



Smithsonian Institution Archives

C. Malcolm Watkins Oral History
Interviews, 1992, 1994-1995

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	C. Malcolm Watkins Oral History Interviews
Identifier:	Record Unit 9586
Date:	1992, 1994-1995
Extent:	15 audiotapes (Reference copies).
Creator::	Watkins, C. Malcolm, interviewee
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9586, C. Malcolm Watkins Oral History Interviews

Use Restriction

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Historical Note

C. Malcolm Watkins (1911-2001), cultural historian, developed an early interest in American material culture through his parents, Charles H. and Lura Woodside Watkins, who collected glass and pottery. Watkins received the B.S. from Harvard College in 1934 and began his museum career as Curator for the Wells Historical Museum, predecessor of Old Sturbridge Village, in Massachusetts. In 1949, he was appointed Associate Curator in the Division of Ethnology, United States National Museum (USNM), where he was responsible for the collections documenting American technology and decorative arts. When a separate National Museum of History and Technology (NMHT) was created in 1958, Watkins assumed responsibility for a new Division of Cultural History in the Department of Civil History. In 1969, a separate Department of Cultural History was established, with Watkins as Chairman. In 1973, he was named Senior Curator in the Department, a position he held until his retirement in 1980; he continued his research as Curator Emeritus until 1984. In 1980, the National Museum of History and Technology was renamed the National Museum of American History (NMAH).

During his career at the USNM and NMHT, Watkins worked on numerous exhibits, including the *Hall of Everyday Life in the American Past*, *Growth of the United States*, and *A Nation of Nations*. He was responsible for the acquisition of many significant collections, including the Arthur and Edna Greenwood Collection of Americana, the Remensnyder Collection of American Stoneware, and the Morgenstern Collection of early American material culture. His major research projects included the Marlborough and Jamestown, Virginia, archeological sites, North Devon pottery export to America, and early California history. Watkins was a pioneer in the fields of material culture studies and historical archeology.

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.

C. Malcolm Watkins was interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of his long and distinguished career as curator in the Department of Cultural History, National Museum of American History, and his pioneering role in fields like historical archeology and material culture studies.

Descriptive Entry

These interviews of Watkins by Pamela M. Henson, Historian for Smithsonian Institution Archives, and Susan H. Myers, Curator of Ceramics and Glass at the National Museum of American History, discuss his family, youth, and education; first job at Wells Historical Museum; curatorial career in the Division of Ethnology and Department of Cultural History; contributions to exhibits; research interests; role in the development of the fields of material culture studies and historical archeology; and reminiscences of such colleagues as Edna Muriel Hilburn Little Greenwood, Herbert W. Krieger, Frank A. Taylor, George H. Watson, and Albert Wells.

This collection is comprised of eight interview sessions, totaling approximately 13.0 hours of recordings and 235 pages of transcript.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Anthropology
- Archaeology -- History
- History
- Interviews
- Museum curators -- Interviews
- Museum exhibits
- Oral history
- Science -- History
- Technology -- History

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Transcripts

Names:

- Arthur and Edna Greenwood Collection of Americana

Greenwood, Edna Muriel Hilburn Little, 1888-1972
Growth of the United States (Exhibition)
Henson, Pamela M., interviewer
Krieger, Herbert W. (Herbert William), 1889-
Morgenstern Collection
Myers, Susan H., interviewer
Nation of Nations (1976 : Smithsonian Institution)
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.)
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Department of Cultural History
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Cultural History
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Hall of Everyday Life in the American Past
Remensnyder Collection of American Stoneware
Taylor, Frank A. (Frank Augustus), 1903-2007
United States National Museum
United States National Museum. Division of Ethnology
Watkins, C. Malcolm
Watkins, Charles H.
Watkins, Lura Woodside
Watson, George H.
Wells Historical Museum
Wells, Albert

- Interviews Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 2.0 hours
Note:
 - Original Masters: Four 7" reel-to-reel analog audiotapes
 - Reference Copies: Two audiotape cassettes
- Interviews **Interview 5: February 1, 1994**
- Interviews Interview of Watkins by Henson.
- Interviews Transcript, pp. 1-24, of audiotape recording, 1.5 hours.
- Interviews Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 1.5 hour
Note:
 - Original Masters: Three 7" reel-to-reel analog audiotapes
 - Reference Copies: Two audiotape cassettes
- Interviews **Interview 6: May 8, 1995**
- Interviews Interview of Watkins by Myers.
- Interviews Transcript, pp. 1-35, of audiotape recording, 2.5 hours.
- Interviews Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 2.5 hours
Note:
 - Original Masters: Three audiotape cassettes
 - Reference Copies: Three audiotape cassettes
- Interviews **Interview 7: May 12, 1995**
- Interviews Interview of Watkins by Myers.
- Interviews Transcript, pp. 1-18, of audiotape recording, 1.0 hour.
- Interviews Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour
Note:
 - Original Masters: One audiotape cassette
 - Reference Copies: One audiotape cassette
- Interviews **Interview 8: May 14, 1995**
- Interviews Interview of Watkins by Myers.
- Interviews Transcript, pp. 1-22, of audiotape recording, 1.0 hour.
- Interviews Audio Recordings of Interviews: Total Recording Time: 1.0 hour

Note:

- Original Masters: One audiotape cassette
- Reference Copies: One audiotape cassette