Hayden Planetarium Interplanetary Reservations, 1949-2011 (bulk 1949-1953)

American Museum of Natural History
Special Collections-Library
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024
COLLECTION INFORMATION

Repository:
American Museum of Natural History, Special Collections-Library
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024

Collection: Hayden Planetarium Interplanetary Reservations

Creator: Hayden Planetarium; American Museum of Natural History

Inclusive Dates: 1949-2011

Bulk Dates: 1949-1953

Call Number: DR 194

Extent: 1 linear foot (4 boxes)

Physical Description: Collection primarily consists of handwritten letters. Also contains printed materials.

Condition: The handwritten letters range from good to poor. Some are very fragile. Printed materials are in good condition.

Prepared by/Date: Jeffrey Levels, February 2012

Revised by/Date:
HISTORICAL NOTE

The Hayden Planetarium has a rich history as it is one of New York City’s most notable and revered learning centers and special exhibits. The original Hayden Planetarium was funded by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and was completed in 1935. The Zeiss Projection apparatus and the Copernican Planetarium were gifts of Charles Hayden, an American banker, philanthropist, and the individual whom the building was named after. It was opened to the public on October 3, 1935 and attained immediate popularity and success. A few of the notable individuals who have served the Hayden Planetarium include Joseph M. Chamberlain who became Chairman of the Hayden Planetarium in 1956, Kenneth Franklin was the head scientist at the Hayden Planetarium from 1956-1984, and Neil deGrasse Tyson who is currently the Frederick P. Rose Director of the Hayden Planetarium at the Rose Center for Earth and Space.

The Hayden Planetarium is operated out of the Department of Astrophysics at the American Museum of Natural History. Since its opening in 1935 it has been a center for research in astronomy and astrophysics, a center for education in the field of astronomy, and one of the museums most visited and regarded special exhibits. It has attracted visitors from around the globe by the thousands since its inception and remains a leading source for informing the public on major breakthroughs in astrophysics and astronomy. In addition to the planetarium shows and permanent exhibits, Hayden offers educational lectures monthly, live talks featuring respected scholars in the field, and also features special events for the public on occasion. For instance in the 1980’s and 1990s Hayden put on laser shows with popular music from artists such as Pink Floyd and David Bowie weekly.

The mission statement of the Hayden Planetarium, according to their website, is three fold:

• Maintain scientific excellence in, and service to, the field of astrophysics.
• Track the frontier of cosmic discovery—seek out and develop innovative ways to bring this frontier to the programs and activities of the American Museum of Natural History.
• Honor the legacy of the Hayden Planetarium in the hearts and minds of the public and in the amateur astronomy community.

Since its inception in 1935, the Hayden Planetarium utilized the Zeiss projectors for their planetarium presentations. Although the shows evolved over the years, and the old Zeiss projectors were either updated or replaced by newer, more powerful ones, the Hayden Planetarium began preparing for its future. Seeking to modernize its facilities and equip the planetarium with digital screens, Hayden underwent renovation in 1997. After years of planning and protest, the old brick Hayden Planetarium building was demolished in 1997, rebuilt with a modern, futuristic theme, and reopened to the public in February of 2000. It was also renamed the Rose Center for Earth and Space with respect to its principal donors Frederick Phineas and Sandra Priest Rose.

Sources:
http://www.haydenplanetarium.org/about
Planetarium Annual report from 1949-1950.
SCOPE AND CONTENT

This particular collection refers to a promotional strategy implemented by the Hayden Planetarium. In 1949, in order to increase publicity for their space exhibit “Conquest of Space”, the Hayden Planetarium set up an “interplanetary-tour reservations desk” that would take reservations for the first trips into space. The museum promised that the collected names would be turned over to the first organization actually planning interplanetary travel. In addition to the desk at the planetarium, interplanetary reservation blanks were printed in major publications worldwide. Between 1950-1953 hundreds of letters were sent in response to the advertisements from all over the United States and the world. Due to the heavy influx of letters from enthusiastic, future space travelers, there is a need to keep these reservations organized if interplanetary space travel does become a reality in the future. Therefore, the letters that were sent to the planetarium have been arranged in this collection and described in the finding aid to assist anyone one who wishes to locate names or reservations in the future. Examples of these letters can be viewed the following sites:

• http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/beyond/hayden-letters.php

This site is home to the museum’s special exhibit “Beyond Planet Earth”, a temporary exhibition that ran from November 19, 2011 - August 12, 2012. The exhibit was created to celebrate the 50th anniversary of space flight. The exhibit explored many aspects of space including asteroids, the Space Race, returning to the moon, traveling to mars and space tourism.

• http://www.flickr.com/photos/amnh/sets/72157628295324859/with/6554625987

This Flickr site hosts a digitized sample of the letters available in the collection. Some of the more interesting letters were uploaded to the site for anyone who is interested in viewing them. Items were uploaded December 2011. The physical collection also contains printed copies of those letters which were digitized along with the original letter.

The collection contains hundreds of letters from people residing within the United States as well as internationally. Countries present in the collection include: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, England, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, Wales, and Yugoslavia. There is also a folder that contains letters with unidentifiable origins. Another folder contains reservations from the Rochester Public Library’s “The Universe Unlimited Science Fiction Book Club”.

This collection also contains other printed materials related to the Hayden Planetarium. Materials include the Planetarium Annual report from 1949-1950, an original “Time Schedule” card which was sent to those who wrote the planetarium, and also a list of media outlets listed in the letters.
ARRANGEMENT NOTE
Boxes 1 and 2 contain letters from within the United States. The states are arranged alphabetically within folders. Within each state the letters are arranged alphabetically by last name.

Box 3 contains letters from countries outside of the United States. The countries are arranged alphabetically by name of country. Within each country the letters arranged alphabetically.

ACCESS CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS
Requests to use the collection should be made in advance to the Senior Special Collections Librarian, who may be contacted at 212-769-5420 or at speccol@amnh.org

PREFERRED CITATION

SUBJECTS
American Museum Of Natural History.
Astronautics.
Correspondence.
Hayden Planetarium.
Jupiter (Planet)—Exploration.
Letters.
Mars (Planet)--Exploration.
Manned space flight.
Moon--Exploration.
Outer space--Exploration.
Saturn (Planet) Exploration.
Space flight to Jupiter.
Space flight to Mars.
Space flight to the moon.
Space flight to Saturn.
Space tourism.
## CONTAINER LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: Alabama-Connecticut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: Delaware-Iowa</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: Kansas-Massachusetts</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: Michigan-Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: Nebraska-New Mexico</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: New York</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: North Carolina- Oregon</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: Pennsylvania-Rhode Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: South Carolina-Virginia</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: Washington-Wyoming</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>United States Correspondence: District of Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>International Correspondence: Countries A-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>International Correspondence: Countries F-I</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>International Correspondence: Countries J-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>International Correspondence: Countries S-Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unidentifiable Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Requests from the Rochester Public Library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flickr Letters. Uploaded in December of 2011. This folder contains letters that were uploaded to Flickr, a social media website, for public viewing. These letters were selected for outstanding qualities such as humor, uniqueness, or outrageousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Planetarium Annual Report, 1949-1950. This report explains the origins of the promotion that sparked the influx of the Hayden Letters. Contains information regarding the promotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Time Schedule and Advertisements. This folder contains a list of periodicals and journals that ads for the Hayden Planetarium were placed in. This folder also contains the sole remaining Time Schedule, which was what was sent to those people who wrote the Hayden Planetarium regarding interplanetary travel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>