Language of Material: English
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Title: Otto Struve papers
Creator: Struve, Otto, 1897-1963
Identifier/Call Number: BANC MSS 81/35 c
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Date (inclusive): 1837-1966
Date (bulk): (bulk 1953-1956)
Abstract: Correspondence, most of it prior to Struve’s service in the Dept. of Astronomy, University of California, biographical materials, bibliographies of his writings, photographs, and some papers relating to various members of the Struve family. Also includes materials concerning his interest and activity in astronomy while at U.C. Berkeley and the International Astronomical Union.
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Preferred Citation
Otto Struve papers, BANC MSS 81/35 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Biographical Sketch
Otto Struve (August 12, 1897-April 6, 1963) was an influential astronomer, professor, and observatory director who specialized in stellar spectroscopy and the study of double stars. Struve’s research achievements, administrative talents, and active promotion of international cooperation greatly influenced the development astronomy in the 20th century.
Born in Kharkov, Russia (now the Ukraine) to Gustav Wilhelm Ludwig and Elisabeth (Grohmann) von Struve, Otto Struve was descended from a family of noted astronomers. His great-grandfather, Friedrich Georg Wilhelm von Struve was the director of the Imperial Observatory at Pulkovo, Russia, and was a pioneer in the study of double stars. Otto Struve’s grandfather, Otto Wilhelm Struve, succeeded Friedrich as director of the Pulkovo Observatory. Otto’s father was director of the observatory and dean of the faculty at the University of Kharkov.

Struve attended high school in Kharkov (graduating in 1916), spent a year at the Michael Artillery School in Petrograd, and received his diploma in 1919 from the University of Kharkov, where he specialized in astronomy. He served as a lieutenant of field artillery in the Imperial Russian Army from 1916 to 1918, and in 1919-20 fought in the White Russian Army in the Bolshevik Revolution, where he was wounded in action. When the opposition to the Communists collapsed, Struve moved to Turkey as a refugee where he worked odd jobs until he was invited by Edwin Frost to come to the United States and join the staff of the University of Chicago’s Yerkes Observatory in 1921. The Yerkes Observatory boasted one of the largest telescopes in the world at the time. Struve began his work at the University of Chicago as an assistant in stellar spectroscopy while concurrently working for his Ph.D. degree, which he received in 1923. His thesis was entitled A Study of Spectroscopic Binaries of Short Period. In May 1925 Struve married Mary Martha Lanning. He became a naturalized American citizen in 1927.

Upon attaining his doctorate he immediately began his teaching career at the University of Chicago, first as an instructor in astronomy (1924-26), then an assistant professor (1926-30), associate professor (1930-32), and finally a full professor (1932). In 1939 he founded and directed the University of Texas’ McDonald Observatory (where a telescope is named for him). In 1950 he moved to the University of California, Berkeley and became chairman of the Department of Astronomy and director of the Leuschner Observatory. In 1959 he took a leave of absence to assume the first directorship of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia (where he also encouraged the first search for extraterrestrial intelligence). He held this position until his retirement in 1962. While at Berkeley Struve initiated the establishment of the campus computer center and was also largely responsible for the creation of the radio astronomy laboratory.
Among the many honors Struve received over the years were the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Isaac Newton medal of the Royal Astronomical Society of London for 1944, the Order of the Crown, rank of Chevalier (Belgium), and the Catherine...
Bruce gold medal of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific for 1948. In 1936 he was chosen to represent the American Astronomical Society in the division of physical sciences of the National Research Council, and he served as chairman of the advisory committee on astronomy to the Office of Naval Research. Struve also received honorary doctorates from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland (1939), the University of Copenhagen (1946), and the University of Liege (1949).

Struve was president of the American Astronomical Society from 1946 to 1949. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, International Astronomical Union, the American Physical Society, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, the Academy of Sciences of Denmark (honorary), the Societe Astronomique de France, and the Astronomische Gesellschaft. He also was a corresponding member of the Societe Royale des Sciences de Liege, of the Haarlem (Holland) Society of Sciences, and a foreign associate member of the Royal Astronomical Society of London. Struve also belonged to the national honorary scientific fraternity, Sigma Xi. As a frequent contributor to astronomy periodicals Struve published over 900 articles and several books and he was editor of the Astrophysical Journal from 1933 to 1947.

Scope and Content
Ukrainian born Otto Struve (1897-1963) was an influential astronomer, professor, and observatory director who specialized in stellar spectroscopy, and the study of double stars. He directed the University of Chicago's Yerkes Observatory before moving to the University of California, Berkeley in 1950 where he was named chair of the University's Astronomy Department. The collection consists of correspondence reflecting Struve's various roles as observatory director, astronomy professor, researcher, administrator and editor. Also included are biographical materials, bibliography, photographs, and papers relating to various members of the Struve family. Notable correspondents contained in this collection include Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, Bart Jan Bok, Theodore Dunham, William W. Morgan, Gerard P. Kuiper, and J. Robert Oppenheimer.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Struve, Otto, 1897-1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correspondence</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>carton 1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

MSS 81/35 c
Carton 1  
G - miscellaneous, (Gjellestad, Guro letter to Struve re. Woman and observational work in Astronomy) 1953

Carton 1  
Gould Fund 1949-1953

Carton 1  
H - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 1  
Hiltner, W. G. 1950

Carton 1  
Huchins, Robert M., (statement re. Struve) 1947

Carton 1  
I - miscellaneous 1953

carton 2  
International Astronomical Union 1952-1953

Carton 2  
International Astronomical Union - Dublin Meeting 1955

Carton 2  
International Astronomical Union - Dublin Program 1955

Carton 2  
International Astronomical Union - Oosterhoff 1952-1953

Carton 2  
Intensitometer 1952

Carton 2  
J - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 2  
K - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 2  
Kuiper, Gerard P. 1949

Carton 2  
L - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 2  
Library 1954-1956

Carton 2  
M - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 2  
Morgan, William W. 1950

Carton 2  
N - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 2  
National Academy of Sciences 1953

Carton 2  
National Academy of Sciences - Astronomy Section 1953

Carton 2  
National Academy of Sciences - Elections 1953

Carton 2  
National Academy of Sciences - Office of International Relations 1953

Carton 2  
National Science Foundation Astronomy Panel 1953

Carton 2  
National Science Foundation 1953

Carton 2  
Nicholson, Seth B. - Publication of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific 1953

Carton 3  
O - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
Office of Ordinance Research 1953

Carton 3  
Office of Naval Research 1953

Carton 3  
Oppenheimer, Robert 1961

Carton 3  
P - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
Positions - open 1953

Carton 3  
President's Office 1954-1956

Carton 3  
R - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
S - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
Shane, C. D. 1953

Carton 3  
Staff Meeting and Notes 1954-1956

Carton 3  
Statement re: Yerkes Observatory 1949

Carton 3  
Stromgren, Bengt 1953

Carton 3  
Stromgren, Beng 1961-1963

Carton 3  
Struve, Otto 1953

Carton 3  
Struve, Wilhelm, (letter to Utzshneider purchased from Struve estate Nov. 23, 1966 transferred from RBSC Summer Sessions) 1837 1954

Carton 3  
Swings, P. 1953

Carton 3  
T - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
Teacher's Conference 1958

Carton 3  
U - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
University of Chicago, (3 letters by Edwin B. Frost, J.S. Dickinson, and Walter Bartky) 1921-1950

Carton 3  
V - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
W - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
XYZ - miscellaneous 1953

Carton 3  
Miscellaneous correspondence 1953-1961

Miscellaneous  
Academic Senate Meetings - U.C. Berkeley 1953

Carton 3  
Bibliography 1953-1962
Carton 3

- Biographical Information 1950-1960
- Colloquia 1954-1956
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- Expectation's Report 1955
- Identity Papers, etc. 1917-1949

Carton 4

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- Miscellaneous 1960
- Reports 1955
- Publicity 1953
- Publicity 1954-1956
- Speakers 1954-1956
- Travel Requests and Leaves 1954-1956