



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Oral history interviews with
Cynthia Adams Hoover, 1986

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Oral history interviews with Cynthia Adams Hoover
Identifier:	Record Unit 9608
Date:	1986
Extent:	2 audiotapes (reference copies).
Creator::	Hoover, Cynthia A. (Cynthia Adams)
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9608, Oral history interviews with Cynthia Adams Hoover

Access Restriction

The recordings are available for research use, but the transcripts of the interviews of Cynthia Hoover do not have prefaces. Researchers may submit a written request to interviewee, heirs, or assigns for written permission to use the transcript.

Historical Note

Cynthia Adams Hoover (1934-) received her B.A. from Wellesley College in 1957, the M.A.T. from Radcliffe College in 1958, and the M.F.A. from Brandeis University in 1961. She was appointed an Assistant Curator of Musical Instruments in the Division of Cultural History, National Museum of History and Technology (now the National Museum of American History) in 1961. In 1964, she advanced to Associate Curator and in 1975 she advanced to Curator of Musical Instruments. Upon her retirement in 2004, she was named Curator Emeritus. Hoover was instrumental in creating the Yale-Smithsonian Seminar Series which focused on material culture research, was the founder of the Material Culture Forum at the Smithsonian Institution, and was involved in several professional societies, including the American Musicological Society. Her research specialties include the cultural, social, and technological history of musical instruments, especially the piano, made and used in America; music in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American life; and interpretation of American material culture. Her work has resulted in exhibitions and publications on such subjects as *Music in Early Massachusetts, Nineteenth-Century American Ballroom Music, 1840-1860*; *Music Machines-American Style*, and *PIANO 300: Celebrating Three Hundred Years of People and Pianos*. Hoover received a Guggenheim Fellowship to research the changing intersections of technology, culture, and commerce of the piano, work that resulted in the *PIANO 300* exhibition and related programs in 2000 2001.

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

Cynthia Adams Hoover, Curator of Musical Instruments at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History from 1961 to 2004, was interviewed in 1986 by Richard Binfield, a student in an oral history seminar at the University of Maryland, to document her long and distinguished career as a scholar of American music and her role in engaging the scholarly community at the Smithsonian.

Descriptive Entry

Cynthia Adams Hoover was interviewed in 1986 by Richard Binfield, a student at the University of Maryland, as part of a seminar project that focused on interviews of Smithsonian staff members, taught by Smithsonian Institution Archives Historian Pamela M. Henson. This interview of Hoover covers her youth, education, and career at the Smithsonian, including the development of a musical instruments division, her special interest in the keyboard collection, her work on various publications, programs, and exhibits, and reminiscences of colleagues and administrators. The collection consists of 1.5 hours of recording: 2 original 5" reel-to-reel audiotape recordings, which are in security storage; 3 digital preservation files; 2 cassette audiotapes and 3 digital reference files, as well as 28 pages of transcript, and occupies 0.5 cubic feet of shelf space. Box 1 contains transcripts of the interviews and reference copies of the audio recording.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Historic preservation
- Museum curators -- United States -- Interviews
- Museum exhibits
- Musical instruments
- Musicology
- Pianos
- Women museum curators

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Interviews
- Oral history

Names:

American Musicological Society
Binfield, Richard interviewer
Hoover, Cynthia A. (Cynthia Adams)
National Museum of American History (U.S.)
National Museum of History and Technology
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Department of Cultural History
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Division of Cultural History
Smithsonian Institution. Forum on Material Culture
Yale-Smithsonian Seminar on Material Culture

Container Listing

Box 1

Transcript of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 10 December 1986

Note:

- Interview of Hoover discusses her childhood; early interest in music; education at Wellesley, Radcliffe, and Brandeis; and career at the Smithsonian, including the development of a musical instruments division, her special interest in the keyboard collection, her work on various publications, programs, and exhibits, and reminiscences of colleagues and administrators.
- Transcript, pp. 1-28, of audiotape recording, c. 1.5 hours.

Audio Recordings of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 10 December 1986

Note:

- Total Recording Time: c. 1.5 hours
- Original Masters: 2 5" reel-to-reel audiotapes
- Preservation Masters: 3 digital .wav files
- Reference Copies: 3 digital .mp3 files and 2 audiotape cassettes