



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Oral history interviews with Robert P. Multhauf, 1974

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

Smithsonian Institution Archives
Washington, D.C.
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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu |
| Title: | Oral history interviews with Robert P. Multhauf |
| Identifier: | Record Unit 9502 |
| Date: | 1974 |
| Extent: | 3 audiotapes (Reference copies). 6 digital .mp3 files (Reference copies). |
| Creator:: | Multhauf, Robert P. interviewee |
| Language: | English |

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9502, Multhauf, Robert P. interviewee, Oral history interviews with Robert P. Multhauf

Historical Note

Robert P. Multhauf (1919-2004), a historian of science, received his Ph.D. in 1953 from the University of California at Berkeley. After postdoctoral work at The Johns Hopkins University, he was appointed Curator of Engineering at the U.S. National Museum in 1955. In 1957, he was appointed head Curator of the Department of Science and Technology. From 1966 to 1969, Multhauf served as Director of the new National Museum of History and Technology, now the National Museum of American History, and in 1969 he was appointed Senior Historian of Science. Multhauf also served as editor of *Isis* from 1964 to 1978.

Introduction

The Smithsonian Institution Archives began its Oral History Program in 1973. The purpose of the program is to supplement the written documentation of the Archives' record and manuscript collections with an Oral History Collection, focusing on the history of the Institution, research by its scholars, and contributions of its staff. Program staff conducts interviews with current and retired Smithsonian staff and others who have made significant contributions to the Institution. There are also interviews conducted by researchers or students on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Multhauf was interviewed for the Oral History Project because he made significant scholarly and administrative contributions to the Smithsonian during his career.

Descriptive Entry

Multhauf was interviewed on May 29 and July 23, 1974, by Miriam S. Freilicher and Pamela M. Henson. The interviews cover his education, career as Curator of Engineering, work on the development of the National Museum of History and Technology, and his role as an administrator in the Museum.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- History of science and technology
- Museum curators -- Interviews
- Museum directors -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Interviews
- Oral history
- Transcripts

Names:

- Carmichael, Leonard, 1898-1973
- Chapelle, Howard Irving
- Freilicher, Miriam S. interviewer
- Henson, Pamela M. interviewer
- Multhauf, Robert P.
- National Museum of American History (U.S.)
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.)
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Dept. of Science and Technology
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Office of the Director
- Taylor, Frank A. (Frank Augustus), 1903-2007
- United States National Museum
- United States National Museum. Division of Engineering

Preferred Titles:

Isis (Serial)

Container Listing

Box 1

Transcripts of Interviews

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 29 May 1974

Note:

- Interview of Multhauf by Freilicher covers his educational background, career as Curator of Engineering, work in the development of the Museum of History and Technology and exhibits modernization, and philosophy of administration, curatorial functions and exhibits, c. 1919-1974.
- Transcript, pp. 1-43, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 2: 23 July 1974

Note:

- Interview of Multhauf by Freilicher and Henson discusses the historical background of the Museum of History and Technology, the museum's collections management, exhibits, and staffing, the history of science, and Smithsonian administration, c. 1876-1974.
- Transcript, pp. 44-109, of audio recording, 2.0 hours.

Audio Recordings of Interviews

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 29 May 1974

Note:

- Total Recording Time: 1 hour
- Original Master: 1 5" reel-to-reel audiotape
- Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
- Reference Copies: 1 cassette audiotape; 2 digital .mp3 files.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 2: 23 July 1974

Note:

- Total Recording Time: 2 hours
- Original Masters: 2 5" reel-to-reel audiotapes
- Preservation Masters: 4 digital .wav files
- Reference Copies: 2 audiocassettes; 4 digital .mp3 files.