Theodore Roosevelt Memorial and Exhibitions, 1899-1984 (bulk 1899-1970)

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: Theodore Roosevelt Memorial and Exhibitions

Creator: American Museum of Natural History

Inclusive Dates: 1899-1984
Bulk Dates: 1899-1970

Call Numbers: MSS .R6671

Extent: 4 linear feet (7 boxes, including two oversized).

Physical Description: Collection consists of original documents, including those that are handwritten and/or signed by Roosevelt and others. Also, included are carbon copied documents, photocopied documents, magazine and newspaper clippings, invitations, event programs, pamphlets, brochures, books, blueprints, artwork, museum display materials, postcards, telegrams, receipts, photographs and negatives, and one LP record. A majority of the photographs from Memorial and Exhibition boxes are stored within folders and have rarely been placed in plastic sleeves.

Condition: Some documents, such as the original correspondence are extremely fragile, however they have been properly stored. A majority of the documents are in fairly good condition.


Revised by/Date:
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), the 26th President of the U.S. (1901-1909), was a passionate conservationist and supporter of the American Museum of Natural History. Not only was his father a founding member of the museum, but Roosevelt himself undertook numerous collecting expeditions on its behalf. Despite being born in the heart of New York City, he was an ardent naturalist who enjoyed hunting, taxidermy and the study of biology from a young age. These interests fueled his friendships with notable museum employees Frank M. Chapman and Henry Fairfield Osborn, and were his motivation for the creation of the National Parks system during his presidency as well. The New York State Roosevelt Memorial Hall, including a permanent exhibition on his life, opened at the museum in 1936.

HISTORICAL NOTE
Immediately following the death of Theodore Roosevelt on January 6, 1919, prominent editorials in major newspapers (New York Times, and New York World) advocated for the creation of a memorial connected to the museum. AMNH president Henry Fairfield Osborn, was also a strong supporter of such an idea and the following year the New York State legislature, along with Governor Alfred E. Smith, created a six-member commission, with Osborn as the chairman, to investigate and report “a plan for a memorial which would for all time stand as a visible expression of recognition of the series of one who has been most active in the welfare and development of our State and Nation.” On May 5, 1924, thanks to the commission’s tireless efforts, the legislature passed an act providing for the construction of “a free and public education building as a memorial to Theodore Roosevelt” on a site adjacent to the museum. It appropriated $2.5 million for the project and transferred responsibility for the project to a board of trustees who were soon named the New York State Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, and once again Osborn was the chairman.

On June 2, 1925 the board selected architect John Russell Pope, a New Yorker and graduate of Columbia University, to design the memorial. While Pope’s plans, specifications, and model of the memorial building were completed by mid-July 1926, it was another three years before the project was able to get underway due to the downturn of the national economy. In a meeting with Governor Franklin Roosevelt in January of 1929, Osborn was able to secure a second round of funds ($3.5 million) that were needed in order to address new architectural issues of the design related to the creation of the Central Park West subway line. During this same time period, Osborn also procured funds ($3.4 million) from the City of New York as well.

The work of excavation began nine months later, on October 16, 1929, when museum secretary George N. Pinder officially broke ground. On October 27, 1931, the cornerstone was laid by Governor Roosevelt in a celebration marking what would have been Theodore Roosevelt’s 73rd birthday. Exactly five years later, the building was officially dedicated in a ceremony attended by President Roosevelt, New York State Governor Herbert Lehman, and New York City Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia. Unfortunately, Osborn had died less than a year before the celebration, but his enthusiastic support for the memorial and the museum was recognized during the event.

The Bronze equestrian statue in front of the memorial is the work of James Earle Fraser, who received the commission at about the same time as Pope was selected as the architect. A native of Minnesota and a protégé of Augustus Saint Gaudens, Fraser was best known at the time as the
designer of the Buffalo nickel. Theodore Roosevelt’s widow unveiled the statue in a ceremony on October 27, 1940.

In 1953 the museum opened a permanent exhibition dedicated to the Theodore Roosevelt’s life. The exhibit specifically showcased his passionate interest in natural history and his life-long commitment to the museum. Finally, five years later in 1958, the museum held another celebration, this time in honor of the centennial anniversary of Roosevelt’s birth.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT**
This collection contains a wide range of materials mostly concerned with various memorials and exhibitions celebrating the life of Theodore Roosevelt, and in particular, his close relationship with the American Museum of Natural History. Materials include; typed, handwritten and carbon copies of correspondence, photographs, negatives, pamphlets, invitations, programs, books, items and texts from the various exhibitions, blueprints, an LP record, artwork (drawings, etchings), postcards, magazines, newspapers and clippings, press releases, receipts, and various museum documents.

Box #1- This box contains correspondence and various documents from 1954-1965 mostly related to the organization of exhibitions celebrating Roosevelt. The correspondence is primarily concerned with requests to different organizations and people (including TR’s daughter Ethel Derby) for TR related material and memorabilia for exhibition at the museum. Also included are a number of newspaper and magazine articles covering different TR memorials, openings, and celebrations at the museum, as well as various museum souvenirs, pamphlets and documents.

Box #2- This box contains four folders of correspondence and eighteen folders related to exhibitions. The first folder is a collection of letters received by the museum from the public in regards to Roosevelt, usually concerning questions about authenticating TR memorabilia. The following three folders contain typed carbon copies of correspondence between Roosevelt and Frank M. Chapman, Henry Fairfield Osborn, and others. These letters can also be found in other collections (MSS .R6673-R6675). The remaining folders include documents, photos, texts, and notes from museum exhibitions (both permanent and temporary) about Roosevelt.

Box #3- This box contains a wide variety of materials related to Roosevelt temporary exhibitions and permanent memorials (equestrian statue). Documents include; correspondence, photos, pamphlets, books and other printed materials, press releases, receipts, and meeting minutes.

Box #4- The contents of this box deals with three different themes related to Roosevelt. The first of which are collections of pamphlets and other documents from various parks, memorials, and/or museums from across the United States that are dedicated to, named after, or created by Theodore Roosevelt. The second theme is a collection of assorted photographs and negatives of Roosevelt or things/places connected to his life. The final theme is a collection of museum documents (1960-1981) related to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Fund which dispersed funds for research projects relating to wildlife and natural history.

Box #5- This box consists of assorted oversized materials including press releases, photographs of Theodore Roosevelt items included in exhibits, and other museum related documents.
Box #6- This box features large items such as books, pamphlets, and printed matter related to Roosevelt memorials, celebrations, and exhibitions.

Box #6A- Oversized documents mostly related to the construction of Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Park on the grounds of the museum. Included in this box are early sketches and blueprints of the park’s design. Also included are various photographs, artwork, and an LP record.

RELATED MATERIAL
Correspondence (typed carbon copies, photocopies and originals) between Roosevelt and various individuals is available in the AMNH Special Collections. Call number MSS .R6673-R6675.

AMNH Special Collections also has photographic collections relating to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall and its construction. Call numbers PPC .A45.P57 and PPC .A45.V56

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

PEOPLE AND SUBJECTS
Frank M. Chapman: AMNH Ornithologist
Henry Fairfield Osborn: AMNH President, 1908-1933
John Russell Pope: Architect, Roosevelt memorial
Alfred E. Smith: NY Governor
Franklin D. Roosevelt: US President 1933-1945
James Earl Fraser: Sculptor of TR Memorial Statue
John Burroughs: Naturalist, friend of TR
Robert F. Wagner: NY State Senator, 1927-1949
Herman Hagedorn: TR Friend and Biographer
James L. Clark: Taxidermist and Explorer AMNH
Waldron DeWitt Miller: Ornithologist AMNH
Abbot R. Thayer: Painter of Animals
William O’Dwyer, NYC Mayor, 1946-1950
Sir George Trevelyan: British Statesman
Arthur Lee: 1st Viscount Lee of Fareham, British diplomat/politician
Cornelius Vanderbilt III- Financier
Edward Curtis: Photographer
Albert Bickmore: Naturalist and founder of AMNH

AMNH Exhibition History
AMNH Architecture
AMNH Memorabilia
Elk Horn Ranch, North Dakota
## CONTAINER LIST

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