



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Oral history interview with
Graham Bell Fairchild, 1989

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Oral history interview with Graham Bell Fairchild
Identifier:	Record Unit 9559
Date:	1989
Extent:	2 audiotapes (reference copies). 3 digital .mp3 files (reference copies).
Creator::	Fairchild, G. B. (Graham Bell) interviewee
Language:	Language of Materials: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9559, Fairchild, G. B. (Graham Bell) interviewee, Oral history interview with Graham Bell Fairchild

Use Restriction

Restricted. For information about use of this interview, contact SIHistory@si.edu.

Historical Note

Graham Bell Fairchild (1906-1994), was born in Washington, D.C. In his youth, Fairchild was introduced to tropical biology while visiting Barro Colorado Island (BCI) research station of the Canal Zone Biological Area (CZBA) with his father, David Grandison Fairchild. He received the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in entomology from Harvard University where he studied under William Morton Wheeler, Joseph Charles Bequaert, and Thomas Barbour. Before and during his years at Harvard he also worked at the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) studying the collections.

Fairchild began his career as an entomologist stationed in Brazil with the Yellow Fever Service of the Rockefeller Foundation, from 1935 to 1937. From 1938 to 1971, he worked as an Entomologist at Gorgas Memorial Laboratory in Panama City, Panama, and from 1958 to 1971 he served as Assistant Director. At Gorgas his research focused on the taxonomy of medically important insects, especially Tabanidae and Psychodidae. During his years in Panama, he observed the development of the BCI research station from a small university consortium to Smithsonian aegis as the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI).

The Canal Zone Biological Area was established in 1923 on Barro Colorado Island (BCI) in the Panama Canal as a reserve for scientific study of the tropics. Originally designed as a consortium of universities and government agencies by Thomas Barbour, William Morton Wheeler, James Zetek, and others, CZBA was transferred to the Smithsonian Institution in 1946 and in 1966 was renamed the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

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.

Graham Bell Fairchild was interviewed for the Oral History Collection by Hagen because of his involvement with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in its early years.

Descriptive Entry

The Graham Bell Fairchild Interview was conducted for the Smithsonian Archives on 7 June 1989 by Joel B. Hagen, a Smithsonian postdoctoral fellow, as part of his research on the history of the Canal Zone Biological Area. This interview discusses Fairchild's reminiscences of CZBA and the scientists involved in its development, notably James Zetek, William Morton Wheeler, and Thomas Barbour; his father's interests in the tropics; the development of STRI under Smithsonian administration; the biology faculty at Harvard and the MCZ; and his career in medical entomology. Box 1 contains the transcript and a cassette copy of the original recording, which is in security storage.

The Graham Bell Fairchild Interview recording may not be reproduced without the permission of his heirs or assigns.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Entomology
Tropical biology

Types of Materials:

Audiotapes
Interviews
Oral history
Transcripts

Names:

Canal Zone Biological Area. Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Fairchild, David Grandison
Fairchild, Graham Bell, 1906-1994
Gorgas Memorial Laboratory (Panama)
Hagen, Joel B. interviewer

Harvard University
Harvard University. Museum of Comparative Zoology
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Canal Zone Biological Area
Yellow Fever Service. Rockefeller Foundation

Geographic Names:

Barro Colorado Island (Panama)
Panama

Container Listing

Box 1

Digital Content: Graham Bell Fairchild, entomologist at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI), is at work in a laboratory, circa 1960s. A microscope sits in front of him on a table. [Image no. SIA2011-1338]

Digital Content: A group of naturalists at Barro Colorado Island, Panama. L to R: Gordon Stanhope Dodds, James Zetek, Ignacio Molino, Nathan Banks, George C. Wheeler, Graham Bell Fairchild, Frederick Burgess, David Grandison Fairchild, and William Morton Wheeler, shortly after the biological field station opened there, 1924 The station is now the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. [Image no. 92-12929]

Digital Content: On Allison Armour's yacht off Casablanca. L to R: William Morton Wheeler, Mrs. Jordan Mott, Graham Bell Fairchild (standing), David Grandison Fairchild, Allison V. Armour (standing), and Jordan Mott, 1925. This group was involved in creating what is now the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. [Image no. 92-12930]

Digital Content: Graham Bell Fairchild in the field above Rio Boqueron, Colon, Panama, 1957. [Image no. 92-15744]

Digital Content: Trail marker on Barro Colorado Island for Shannon Trail and leading to Snyder-Molino, AMNH (American Museum of Natural History), and Balboa trails, at RCS 18, circa 1950s) Barro Colorado Island is part of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. [Image no. 92-15293]

Transcript of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 7 June 1989

Audio Recordings of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 7 June 1989