National Anthropological Archives: The Waldo R. Wedel Collection

Robert McLaughlin


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**SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

I. National Anthropological Archives: The Waldo R. Wedel Collection

As an intern at the National Anthropological Archives last summer, I began processing the Waldo R. Wedel Papers—a collection of 117 boxes and a dozen map cases. There is now a partial finding aid surveying the materials and documenting Wedel’s correspondence, administrative and organizational files. These materials span Wedel’s career from the early 1930s into the 1980s. Heavily influenced by William Duncan Strong, Alfred Kroeber and Carl Sauer, Wedel’s career was primarily, although not exclusively, associated with his archeological fieldwork in the Great Plains, especially in Nebraska, Kansas and the Missouri River Basin. After working for the Nebraska Historical Society and Gila Pueblo Foundation, Wedel became affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution in 1936, and continued there until retirement, when he held the position of Curator of Archaeology and Senior Archaeologist. In the summer of 1946 Wedel became director of the Missouri Basin Project of the Bureau of American Ethnology’s River Basin Surveys, a position he held until 1950. Throughout the 1950s, he continued to participate in the excavation of a number of River Basin Survey sites. His meticulous and careful field notes have already begun to assist the Smithsonian Office of Repatriation’s attempts to identify bones and grave goods for return to appropriate descendant groups of Great Basin Native Americans.

Wedel’s papers are an invaluable source for reconstructing the history of Plains archeology. They include careful documentation of the annual meetings of such groups as the Society for American Archaeology and the Plains Conferences. The *Guide to the National Anthropological Archives* lists among his correspondents David Barreis, Frank Calhoun, Phillip Drucker, William Fenton, Jesse Jennings, Emil Haury, A. T. Hill, A.V. Kidder, George Metcalf, Dennis Stanford, W. D. Strong, William Sturtevant, A. Wetmore, and George F. Will. The extraordinary levels of detail, legibility and
inherent organization of the collection will enable historians of archaeology to pursue more narrowly bounded questions, including the gradual incorporation of carbon-14 dating into Wedel's research methodology. Another set of papers reflect his critical position on "new archaeology." Other documents pertain to the incorporation of the B.A.E. into the Smithsonian Office of Anthropology in 1965. The collection also contains a large number of drafts of texts, descriptions, and floor plans relating to museum exhibits.

The collection has been organized into eight series: Correspondence of Waldo Wedel; Correspondence of Mildred M. Wedel: Organizational and Administrative Material; Exhibit Materials; Publications; Manuscripts; Research and Fieldwork Materials; and Maps and Large Drawings. Photographs have not yet been removed for separate preservation, and are retained throughout the collection as they existed among the papers. (Robert McLaughlin)

II. Archives of the Laboratory of Anthropology/Museum of Indian Arts and Culture

The Laboratory of Anthropology/Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, a division of the Museum of New Mexico, has set up an archives of the papers and photographs in its possession. The papers of the original Laboratory of Anthropology constitute one of the major collections. Other collections of interest include the field notes of A. V. Kidder's Pecos work; the papers of Erik K. Reed, Dorothy Dunn Kramer, Mabel Morrow, Sylvanus G. Morley, Jesse Nusbaum and others; the field notes of the Ramah projects; and photographs of archeological survey and excavation done at the Laboratory of Anthropology in the 1930s. Also included are the Site Survey Files of all archeological work done on state lands. Most of the collections have been processed, and a list of them is available, as well as guides. Researchers are welcomed, by appointment. For more information contact Willow Roberts Powers, Archivist, Laboratory of Anthropology/Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, P.O. Box 2087, Santa Fe, N.M. 87504-2087; Tel: (505) 827-6344; Fax: (505) 827-6497.

III. ANSS currents

ANSS currents, the newsletter of the Association of College and Research Libraries Anthropology and Sociology Section, under the editorship of James Williams (University of Illinois Library) and Fred J. Hay (Tozzer Library, Harvard) includes materials on sources and reference materials in anthropology, some of them of interest to historians of the discipline. Among those listed in recent numbers are:

Images of the Other: A Guide to Microform Manuscripts on Indian-White Relations. (By Polly Swift Grimshaw. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.) This guide identifies, describes, and evaluates sixty-five manuscript collections in microform which document the earliest contacts of Europeans with native inhabitants of the Americas.

The American Monographs Program, 1876-1949, Unit Two: Anthropology. (Further information available from Chadwyck-Healey Inc., 1101 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314.) This program was designed to identify, film, and republish on microfiche all monographs published in the U.S. between 1876 and 1949. These titles, which reveal the growth of anthropology as an academic discipline in the U.S., will be available as a set or as individual titles.