Davis' personal life, and, to a lesser extent, his professional career. Of special note are letters from Davis' second wife, Janet, and journals kept during his travels. Materials concerning his career consist largely of photographs, newspaper clippings, and research notes, and less often include official business papers and correspondence. The most detailed division regards his directorship of the Vizcaya Museum. Davis' research on the Gellatly Collection in the Smithsonian is also well documented. Other materials include travel photographs, artistic sketches drawn by Davis, and notes.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art

Types of Materials:

Art objects
Diaries
Photographs
Sketches

Names:

Albright Art Gallery (Buffalo, N.Y.)
Davis, Robert Tyler
French & Company (New York, N.Y.)
Harvard University
Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery (University of Miami)
McGill University
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
National Collection of Fine Arts (U.S.)
Portland Art Museum (Or.)
University of Miami
University of Rochester
Vizcaya Museum and Gardens (Miami, Fla.)

Container Listing

Series 1: CORRESPONDENCE, 1939-1940, 1947-1951, 1953-1977, AND UNDATED. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

This series contains incoming personal letters and cards to Robert and Janet Davis from family, friends, and colleagues. Of special note are letters from Janet Davis, which reveal much about their relationship and her long illness. The collection also includes numerous and frequent letters from Robert Tyler Lee, Davis' cousin, friend, and companion, as well as a significant amount of correspondence from friend Stephan Bourgeois, New York art consultant and author.

Box 1

- Folder 1 Andorfer, Greg, 1973, and undated
- Folder 2 B, general
- Folder 3 Barland, Meleur, 1968, 1977
- Folder 4 Beal, Rachel, 1977
- Folder 5 Blackmun, Florence and Ted, 1976-1977, and undated
- Folder 6 Bourgeois, Stephan, 1939-1940, 1947-1951, 1953-1959, 1961
- Folder 7 Bower, Tom, 1976, and undated
- Folder 8 Breeskin, Adelyn Dohme, 1976, and undated
- Folder 9 C-D, general
- Folder 10 Sister Corona, 1976, 1977, and undated
- Folder 11 Cuddy, Lorraine, 1976, and undated
- Folder 12 Davis, Eugenie, undated
- Folder 13 Davis, Janet, 1959, 1960-1962
- Folder 14 Davis, Janet, 1963-1964, 1966, 1968
- Folder 15 Davis, Janet, February-April, 1971
- Folder 16 Davis, Janet, August-December, 1971
- Folder 17 Davis, Janet, 1972-1973
- Folder 18 Davis, Janet, undated
- Folder 19 Davis, Martin, 1960, and undated
- Folder 20 DePietro, Anne Cohen, 1977, and undated
- Folder 21 Dubin, Elizabeth, undated

- Folder 22 E-F, general
- Folder 23 Eisenberg, Helen, 1975, and undated
- Folder 24 Evans, Jenella, 1977, and undated
- Folder 25 Fabian, Monroe, 1972
- Folder 26 Feldman, Thalia, 1976, and undated
- Folder 27 Ferault, Thirese, 1971, 1977
- Folder 28 Fisch, Olga Anhalzer, undated
- Folder 29 Fisher, Fred and Becky, 1976, 1977
- Folder 30 Francis, Frances Meriam, 1976, and undated
- Folder 31 Francis, Henry S. and Frances, 1956-1957, 1959, 1968,
1976-1977, and undated
- Folder 32 G-H, general
- Folder 33 Gomez, Mary and Alden, 1977, and undated
- Folder 34 Hesen, Stephne, 1974, and undated
- Folder 35 Hoffman, Edmund M., 1977
- Folder 36 Irvine, Evy, 1960, 1975
- Folder 37 J, general
- Folder 38 Kaufman, Louis and Annette, 1977, and undated
- Folder 39 Kuhr, Dave, 1976, and undated
- Folder 40 L-O, general
- Folder 41 Landgren, Marchal E., 1976-1977
- Folder 42 Lee, Robert Tyler, 1953, 1975
- Folder 43 Lee, Robert Tyler, February-June, 1976
- Folder 44 Lee, Robert Tyler, July-October, 1976
- Folder 45 Lee, Robert Tyler, January-April, 1977
- Folder 46 Lee, Robert Tyler, May-July, 1977
- Folder 47 Lee, Robert Tyler, August-October, 1977
- Folder 48 Lee, Robert Tyler, November-December, 1977, and undated
- Folder 49 Maxwell, Jane, 1973, 1977, and undated
- Folder 50 Milliken, William Mathewson, 1977, and undated

Folder 51 Mostecky, Helmut and Karin, 1977

Folder 52 P-S, general

Folder 53 Paine, Barbara ("Babs"), 1976-1977

Folder 54 Pancoast, Kay, 1977, and undated

Folder 55 Rauch, Doris, 1975-1977, and undated

Folder 56 Reiff, Daniel and Janet

Folder 57 Rhoades, Georgia M., 1976, and undated

Folder 58 Risser, Fred, M.D., 1972

Folder 59 Rubenstein, Richard A., 1976-1977

Folder 60 Sphar, John and Pat, undated

Folder 61 Spickard, Jean, 1971, 1973, and undated

Folder 62 T, W, general

Folder 63 Tyler, Don, 1977, and undated

Folder 64 Watt, Marge and William, 1977, and undated

Folder 65 Wheeler, Maggie, 1977, and undated

Folder 66 Unidentified correspondence, 1969, 1973, 1975-1977, and undated

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Series 2: JOURNALS AND DAYBOOKS, 1963-1977, AND UNDATED.

This series contains several notebooks, and Robert Tyler Davis' pocket calendars, 1968-1977, which give very brief account of Davis' business and personal affairs. Also included are travel journals, which generally describe Davis' travels for the National Collection of Fine Arts, and during his retirement, but which also occasionally give special insight into Davis' thoughts on retirement, the deaths of his son and second wife, his travels, and his relationship with Robert Tyler Lee.

Box 2

Folders 1-10 Pocket Day-Timers, 1968-1977

Box 3

Folder 1 Address book

Folder 2 Notebooks, 1963-1968, and undated

Folder 3 Memo book of prescription drugs, 1969-1975

Folder 4 Travel journal, September-November 1974

Folder 5 Travel journal, November 1974

Folder 6 Travel journal, January-November 1976

Folder 7 Travel journal, November-December 1976

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Series 3: PAPERS RELATING TO ROBERT TYLER DAVIS' EDUCATION AND PROFESSORSHIP, 1918-1926, 1928, 1932-1934, AND UNDATED.

This series concerns Robert Tyler Davis' education at Franklin High School, Los Angeles, California, the University of California at Los Angeles, Harvard University, and abroad, and his brief professorship at the University of Rochester. Included are several course notebooks, a sketch book of Davis drawings, and high school annuals.

Box 3

Folder 8 Diplomas

Folder 9 Franklin High School photograph, programs and clippings

Folder 10 Franklin High School "Almanac," 1918-1919

Folder 11 Franklin High School "Almanac," 1922

Folder 12 University of California botany notes, 1922-1923

Folder 13 Harvard memorabilia

Folder 14 Composition book

Folder 15 Design notebook

Folder 16 Lettering notebook

Folder 17 Note cards

Folder 18 Sketch book, drawings of Tiepolo, 1928

Folder 19 Art lectures, notes, papers and blueprints, 1934, and undated

Folder 20 University of Rochester catalogue, 1932-1933

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Series 4: PAPERS RELATING TO ALBRIGHT ART GALLERY, BUFFALO, NEW YORK, 1937-1939, AND UNDATED.

As Director of the Albright Gallery, Davis designed programs which fostered cooperation between the museum and area schools. This series includes reports, papers, and interviews relating to his programs, as well as collection photographs and other memorabilia.

Box 3

Folder 21 Albright Art Gallery catalogues, photographs, clippings and postcards, 1937-1939

Folder 22 Albright Art Gallery installation and collection photographs

Folder 23 Interviews on educational museum programs, 1938

Folder 24 "Questionnaire on the Place of the Art Museum in General Education"

Folder 25 Educational material, notes and brochures

Folder 26 "The Art Museum and the Secondary School," by Robert Tyler Davis

Folder 27 "Educational Activities of Art Museums," by Robert Tyler Davis

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Series 5: PAPERS RELATING TO PORTLAND ART MUSEUM, 1939-1947.

This series contains a number of installation and collection photographs from the Portland Art Museum. It illustrates the public view of the museum, and of Davis, with many newspaper clippings and catalogues, and includes specific information on two Davis exhibits on Indian art and the "Masterpieces of French Painting."

Box 3

Folder 28 Portland Art Museum acquisition listings and photographs,
1939-1947

Folder 29 Portland Art Museum installation and collection photographs

Folder 30 Portland reports, bulletins and programs

Folder 31 Portland Art Museum lectures and notes, 1940-1947, and undated

Folder 32 Portland Art Museum catalogues by Robert Tyler Davis,
1939-1946, and undated

Box 4

Folder 1 Museum policies and codes

Folder 2 Portland Art Museum publicity clippings, photographs, and
memorabilia

Folder 3 Portland Indian Art Exhibit publicity clippings and photographs

Folder 4 Portland "Masterpieces of French Painting" exhibit, 1941

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Series 6: PAPERS RELATING TO MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS AND MCGILL UNIVERSITY, 1947-1952.

At the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Davis created a bilingual program and museum. The collection contains a significant amount of photographs and publicity clippings, written in both French and English. It also includes the museum's annual reports, general personal correspondence from colleagues, and several reviews of Davis' book, *Native Arts of the Pacific Northwest*. There are very few papers relating to McGill University.

Box 4

Folder 5 Correspondence regarding Montreal position, 1947

Folder 6 Montreal correspondence, notes, invitations and photographs. In French and English.

Folder 7 Montreal Museum of Fine Arts annual reports, 1947, 1949-1951

Folder 8 Montreal Museum of Fine Arts publications, 1947-1951, and undated

Folder 9 Montreal lectures and notes, 1947-1951, and undated

Folder 10 Montreal publicity clippings, 1947-1952, and undated. In French and English.

Folder 11 Montreal scrapbook. In French and English.

Folder 12 Montreal Indian exhibition photographs

Folder 13 Montreal landscape exhibition photographs

Folder 14 Montreal Museum of Fine Arts eighteenth century exhibit publicity, 1950. In French and English.

Folder 15 McGill University papers and reports, 1947-1949, and undated

Folder 16 McGill College catalogues, 1948-1952

Folder 17 Robert Tyler Davis publications and reviews, 1948-1950

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Series 7: PAPERS RELATING TO VIZCAYA-DADE COUNTY ART MUSEUM, AND LOWE ART GALLERY, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI, 1934-1937, 1952-1957, 1959, AND UNDATED.

This series describes the interoffice affairs of the Vizcaya Museum, including policy committee meetings, memoranda and reports, director's reports, and financial statements. It also contains personal and professional correspondence concerning Davis' appointment to Vizcaya, original correspondence from early Vizcaya organizer, Paul Chafin, and notes and outlines for Davis' Miami University television series, entitled "Focus on Art." Several publicity photographs and clippings concerning both Davis and his first wife, Lillian Davis, are also included.

Box 4

Folder 18 Paul Chafin general Vizcaya correspondence, 1934-1937, 1953, 1957, and undated

Folder 19 Appointment to Vizcaya. Correspondence and memorabilia, 1952-1953.

Folder 20 Vizcaya general photographs, notes and correspondence, 1953-1956, and undated

Folder 21 Vizcaya policy committee meetings and agendas, 1953-1954

Folder 22 Vizcaya policy committee meetings and agendas, 1955-1956

Folder 23 Vizcaya memos, letters and reports to the policy committee, 1953-1954

Folder 24 Vizcaya memos and reports to the policy committee, 1955

Folder 25 Vizcaya weekly director's reports, 1953, 1956

Folder 26 Vizcaya director's reports and memos, 1953-1956

Folder 27 Vizcaya annual and monthly director's reports, 1954

Folder 28 Vizcaya weekly reports to the director, 1955

Folder 29 Dade County Art Museum financial statements, January 1, 1953-September 30, 1953

Folder 30 Dade County Art Museum financial statements, October 1, 1953-September 30, 1954

Folder 31 Dade County Art Museum financial statements, October 1, 1954-September 30, 1955

Folder 32 Dade County Art Museum financial statements, October 1, 1955-September 30, 1956

Folder 33 "Focus on Art" television series, 1959

Folder 34 Lowe Gallery clippings and letters, 1955 and undated

Folder 35 Miami publicity photographs and clippings, 1953-1956, and
undated

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Series 8: PAPERS RELATING TO FRENCH AND COMPANY, 1959-1960, 1962-1968, AND UNDATED.

This series includes general personal and professional correspondence and newspaper clippings relating to Robert Tyler Davis' employment at French and Company, in New York. A large portion of the collection contains photographs of art works handled by the company, including the Houdon bust and Chateau Lafayette. Also included are Davis' research notes and report on tapestries and their preservation.

Box 4

Folder 36 French and Company correspondence, 1959-1960, 1964-1967

Folder 37 French and Company collection photographs

Box 5

Folder 1 The Artemisia Tapestries of the Putnam Foundation, 1964

Folder 2 Tapestry cleaning

Folder 3 Houdon bust. Photographs and correspondence, 1967.

Folder 4 Chateau Lafayette photographs and negatives

Folder 5 French and Company publicity and memorabilia, 1960, 1962-1964,
1968, and undated

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Series 9: PAPERS RELATING TO NATIONAL COLLECTION OF FINE ARTS, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, 1968-1975.

This series includes Robert Tyler Davis' lecture notes, clippings, NCFA staff information, papers concerning the Intermuseum Conservation Association, and several photographs--including pictures of Janet Davis. It contains little correspondence. The bulk of the collection concerns Davis' research and reference inquiries about the Smithsonian's Gellatly Collection.

Box 5

Folder 6 National Collection of Fine Arts correspondence, 1968-1969,
1971-1972, 1974-1976

Folder 7 National Collection of Fine Arts miscellaneous notes and
memorabilia

Folder 8 National Collection of Fine Arts photographs, 1969, and undated

Folder 9 National Collection of Fine Arts staff, 1968-1969, 1971-1973, 1975

Folder 10 Smithsonian Institution National Collection of Fine Arts catalogue,
1963

Folder 11 National Collection of Fine Arts opening symposium, 1968

Folder 12 National Collection of Fine Arts five year report, May 1968-May
1973

Folder 13 General Gellatly Collection publications

Folder 14 Gellatly purchases by dates

Folder 15 Gellatly Collection inventories and exhibit listings

Folder 16 Gellatly American paintings, alphabetically by artist

Folder 17 Gellatly Renaissance jewelry, notes and references

Folder 18 Gellatly collection dealers and prices

Folder 19 Mrs. Edith Gellatly Estate contents

Folder 20 Gellatly research and photographs

Folder 21 Gellatly Collection research notes

Folder 22 Gellatly Collection reference correspondence, 1968, 1971-1972,
1975-1977

Folder 23 Ralph Seymour notes and correspondence, 1975

Folder 24 Ralph Seymour Gellatly notes

Folder 25 Childe Hassam research notes and correspondence, 1965,
1969-1972

Folder 26 Freer correspondence. Robert Tyler Davis copies and notes.

Folder 27 Nineteenth century American art notes

Folder 28 Shell research. Notes and correspondence, 1969, 1972-1974,
1977

Folder 29 Miscellaneous art history notes

Folder 30 Course and lecture outlines, 1968-1974, and undated

Folder 31 Associates lecture, "Museum Hopping," 1974

Folder 32 Intermuseum Conservation Association Training Program, 1974

Folder 33 National Collection of Fine Arts calendar, 1975-1977, and undated
clippings

Folder 34 Smithsonian clippings, 1969-1970

Folder 35 The Pragmatist in Art, 1972-1975

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Series 10: PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL RECORDS, 1933, 1953, 1955-1977.

This series contains miscellaneous personal and financial records. Of special note is Robert Tyler Davis' curriculum vitae and Standard Form 171, documents and photographs regarding Davis' personal art collection, Lillian Davis' will, papers regarding Martin M. Davis' death and estate, Davis' income tax records, papers regarding various residences, several personal photographs, and an audio cassette which belonged to Janet Davis.

Box 5

Folder 36 Memorabilia, 1933, 1953, 1959, 1965, 1968, and undated

Folder 37 Robert Tyler Davis allergy test, 1966

Folder 38 Robert Tyler Davis' curriculum vitae and Standard Form 171,
1968-1969

Folder 39 Harvard class reunions, 1971, 1976

Folder 40 Friends of the Daniel Reed Library, 1976-1977

Folder 41 Personal art acquisitions and inquiries, 1957, 1960-1961, 1968,
1970

Folder 42 Sale of Northwest Indian items owned by Robert Tyler Davis.
Photographs, negatives, and correspondence, 1975-1976.

Folder 43 Sotheby Parke Bernet auction catalogues, 1975-1976

Box 6

Folder 1 Lillian Davis Estate

Folder 2 National Cathedral School, 1971-1972

Folder 3 Eugenie Davis, 1977

Folder 4 Martin M. Davis Estate and mementos

Folder 5 Audio cassette tape. Woman singing song about Lily Dale, in poor
condition.

Folder 6 Bibliographies and lists

Folder 7 Chandelier photographs and fragment

Folder 8 Miscellaneous photographs, 1962, 1977 and undated

Folder 9 Miscellaneous notes

Folder 10 Miami, Florida, residence, 1957-1961

Folder 11 New York apartments, 1960-1968

Folder 12 Lily Dale, New York. General correspondence and memorabilia,
1970, 1972, 1974-1977, and undated.

Folders 13-14 Income Tax records, 1955-1956

Folders 15-25 Income Tax records, 1965-1975

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Series 11: TRAVELS, 1949, 1974, 1976-1977.

This series includes itineraries, photographs and postcards from numerous Davis trips to Europe, Central and South America, and within the United States. Most photographs are annotated.

Box 6

Folder 26 Travel arrangements and itineraries, 1949, 1974, 1976-1977

Folder 27 London playbills and notes, 1974

Folder 28 Travel photograph negatives and one slide, Mexico, 1976

Folder 29 Travel photographs, South America, 1976

Folder 30 Travel photographs, South America, 1976

Folder 31 Travel photograph negatives, South America, 1976

Folder 32 Travel photograph negatives, South America, 1976

Folder 33 Travel photographs and negatives, Egypt, 1977

Folder 34 Travel photographs and negatives, Egypt and Turkey, 1977

Folder 35 Travel photographs and negatives, Turkey, 1977

Box 7

Folder 1 Travel photographs and negatives, Turkey and Greece, 1977

Folder 2 Travel photographs and negatives, Greece, 1977

Folder 3 Travel photographs and negatives, Greece, 1977

Folder 4 Travel photographs and negatives, Greece, 1977

Folder 5 Travel photographs and negatives, San Diego Wildlife Park, 1977

Folder 6 Postcards, Turkey and Greece

Folder 7 Postcards, Venice

Folder 8 Postcards, Peruvian art, general

Folder 9 Postcards, general

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Series 12: SKETCHES, PAINTINGS, PRINTS, AND PHOTOGRAPHS, 1928-1929, 1940, 1947, 1961-1962, AND UNDATED.

This series contains oversized materials, including sketches and paintings by Robert Tyler Davis drawn during his education in Europe, and during the 1960s. Many are studies of human form, and self portraits. Other items include prints of personal interest, gifts from artist friends, several oversized photographs, and other memorabilia.

Box 7

Folder 10 Sketches by Robert Tyler Davis, 1929 and undated

Folder 11 Sketchbook

Folder 12 Drawings by C. Morris

Folder 13 European art photographs

Folder 14 Miscellaneous art prints

Box 8

Folder 1 Robert Tyler Davis photograph

Folder 2 Painting by Robert Tyler Davis, Paris

Folder 3 Painting by Robert Tyler Davis, sea shells

Folder 4 Painting by Robert Tyler Davis, flower

Folder 5 Paintings and sketches by Robert Tyler Davis, 1928 and undated

Folder 6 Nude sketches by Robert Tyler Davis, 1928-1929, and undated

Folder 7 Sketches by Robert Tyler Davis, 1961-1962

Folder 8 European art photographs and prints

Folder 9 Christmas greetings prints, 1940, 1947, and undated

Folder 10 Portland "Citizen of the Week" poster, 1947

Folder 11 Certificate of appreciation from New York City Mayor, Robert F. Wagner

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Series 13: TRAVELS, 1976.

This series includes photograph albums from trips Davis took to Central and South America and within the United States. Most photo albums are annotated.

Box 9

Folder 1 Photo album, domestic, 1976. Negatives included.

Folder 2 Photo album, Ecuador, 1976

Folder 3 Photo album, Peru and Bolivia, 1976

Folder 4 Photo album, Mexico, 1976

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