

Guide to the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory, Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, Records

RU 552



compiled by Staff of Manuscripts and Archives

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: RU 552

CREATOR: Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory

TITLE: Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory, Peabody Museum of Natural History,
Yale University, records

DATES: 1927-1965

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 17.25 linear feet (42 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The records consist of correspondence and subject files documenting the operations of the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory at Yale University. Topics include faculty and personnel, environmental issues, national biological stations and institutions, and naval reports and research.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ru.0552>

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Preferred Citation

Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory, Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, Records (RU 552). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Processing Information

Yale University records are arranged and described at the accession level by the creating office. The University Archives creates collection level descriptive records, but typically does no further arrangement and description at the accession level.

Biographical / Historical

The Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory was formed in 1930 with the gift of the 3,000 item Bingham Oceanographic Collection by Henry Payne Bingham, Yale 1910. This rare and valuable group of oceanographic specimens, collected personally by Bingham, had been at Yale on loan since 1927. With the oceanographic collection came Albert Eide Parr, a young Norwegian who had been working at the New York Aquarium. Parr was Assistant Curator from 1927-1930, Curator of the collection from 1930-1942, and Director of the Peabody Museum from 1938-1942.

Henry Bingham was interested in more than just adding to his collection. He wanted to sponsor scientific research into the life and natural laws of the sea. Thus the laboratory was founded for pure rather than applied contractual research. Scientists were encouraged to explore any aspect of oceanography they considered significant, to pursue oceanographic knowledge for its own sake. Marine biology, biochemistry and physical oceanography were the main areas of concentration. The results of research at the lab were published in the *Bulletin of the Bingham Oceanographic Collection* and elsewhere. *The Journal of Marine Research* was founded in 1937. By 1940 the lab's researches in pure oceanography had given it a high reputation despite its small staff.

In 1942 Parr left Bingham to become director of the American Museum of Natural History. Dr. Daniel Merriman, a biologist, was appointed to replace him. Merriman was Curator of the Bingham Oceanographic Collection from 1942-1947 and Director of the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory from 1942-1966.

With the onset of World War II, the research emphasis at the lab switched from pure to applied and practical marine research to provide information for increased and rational use of sea materials. Following the war the work of the laboratory returned to its emphasis on pure research in planktology, taxonomy, fisheries biology, productivity, anatomy, distribution, life history, and other areas of ichthyology, and physical and chemical oceanography. In addition to publication of their research the staff of the laboratory offered courses in oceanography and ichthyology at the graduate level and were actively involved in outside activities such as popular lectures, consultation, and conferences.

Funds for the Bingham Lab were small and provided only for the care and enlargement of the collection, salary for a curator, publications, and a small fund towards construction of an oceanography building. To pay for research, the budget was supplemented by outside sources such as the Connecticut State Board of Fisheries and Game, additional funds from Harry Payne Bingham and other private benefactors, Wood's Hole Oceanographic Institution, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, and private corporations. The physical location of the Bingham Laboratory had been in numerous spaces within the Peabody Museum physical plant until 1959 when the Bingham Laboratory for Oceanographic and Ornithological Research was constructed behind the Peabody Museum.

In 1964 an Ad Hoc Committee of several eminent oceanographers decided other oceanographic research institutions in close proximity such as Wood's Hole provided enough programs for students without having a center at Yale University. This decision along with decreased funding meant the end of the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory in 1966.

Scope and Contents

The records consist of correspondence and subject files documenting the operations of the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory at Yale University. Topics include faculty and personnel, environmental issues, national biological stations and institutions, and naval reports and research.

The records of the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory in our holdings are not complete. The material in our possession is mainly General Correspondence, Series I, and Subject Files, Series II. Series I, General Correspondence, consists of 41 boxes of correspondence from 1927-1964 regarding preparation of the *Bulletin of the Bingham Oceanographic Collection*, exhibitions, receipt of fish and water samples, arrangements with boat captains and fisheries for their catches, etc. There is substantial correspondence with prominent oceanographers and ichthyologists such as Charles Marcus Breder and William Charles Schroeder. Series II, Subject Files, consists of one box of office records, personnel records, and miscellaneous from 1931-1965 and includes Peabody Museum reports, President's reports, research grant lists, staff activities, appointments and publications.

A substantial amount of material remains in the hands of the Peabody Museum, including Albert Parr correspondence 1879-[1928-1934]1938, Daniel Merriman correspondence 1965-1966, expedition data and logs, President's reports 1943-1966, films on fishing and expeditions, inventories of Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory equipment, blue-prints and construction records for the Bingham Oceanographic and Ornithological Laboratory, various ephemera (fish tags, vertebrae, water color paintings of fish, framed photographs), treasurer's statements and ledgers, academic appointment files 1959-1966, research grant applications 1960-1964 and Sears Foundation reprints.

General note

Forms part of Yale Record Group 33-A (YRG 33-A), Records of the Peabody Museum of Natural History.

Arrangement

The records are arranged in two series: I. General Correspondence. II. Subject Files.

Collection Contents

Series I: General Correspondence, 1927-1964

Correspondence is arranged alphabetically by writer within a span of dates except where directed by the recipient to be filed elsewhere. Incoming and outgoing letters are filed together.

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Subjects

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Peabody Museum of Natural History
Yale University -- Faculty