Finding Aid to the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Institutional Archives MS.3

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2013
Title: Southwest Museum of the American Indian Institutional Archives
Identifier/Call Number: MS.3
Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Braun Research Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 776.0 Linear feet (1033 document boxes, 41 oversized boxes), 25 oversized folders
Date (inclusive): 1901-2008
Abstract: The historic Southwest Museum was founded by Charles Fletcher Lummis and incorporated in Los Angeles, California on 1907 December 31, making it the city's first museum. The Southwest Museum is known nationally and internationally for the archaeological, ethnological and library collections that it holds relating to Native Americans spanning from Alaska to Terra del Fuego. In 2003, the Southwest Museum of the American Indian and the Autry Museum of Western Heritage merged to form the Autry National Center of the American West. The institutional archives of the Southwest Museum document over 100 years of its operations, development, and staff. Materials, created between 1901 and 2008, include office files, legal documents, reports, financial records, architectural drawings and building plans, photographs, and publications created by the Museum and its Board of Trustees. Also included are some material created by outside individuals and groups.
creator: Braun Research Library.
creator: Dentzel, Carl S.
creator: Hannah, Pam
creator: Harrington, M. R. (Mark Raymond), 1882-1971
creator: Hodge, Frederick Webb, 1864-1956
creator: Houlihan, Patrick T.
creator: James, George Wharton, 1858-1923
creator: King, Duane H.
creator: Munk, J. A. (Joseph Amasa), 1847-1927
creator: Skinner, Alanson, 1886-1925
creator: Southwest Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
creator: Walters, Kim
creator: Watkins, Frances E. (Frances Emma), 1899-1987
Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at rroom@theautry.org. Box level inventory and location guide available from library staff.
Use
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Preferred citation
Southwest Museum Institutional Archives, 1901-2008, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.3; [folder number] [folder title][date].
Related Archival Materials note
Carl S. Dentzel Papers, 1957-1980, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.241
George Bird Grinnell Manuscript Collection, 1815-1938, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.5
Mark Raymond Harrington Manuscript Collection, 1930-1961, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.214
Frederick Webb Hodge Manuscript Collection, 1884-1956, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.7
Charles Fletcher Lummis Papers, 1888-1928, Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.1
Walter McClintock Manuscript Collection, 1900-1949, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.533
Alanson Skinner Papers, 1890-1926, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.201
Frances E. Watkins Papers, and other materials, 1855-1968, Braun Research Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.8

Acquisition

Deposited by staff and departments, 1901-present.

Administrative Files, 1901-2008
Audiovisual material, 1988-2003
Awards and Certificates, 1907-2003
Building fixtures and signage, 1912-2003
Memorabilia and merchandise, 1919-1991
Publications, 1904-2002

Administrative History note

The Southwest Museum was founded by Charles Fletcher Lummis and incorporated in Los Angeles, California on 1907 December 31, making it the city’s first museum. The Southwest Museum is known nationally and internationally for the archaeological, ethnological and library collections that it holds relating to Native Americans spanning from Alaska to Terra del Fuego.

The Museum is also recognized for its research library and the collections of manuscript, photographs and sound recordings. Many of the manuscript collections relate to the early development of archaeology and anthropology in the United States.

As editor of the Land of Sunshine magazine, Charles Lummis began to use this publication to arouse interest in a February 1895 article where he stated, “The Land of Sunshine would very much like to see founded a Southern California museum.” His intent was to build the first cultural institution in Los Angeles and making the city, a center of art and culture in California. In his writings, Lummis makes reference to New York, Boston and Chicago as eastern art and cultural centers that Los Angeles should strive to emulate.

Lummis first became enlightened to the cultures of the Southwest while making his famous “tramp” from Cincinnati to Los Angeles from 1884-1885. Traveling by foot, he was able to take his time becoming acquainted with the people, land, and culture of the Southwest. By the time he reached Los Angeles, he was enamored with his discoveries and began lauding the culture and history of Native American civilization and the history of the Southwestern region of the United States.

Charles Lummis was educated at Harvard and was a writer of both fiction and non-fiction. He continued his archaeological study of the Southwest by going on excavations with Adolph Bandelier, which only enhanced his vision of creating a museum to preserve the culture he was studying. Lummis was of the opinion that the Eastern American museums and the national museums of Germany, England and Spain were carrying out expeditions to amass archaeological materials from the southwestern United States that he felt belonged in the Southwest. He was concerned about material leaving the Southwest and what this meant to future generations. Thus, in 1903, he started the Southwest Society, a western branch of the Archaeological Institute of America, with the intent of supporting the opening of a museum of the Southwest. Once the Southwest Society began collecting artifacts in 1905, a museum exhibition space was established in the Pacific Electric building in downtown Los Angeles. It was moved in 1908 to the Hamburger Building where it was housed until the Southwest Museum building was constructed in 1914.

Planning for the Southwest Museum building began in early 1906, when Lummis and the Executive Committee of the Southwest Society began to look for land. The group secured 38 acres of land in Highland Park in its current location in the spring of 1907.

The core of the Southwest Museum and its library research collections started with Lummis’s donation of ethnographic objects, manuscripts, sound recordings, and photographs from his personal collection. By 1905 Lummis began to solicit collections and to raise money in order to purchase collections. One of the first was the Palmer-Campbell Collection of Southern California Archaeology and Baskets.

In 1926, the Southwest Museum’s programming and collecting emphasis was altered by a new director, James A. B. Scherer, moving the museum from a general all purpose museum to one focused on education, anthropology, early Native American history, and contemporary Native American culture. The focus on education led to programs in outreach, guided tours, and a lecture series.

Building on the archaeological field work begun by the Southwest Society in 1905, the Museum set about becoming a leader in Southwest, and later Great Basin, archaeological research. To support new research, Scherer hired more professional scientific staff, such as Charles Amsden, Monroe Amsden, Harold Gladwin, Mark Raymond Harrington, and Frances Watkins. In addition, he started the well known publication Masterkey, the Southwest Museum membership
The research efforts and the publication of the findings of these distinguished archaeologists, anthropologists and other professionals were pivotal in the establishment of the Southwest Museum’s reputation as an important repository of Native American material.

Frederick Webb Hodge (1864-1956) was another preeminent anthropologist. Hodge became the director of the Southwest Museum in 1932 and held the position until 1955. He worked for the Smithsonian Institution for more than 20 years, and then he went to work for the Heye Foundation, Museum of the American Indian for 13 years. Hodge was one of the founding members of the American Anthropological Association and was the editor of The American Anthropologist for about 15 years. His work as an archaeologist on the Hemenway Expedition (1886-1890), and on the Hendricks/Hodge Expedition to Zuni Pueblo (1918-1922) provided him with a sound basis for developing the staff and the Southwest Museum’s systematic archaeological programs.

Under Hodge’s leadership, the museum built its collections to what they are today and he put the museum on the map through its publication series: The Hodge Anniversary Series (vol. 1-X), Southwest Museum Papers (no. 1-24), and Southwest Museum Leaflets (no. 1-). He expanded the Masterkey (Southwest Museum membership magazine) into a national publication covering topics in archaeology, anthropology, and contemporary Native American art. Many articles in Masterkey are still referenced by anthropologists and archaeologists. In addition, he brought in influential and important anthropologists to be Research Associates, Advisors and members of the Board of Trustees. Most notable among these were Alfred L. Kroeber (University of California Berkeley), Alfred V. Kidder (Harvard University), and John C. Merriam, ex-President of Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C.

Hodge pursued ethnographic collections drawing upon connections that he had made prior to coming to the Southwest Museum. He sought materials from the Southwest, California and the Plains as well as Northwest Coast, Plateau and Arctic regions. During the 23 years he was Director, Hodge brought almost 200,000 items into the Museum.

Hodge also built large photograph, manuscript, and book collections for the library, making it one of the preeminent libraries for the study of Native Americans in the west. Many of the Library’s collections compliment collections held by Ivy League institutions in the East. For instance, the George Bird Grinnell Collection of Plains Indian Manuscript materials, relates to the George Bird Grinnell Collection at the Sterling Library at Yale University. Researchers worldwide reference the Grinnell Collection for the more than 150 field diaries darting between 1872 and 1923. The Frank Hamilton Cushing Manuscript collections document the Hemenway Archaeological expedition (1886-1890) artifacts held by the Peabody Museum of Ethnology and Archaeology at Harvard University. The Cushing manuscript collection also contains documentation for an expedition that Cushing led to Florida for the University of Pennsylvania Museum. The University houses the archaeological collections and the Braun holds the field notes, and manuscripts. Researchers are also interested in Cushing’s personal observations during his stay at Zuni Pueblo (1878-1884).

Hodge also encouraged contemporary American Indian artists, acquiring their works. Many of the works of art on paper in the Library and Museum collections were acquired before 1960.

One of the important ethnographic collections held by the Museum is the Navajo textile collection, unparalleled in its size, age, breadth of the objects, and documentation. It is considered one of the most important systematic textile collections in the United States.

The museum had an endowment fund established in the 1930s to develop its Hopi Collection, which includes clothing, baskets, other objects of daily life, and katsina dolls. The katsinas in the collection are important because they represent the entire pantheon of the Hopi ceremonial calendar. The dolls date from the late 1800s through the 1940s. New donations and acquisitions have extended the collection into the twenty-first century.

The basket collection at the Southwest Museum is thought to be the country’s largest collection of Native American baskets. It contains not only tourist pieces, but every day items. The baskets span the centuries from Pre-Puebloan age to the twenty-first century. They span the Americas from Alaska to Terra del Fuego. The basket collection of noted author George Wharton James is of special value to researchers due to his manuscript and photograph collections in the Library.

In 1977, the Braun Research Library building was constructed to house the Southwest Museum’s collection of printed material, sound recordings, photographs, maps, works of art on paper, and archives.

The Charles F. Lummis Manuscript Collections contains his personal papers. The Library also holds his photographic archives of more than 5000 images, and more than 500 wax cylinder recordings of California Hispanic Folksongs. This collection documents his ethnographic collections in the Museum. The George Wharton James Manuscript and Photograph Archives are used by researchers interested in Navajo textiles and Native American Basketry.

The earliest donation to the Library was the Munk Library of Arizoniana, donated in 1910 by Joseph Amasa Munk. The Museum founder, Charles Lummis, convinced Munk that he was building a fire proof museum, so Munk gladly donated his valuable collection of photographs, manuscripts, maps, and books on Arizona. This collection also includes early territorial
documents that are not held in the State of Arizona. This collection came with an endowment and the Southwest Museum Library has continued to add to the collection.

In addition to Lummis’s photographs, the Braun Research Library Photographic Archives contains more than 140,000 photographs primarily documenting Native American cultures of the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. These images show the art, traditional clothing, dances, rituals, ceremonies, dwellings, and various aspects of daily life. The Library’s works of art on paper collections includes drawings, paintings, and other illustrations by Native American and European American artists.

Manuscript collections documenting the founding of anthropology and archaeology as disciplines in the United States contain the papers of the anthropologists mentioned above as well as Frank Hamilton Cushing, George Bird Grinnell, Walter McClintock, and Alanson Skinner. Due to the sensitive nature of many of the early anthropologists’ observations, photographs, songs, or artistic depictions, the library staff currently works with Native American consultants to determine what cultural sensitivity issues might arise from providing greater intellectual and visual access to these items, the descriptions of the items, or both.

Patrick Houlihan became the Southwest Museum Director in 1981. He worked to rehabilitate the Southwest Museum site and bring it up to late twentieth century standards. During his tenure, he created the Development Office and the Public Relations department; revitalized and expanded the docent program; increased the museum’s endowment; and started the ARCO facility for exhibitions. It was also under his direction that the number of exhibitions and frequency with which they were changed notably increased.

Kathy Whitaker’s arrival as part of the curatorial department in 1991 marked the beginning of a renewed influence of the many Native American communities represented in the Southwest Museum collections. Whitaker worked on strengthening this relationship and invited members of the Native communities to become active participants in the Southwest Museum as curators and consultants.

In 1986, the Board of Trustees began to investigate merging with other institutions to relieve the financial stress that the Museum has often felt since its inception. Between 1992 and 1994, this interest in merging came about again, under director Thomas H. Wilson. This time, the Board was looking to move the entire operation; they were looking for land, money, and assistance. However, the Board never received an acceptable offer, the Northridge earthquake in 1994 damaged the building, and the national economy was on a downturn. The combination of these factors forced the Board to drop their quest once again. Between 1998 and 2000, under the direction of Duane King, the Southwest Museum tried to reach different audiences by installing exhibits at Los Angeles County Museum of Art in the May Company building. By the end of this foray, they felt they were able to start looking for financial partnership again.

In 2003, the Southwest Museum of the American Indian and the Autry Museum of Western Heritage merged to form the Autry National Center of the American West.

Processing history
Previously processed by Braun Research Library staff. Administrative History created by Kim Walters, 2011. Finding aid completed by Holly Rose Larson, 2011, made possible through grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commissions (NHPRC).

Scope and contents
The Southwest Museum Institutional Archives documents the creation, activities, and development of the Museum from 1901-2008. These files include information about the Southwest Museum’s Casa de Adobe building; collections and acquisitions; personnel; exhibits; educational and outreach programs; library and archives; archeological expeditions; clubs; events; and published works.

The time period covered spans the Museum’s association with the Southwest Society, beginning in 1901, to the merger with the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in 2003. Some files created after 2003 are included because they reflect personnel who spent a predominant amount of years as a Southwest Museum employee in a particular position, such as Dr. Duane King, Executive Director of the Southwest Museum; Pam Hannah, Director of Operations, and Kim Walters, Director of the Braun Research Library.

Types of material in the Archives include correspondence, administrative records, financial records, Board of Trustees files, departmental files, legal documents, photographs, reports, visitor records, and publications. Also included are awards and certificates received by the Southwest Museum; audio/visual materials; interior and exterior signage; memorabilia; and merchandise. Some memorabilia and merchandise were not created by the Southwest Museum.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Grinnell, George Bird, 1849-1938
Lummis, Charles Fletcher, 1859-1928.
Administrative files 1901-2008

Scope and contents
The series includes administrative records, Board of Trustees files, records from the Braun Research Library, records from the Casa de Adobe, collections records, curatorial records, development records, papers of the directors of the Museum, education records, records of the galleries and exhibits, operations and maintenance records, and the papers of the public relations department.

Records created in the early to mid 20th Century often overlap and naturally reflect the interrelationships between departments during the beginning years of the Southwest Museum.

Other material in this series includes photographs, architectural drawings, scrapbooks, maps, and ephemera.

Awards and certificates 1907-2003

Scope and contents
This series contains papers of recognition of the Southwest Museum from outside sources, dating from its incorporation to the time of the merger. It includes awards, certificates, and memorabilia regarding the Southwest Museum.

Audiovisual material 1988-2003

Scope and contents
This series contains moving images and sound recordings produced by or used by the Southwest Museum.
Building fixtures and signage 1912-2003

Scope and contents
This series contains the plaques and engravings mounted to the interior and exterior of the Southwest Museum buildings from the time of incorporation to the time of the merger. This series also contains signage created by the Southwest Museum for directional, identification, dedication/donation, or promotional purposes. This does not include didactics, or signage created for specific exhibits.

Publications

Scope and contents
This series includes papers and records of all Southwest Museum publications including the Casa de Adobe Handbook, the Hodge Anniversary Publication Fund monograph series, The Masterkey journal series, Southwest Museum Leaflets, Southwest Museum Papers, and monographs. These papers and records include correspondence, drafts, notes, and mockups of the publications.

Southwest Museum store and merchandise 1919-1991

Scope and contents
This series contains products and artwork produced by the Southwest Museum to be sold in the store, such as posters and souvenirs. It also includes nonfinancial records of the store, such as promotional materials on featured artists and exhibits.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Artwork