



Smithsonian Institution Archives

T. D. Stewart Oral History Interviews, 1975, 1986

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	T. D. Stewart Oral History Interviews
Identifier:	Record Unit 9521
Date:	1975, 1986
Extent:	14 audiotapes (Reference tapes). 27 digital .mp3 files (Reference copies).
Creator::	Stewart, T. D. (Thomas Dale), 1901-1997, interviewee
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9521, T. D. Stewart Oral History Interviews

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Historical Note

Thomas Dale Stewart (1901-1997), a physical anthropologist in the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), specialized in diagnostic characteristics of the human skeleton. Born in 1901 in Delta, Pennsylvania, Stewart came to Washington, D.C., in 1924 to attend college. He received a B.A. from George Washington University in 1927 and an M.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1931. During his undergraduate years, he worked as a temporary aide to Ales Hrdlicka in the Division of Physical Anthropology of the United States National Museum (USNM), and received a permanent appointment in 1927. Upon completion of medical school, he was advanced to Assistant Curator of Physical Anthropology in 1931, to Associate Curator in 1939, and to Curator in 1942. During these years his research focused on anthropometric studies of Eskimos and American Indians, and on excavations of Potomac Tidewater ossuaries. After Hrdlicka's retirement in 1942, Stewart became Editor of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* for five years. During World War II, he was a visiting professor of anatomy at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Stewart worked with the U.S. Army Graves Registration Service after the Korean War to establish criteria for identifying the age and race of skeletal remains of soldiers.

In 1961 Stewart was appointed Head Curator of the Department of Anthropology and in 1963 Director of the National Museum of Natural History. During his tenure as Director, Stewart guided planning for the new wings to the Natural History Building (NHB), oversaw the merger of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) with the Department of Anthropology, and encouraged formation of a Senate of

Scientists. In 1964 he served concurrently as Acting Assistant Secretary for Science. He retired from administration in 1966, and was appointed Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Anthropology. When he retired from federal service in 1971, he was appointed Anthropologist Emeritus.

Stewart achieved recognition as an authority on diagnostic skeletal characteristics for modern and prehistoric humans. During the years 1957-1962 he conducted analyses at the Iraq Museum of the newly excavated Neanderthal skeletons from Shanidar Cave. In 1985-1986, he oversaw the reconstruction of the Wadi Kubaniya skeleton from Egypt. He performed extensive work in forensic anthropology for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In addition to his anthropological duties, he served as physician to Smithsonian staff in medical emergencies.

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 conduct 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 student on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Stewart was interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of his long and outstanding scholarly and administrative career at the Institution spanning more than half a century.

Descriptive Entry

Stewart was interviewed by Pamela M. Henson on twelve occasions between January and May 1975. A follow-up interview was conducted in September of 1986. The interviews cover Stewart's youth and education; career at the Smithsonian as an aide, Curator and administrator; reminiscences of colleagues; field trips to Alaska, Iraq and Egypt; research on skeletal age and sex determination for anthropological and legal purposes and identification of bodies in mass disasters; exhibits planning; his hobby of painting portraits; and his role as emergency physician for Smithsonian staff.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Anthropology
- Interviews
- Museum curators -- Interviews
- Museum directors -- Interviews
- Oral history
- Paleontology

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes

Transcripts

Names:

Collins, Henry Bascom, 1899-1987
Henson, Pamela M., interviewer
Hrdlicka, Aleš, 1869-1943
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.)
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Department of Anthropology
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Division of Physical Anthropology
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Office of the Director
Smithsonian Institution. Acting Assistant Secretary for Science
Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of American Ethnology
Stewart, T. D. (Thomas Dale), 1901-1997
Stirling, Matthew Williams 1896-1975
United States National Museum. Exhibits Modernization Program

Geographic Names:

Shanidar Archeological Site (Iraq)

Container Listing

Interviews

- Interviews **Interview 1: January 10, 1975**
- Interviews Covers his youth, education and early career, c. 1901-1931, including: his youth and education at Delta, Pennsylvania; college years at George Washington University; employment as a temporary aide in the Division of Physical Anthropology, USNM, 1924-1927; influence of John L. and Mary A. Baer; first field trip to Alaska in 1927; medical training at Johns Hopkins University, 1927-1931; duties as aide to Hrdlicka in the USNM, 1924-31.
- Interviews Transcript, pp. 1-24, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.
- Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour
- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files
- Interviews **Interview 2: January 17, 1975**
- Interviews Discusses his career as Curator in the Division of Physical Anthropology and Director of NMNH, c. 1931-1966, including: reminiscences of his supervisor, Ales Hrdlicka, especially his personality, administrative style, research techniques and relations with other curators; reminiscences of his other colleagues, including Walter Hough, William Henry Holmes and his paintings, Neil M. Judd, Herbert W. Krieger, Waldo T. Wedel, and Frank M. Setzler's selection as Head Curator and activities on the Arnhem Land Expedition; his selection as Director of NMNH in 1963; Leonard Carmichael's role as Secretary, especially his use of a chain of command and his interviews of curatorial candidates; S. Dillon Ripley's considerably different administrative style; establishment of the Smithsonian Office of Anthropology in 1964; his retirement from administrative duties and appointment as Senior Scientist in 1966.
- [Digital Content: Portrait photo of T. Dale \(Thomas Dale\) Stewart was Head Curator, Department of Anthropology, 1960-1962; Director, National Museum of Natural History, 1962-1966; and Assistant Secretary for Science, 1964-1965; 1962. \[Image no. 2002-1278\]](#)
- [Digital Content: View of the National Mall looking toward the northwest includes the Army Medical Museum at Independence and 7th Street, Arts and Industries Building, Smithsonian Institution Building or "The Castle", and across the Mall the Natural History Building, now the National Museum of Natural History, 1954. \[Image no. SIA2010-0190 or 43049\]](#)
- [Digital Content: T. Dale \(Thomas Dale\) Stewart \(1901-1997\), physical anthropologist, Department of Anthropology, United States National Museum](#)

(now the National Museum of Natural History), in his laboratory measures a skull, 1950. [Image no. SIA-4 or 85-8067]

Digital Content: T. Dale Stewart, physical anthropologist, Department of Anthropology, United States National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History), stands on a ladder examining a skull in the collection area, 1950. [Image no. 85-8066]

Digital Content: T. Dale Stewart, physical anthropologist, Department of Anthropology, United States National Museum, now the National Museum of Natural History, seated at work table in the collection area holds a skull and other skulls are on the table in front of him and in cases behind him, 1950. [Image no. 85-12066]

Interviews Transcript, pp. 25-48, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews **Interview 3: January 24, 1975**

Interviews Includes reminiscences of colleagues, the BAE/Department of Anthropology merger, wings to the Natural History Building, and the Exhibits Modernization Program, c. 1922-1975, including: reminiscences of Matthew Williams Stirling, especially his career as a Curator in the Division of Ethnology, USNM, his field work on the pygmies of New Guinea, and his marriage to Marion Illig; reminiscences of colleagues, including Winslow M. Walker, John R. Swanton and other BAE staff members; background to the BAE/Department of Anthropology merger; formation of the Smithsonian Office of Anthropology under a succession of Chairmen, including Richard B. Woodbury and Sol Tax, 1964; construction of the wings to the NHB in the 1960s; the Exhibits Modernization Program in the 1950s, notably Stewart's own Hall of Physical Anthropology.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 49-73, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews **Interview 4: January 31, 1975**

Interviews Covers his years as aide and Assistant Curator, affiliation with professional societies, research, the Senate of Scientists and the position of Smithsonian

anthropologists within the profession, c. 1927-1968, including: his duties as aide and Assistant Curator to Hrdlicka, 1924-1939; Hrdlicka's role in the founding of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists from sections of the American Anthropological Association, American Association of Anatomists and American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1928-1930; Hrdlicka's founding and editorship of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Stewart's succession as editor, 1943-1948, and the publication agreement with the Wistar Institute; his early research papers; publicity for science by Tom Henry of the *Washington Star*; his role in the formation of the Senate of Scientists of the NMNH in 1963; seminar on mass disasters he conducted for the U.S. Army in 1968; Smithsonian's role in supporting professional societies; relative position of Smithsonian anthropologists in the anthropological profession.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 74-96, of audio recording, 1 hour.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews **Interview 5: February 7, 1975**

Interviews Focuses on Smithsonian administration, museum social life, and the neighborhood around the NHB, c. 1927-1960, including: Smithsonian administrators and administrative practices, including the Division of Correspondence and Documents headed by Herbert S. Bryant, and its evolution into the Office of the Registrar under Helena M. Weiss; procedures for accessioning and cataloging specimens; Hrdlicka's informal role as Smithsonian medical officer; USNM budget procedures; the Anthropology Processing Laboratory; specimen storage and space problems in the NHB; roles of USNM directors William deC. Ravenel and Alexander Wetmore; socializing among Smithsonian staff, especially Charles G. Abbot, Leonhard Stejneger, Mrs. Gerrit S. Miller, Jr., the Truman Michaelsons and Neil M. Judd; the effect of staff migration to the suburbs on museum social life; changes in the neighborhood surrounding the NHB; the administrative roles of Harry W. and Nicholas W. Dorsey and Thomas F. Clark; personnel practices; his work on a grievance committee concerning African American guards in the 1950s.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 97-125, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files

- Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews

Interview 6: February 12, 1975

Interviews

Covers the role of USNM curators, his own career ladder, and identification of war dead, c. 1927-1975, including: the role of curators in the USNM, the inherent tension between research, curatorial, exhibits and public outreach duties, and the qualities needed to be an all-around curator; his work on identification of war dead from North Korea for the U.S. Army; his own career ladder from temporary aide to Assistant Secretary for Science; salary rates for curatorial staff and the need to compete with universities after the 1950s; and evaluation of the curatorial strengths and weaknesses of his colleagues, emphasizing the importance of curatorial duties to research and exhibits work.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 126-153, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews

Interview 7: February 26, 1975

Interviews

Discusses his research philosophy and techniques, as well as forensic work done for the FBI, c. 1931-1975, including: the close relationship between curation of specimens and research; his scientific methods for determining the age of skeletons; his techniques for developing research questions from museum collections; forensic work done by the curators of physical anthropology for the FBI, first by Hrdlicka, then Stewart, and later J. Lawrence Angel, with reminiscences of important cases.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 154-179, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews

Interview 8: March 7, 1975

Interviews

Reviews the history of the Division of Physical Anthropology and the medical duties of the curators of physical anthropology, and begins a discussion

of his Shanidar Neanderthal work, c. 1900-1975, including: history of the Division of Physical Anthropology, especially Hrdlicka's appointment as Assistant Curator in 1903, the return of human skeletal material from the Army Medical Museum, Hrdlicka's development of the skeletal collections and the *Catalogue of Human Crania in the United States National Museum* compiled by Hrdlicka; Hrdlicka's and Stewart's roles as medical officers for the Institution, especially care of Arthur H. Howell, Florence E. Meier Chase and Herbert G. Deignan; Stewart's connections with the medical community, especially the Washington Academy of Medicine and the Board of Medical Examiners of the District of Columbia; development of staff service offices for medical care, travel, contracts and grants, and special events since the 1960s; and begins a discussion of his work on Shanidar Cave, Iraq, Neanderthal skeletons discovered by Ralph S. Solecki in the 1950s.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 180-203, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews **Interview 9: March 21, 1975**

Interviews Continues his discussion of the Shanidar Cave work, c. 1953-1964, including: his 1957 trip to Iraq to reconstruct the Shanidar I skeleton and skull; hypotheses concerning origins of malformations in the skeletal material; his 1960 return to the Iraq museum, after the 1958 revolution, to reconstruct Shanidar II and trip to Shanidar Cave to excavate Shanidar IV; his 1962 trip to reconstruct Shanidar IV and VI, when he was joined by Juan C. Munizaga and the James V. Taylors; his observations of Iraqi attitudes towards the finds and relationships with the foreigners; his 1964 visit to attend the opening of the new Iraq Museum building.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 204-230, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews **Interview 10: March 28, 1975**

Interviews Completes his discussion of the Shanidar Cave work and covers his excavations of local ossuaries, c. 1930-1975, including; carbon-14 dating of the Shanidar specimens; reconstruction of Shanidar III by Stewart and

Erik Trinkhaus of Harvard; excavations of ossuaries (Algonquin Indian burials) in the Potomac Tidewater region, beginning with assistance to Judge William J. Graham at the Warehouse Point site in Port Tobacco, Maryland; 1936 salvage dig at the site of Bolling Air Force Base; Alice L. L. Ferguson's discoveries in the 1930s at Piscataway, Maryland; work at the Potomac Creek, Virginia, site, first by local students Howard A. MacCord and Carl P. Manson, continuation of the digs by Judge Graham, 1935-1937, and Stewart's systematic excavations from 1939-1940; finds from the Bernward Juhle site at Nanjemoy, Maryland, in 1953 and 1971; recent digs along the George Washington Memorial Parkway by faculty and students from American University; and the opportunistic nature of research at the Smithsonian and the relative lack of interest in local sites.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 231-256, of audio recording, 1.0 hour

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews **Interview 11: May 14, 1975**

Interviews Focuses on his role in administration, c. 1960-1966, including: Head Curator of the Department of Anthropology, 1961-1962; Director of NMNH, 1962-1965; Acting Assistant Secretary for Science, 1964-1965; planning for construction of the wings to the NHB, 1958-1965; the later phase of exhibits modernization, especially in the Hall of Physical Anthropology, Old World Archeology and Life in the Sea, 1960s; changes in administration when Ripley succeeded Carmichael as Secretary in 1964; Carmichael's role in selection of the professional staff; Ripley's part in the establishment of the Office of Ecology, 1965; selection of Richard S. Cowan as Assistant Director of NMNH; the Smithsonian Bicentennial in 1965; establishment of Senior Scientist positions in the NMNH to free older curators from administrative tasks; the BAE/Department of Anthropology merger into the Smithsonian Office of Anthropology, 1964; formation of the Smithsonian Research Foundation after cut-off of funds from the National Science Foundation; museum relationship to the new Office of Oceanography and Limnology.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 257-285, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

- Note:
- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews

Interview 12: May 22, 1975

Interviews

Continues the discussion of his role in administration, c. 1963-1969, including: relations between NMNH and the Castle; negotiations with the FBI concerning the Donald T. Squires; acquisition of the Belmont Conference Center, 1964 Smithsonian's part in the formation of the Chesapeake Research Consortium; demolition of the Army Medical Museum to make way for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1966-1969; budget planning; establishment of the program offices and their relation to NMNH; creation of the Center for the Study of Man and plans for a Museum of Man; split of anthropological collections between the National Museum of History and Technology and NMNH; and formation of the NMNH Senate of Scientists in 1963 to address problem areas such as the Smithsonian Institution Libraries.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 286-312, of audio recording, 1.0 hour.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

Note:

- Original Masters: 1 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotape
- Preservation Masters: 2 digital .wav files
- Reference Copies: 1 audiocassette tape, 2 digital .mp3 files

Interviews

Interview 13: September 25, 1986

Interviews

Covers Stewart's research from 1975-1986, his hobby of painting portraits, and international travel, c. 1924-1986, including: revision of his research on the Potomac Creek site, begun in the 1940s and completed in the 1980s; reminiscences of Turkey Tayak, a.k.a. Phillip Proctor, a Wesort folk doctor; views concerning Captain John Smith's landing along the Potomac; reconstruction of the Midland, Texas, Pleistocene skull in the 1950s; reminiscences of controversies concerning the Melbourne, Florida, skull; reconstruction of the Wadi Kubbania skeleton from Egypt in the 1980s; interest in painting as a hobby and formation of a Smithsonian Art Club; symposium in honor of Stewart's seventy-fifth birthday at the annual meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in 1976; reminiscences of Stewart's international travel, especially to the Taung Diamond Jubilee International Symposium in South Africa in 1985.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 313-341, of audio recording, 1.5 hours.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.5 hours

Note:

- Original Masters: 2 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotapes
- Preservation Masters: 3 digital .wav files
- Reference Copies: 2 audiocassette tapes, 3 digital .mp3 files