

Call Number: MSS .P371-P375

Albert Eide Parr papers, 1935-1980 (bulk 1933-1935, 1942-1980)

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: Albert Eide Parr papers

Creator: Parr, Albert Eide, 1900-1991

Inclusive Dates: 1933-1980

Bulk Dates: 1933-1935, 1942-1980

Manuscript Call Number: MSS .P371-P375

Extent: 3.25 linear feet (8 boxes)

Physical Description: Organized into eight boxes, the contents of which include publications, newspaper clippings, receipts, handwritten notes, photographs and negatives, bound notebooks and typed correspondence.

Condition: Good to Fragile

Prepared by/Date: Schuyler Volz, October, 2011

Revised by/Date:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Albert Eide Parr, an oceanographer and ichthyologist, was director of the American Museum of Natural History from 1942 to 1959. Parr was born (1900) in Bergen, Norway, went to sea during school and college vacations, studied zoology, and was appointed assistant in the Norway Bureau of Fisheries while an undergraduate. In 1926, Parr came to the United States, worked at the New York Aquarium, and in 1927 was invited by Harry Payne Bingham to serve as naturalist on an expedition to the Caribbean. The fishes collected, including over 100 new species, were eventually housed at Yale University, and the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory was established with Parr as curator. More expeditions followed, offering Parr the opportunity to study the Sargasso Sea and chart the origins of the Gulf Stream. In 1931, Parr began a career at Yale, eventually becoming professor of oceanography, research associate at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and director of the Peabody Museum. During his term as director of the AMNH, Parr faced the need to retrench during wartime and contract the museum's research geographically. He focused on ecology and education, emphasizing the interrelationship of human beings and natural forces, and defining the museum's mission as attracting and maintaining the interest of the public. Parr was the first director of the AMNH to resign in order to pursue research, becoming senior scientist after fifteen years in administration. He founded and served as the managing editor of the journal published by the Sears Foundation for Marine Research, continued his work on classifying fishes and studying ocean currents, and lectured for the American Association of Museums and UNESCO. Parr died in 1991.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection contains a wide variety of documents pertaining to Albert E. Parr, particularly during his tenure as Museum Director (1942-1959). Additionally, the collection also hosts a large collection of his original publications, as well as an assortment of newspaper clippings, receipts, meeting minutes, drafts of speeches, and correspondence.

Box 1, MSS .P371- This box contains a number of receipts and several notebooks detailing expenses during two trips to Europe, the first trip from an indeterminate date, and the second from 1966. Also included is a bound "record" book from 1935 (January 21-April 20) in which he noted scientific numerical information. Additionally, this box contains a Museum document; "Confidential Report and Recommendations from the Director" dated April 1944. In this document, Parr outlines his plan to properly balance the Museum's goals. Specifically, Parr sought to increase the amount of scientific research conducted without neglecting the Museum's role as a place of public enlightenment.

Box 2, MSS .P372- This box is organized in four folders divided as follows. Folder 1 Correspondence: Contains typed and handwritten letters and memos mostly related to Parr's speaking engagements and book publication. Folder 2 Memos: Contains Museum press releases and internal documents/memos concerning Parr. Also included is an incomplete typed copy of "Citation Presented to Albert Eide Parr by Yale University in

1946"celebrating Parr's work and awarding him an honorary Doctorate of Science degree. Folder 3 Papers: Contains drafts of speeches, pamphlets, and articles written by Parr for such publications as *Industrial Design*, *Museum News*, *Print*, and *Arts and Architecture*. Folder 4 Clippings: Contains both original and photocopied newspaper and magazine articles related to Parr and/or the Museum.

Box 3, MSS .P373- This box contains articles written by, or about, Parr between the years of 1942-1973. The earlier articles (generally small pamphlets published by the AMNH) from the 1940s and 1950s focused on issues of Museology and education, particularly, the role of museums during and following times of war, methods of exhibition, the use of technology in museums to improve visitor experiences, and the role of museums in the education of the public. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Parr also began to write about issues of urban planning and design. His articles from this era often concerned urban design and its relationship to subjects such as psychology, sociology, the environment, education, children, and museums. The articles in this collection tend to be AMNH-sponsored pamphlet reprints of articles originally published by magazines, newspapers, and journals such as *American Scientist*, *Curator*, *Yale Review*, *Sociological Inquiry*, *Museologist*, *Landscape*, *Architectural Association Quarterly*, *New York Times*, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, and *Discovery*. Also included in this box are two articles featuring Parr as a subject. The first such article is from *Yale Alumni Magazine* that details the University's marine biology program where Parr worked before his tenure at the Museum. The second article is from a Swedish magazine, *Farmand*, from September 8, 1956 that discusses Parr's success in the United States (written in Swedish).

Box 4, MSS .P374- The contents of this box are divided into eleven folders, and they cover various Museum related issues that arose during the 1940s and 1950s. Generally, these documents represent the administrative role of Parr's work as the AMNH director, including meeting minutes, architectural documents, budgetary outlines, and correspondence with such notable figures as AMNH President F. Trubee Davison and NYC Planning Commissioner Robert Moses.

Box 5, MSS .P375- Originally, the material housed in boxes 5-8 were contained in one large, unorganized box that has since been divided up. Box #5 contains material from across Parr's career, dating from the 1930s, before he was named Museum Director, to the late 1950s, just before he retired from the position. The first two folders includes photos of seaweed (some bound in a three ring binder, with duplicates and negatives in a separate accordion envelope). The seaweed has been identified as Sargassum and also included is a description of the species presumably written by Parr (folder #3). Additionally, in this box are multiple copies of financial data, in the form of graphs, displaying various statistics concerning the monetary cost of exhibitions from the 1920s through the late 1950s. The last folder contains one map and four artist renderings (drawings colored with ink/paint) of specific displays planned for the Biology of Man exhibit which opened in March of 1960. This exhibit was conceived of and planned over fourteen years, by the chairman of the AMNH department of Anthropology, Harry L. Shapiro, and it's goal was to examine the process of human evolution as well as the inner

workings of the human body. According to AMNH annual reports, the exhibit was one of the most popular in the museum during the early 1960s.

Box 6, MSS .P375- This box contains copies of publications from the late 1950s (*New York Times Magazine*, *Collier's*, *Yale Alumni Magazine*) featuring articles about AMNH or Parr.

Box 7, MSS .P375- This box contains multiple issues of two publications from the mid-1960s; *Museums Journal* and *Midwest Museums Conference of the American Association of Museums Quarterly*.

Box 8, MSS .P375- This box contains an assortment of pamphlets and brochures related to various national parks, museums, the 1962 World's Fair, and a copy (book) of The Metropolitan Museum of Art's charter constitution/by-laws of 1947. Also included are multiple issues from the mid-1960s of *The Museologist* and the Museums Association monthly bulletin.

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

American Museum of Natural History, Albert Eide Parr papers, 1935-1980 (bulk 1933-1935, 1942-1980). MSS .P371-P375.

SOURCE OF ACQUISITION

Box 2 (.P372) was transferred to the archives from the Office of Public Affairs in 1993. Box 4 (.P374) is made up of documents "found in a closet near the auditorium," in 1998. Boxes 5-8 were "found in a found in a closet" at an unknown time.

SUBJECTS

TOPICAL TERMS

American Museum of Natural History -- Management -- History -- Sources.
Museum directors -- New York (State) -- New York -- Correspondence.
Natural history museum curators -- Correspondence.
Oceanographers -- United States -- Correspondence.
Ichthyologists -- United States -- Correspondence.
Education -- Museums.
Scientific Research -- Museums.
City Planning.

PERSONAL NAMES

Moses, Robert, 1888-1981.

UNCONTROLLED

American Museum of Natural History – Architecture

Museums and Technology

Museums in the Post-War Era

Norwegian-born Scientists

Urban Design and Education

Urban Design and the Environment

Urban Design and Museums

Davison, Trubee F.

CONTAINER LIST

Series I: Collection Miscellany, 1935-1966 (MSS .P371)

Box	Folder	Title
1	1	Confidential Report and Recommendations from the Director. April 1944.
1	2	Black-bound "Records" notebook. 1935 January 21-April 20.
1	3	Cash Book notebook.
1	4-7	Receipts Europe 1966.
1	7-8	Miscellaneous travel related receipts and papers.

Series II: Papers, Correspondence, and Clippings, 1942-1983 (MSS .P372)

Box	Folder	Title
2	1	Correspondence. 1956-1975.
2	2	Memos. 1942-1983.
2	3	Papers. 1947-1972.
2	4	Clippings. 1949-1980.

Series III: Publications 1942-1973 (MSS .P373)

Box	Folder	Title
3	1	Publications. 1942-1945.
3	2	Publications. 1946-1947.
3	3	Publications. 1947-1953.
3	4	Publications. 1955-1962.
3	5	Publications. 1963-1965.
3	6	Publications. 1966-1967.
3	7	Publications. 1968-1970.
3	8	Publications. 1971-1973.

Series IV: Administrative papers, 1938-1959 (MSS .P374)

Box	Folder	Title
4	1	Architectural Office Victor W. Ronfeldt Staff Architect. 1948-1951.
4	2	Council of the Scientific Staff. 1959.
4	3	Curatorial Organization (Proposals). 1956.
4	4	Exhibitions: Advisory Committee. 1947-1952.
4	5	New York City and the AMNH. 1943-1947.
4	6-7	Plan and Scope Committee (name changed to Committee on Exhibition in 1945). 1942-1944.
4	8-9	Post-War Reconstruction Program. Extracts from Minutes. 1942-1949.
4	10	Preparation Department. 1951.
4	11	Pamphlets-AMNH Pension Plan, 1946. AMNH General Regulations. 1938-1949.

Series V: Albert E. Parr Accretion, 1933-1966 (MSS .P375)

Box	Folder	Title
5	1	Seaweed (Sargassum) Photos and Negatives. 1933-1935, Undated.
5	2	Seaweed (Sargassum) Collection of Photos. 1933-1935, Undated.
5	3	Seaweed (Sargassum) Description. Undated.
5	4	Financial Documents/Graphs. Undated.
5	5	Biology of Man Exhibit Artist Renderings. Undated.

Box	Folder	Title
6	1	Publications. 1954-1959.

Box	Folder	Title
7	1	<i>Museums Journal</i> . 1961-1966.
7	2	Midwest Museums Conference of the American Association of Museums Quarterly. 1963-1966.

Box	Folder	Title
8	1	Books. 1947-1949.
8	2	Pamphlets and Guide Books. 1955-1962.
8	3	<i>Museums Association Monthly Bulletin</i> . 1961-1965.
8	4	<i>The Museologist</i> . 1963-1966.