



Rockefeller University records, History of the University, Site History

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Rockefeller Archive Center

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Summary Information

Repository:	Rockefeller Archive Center
Creator:	Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research
Creator:	Rockefeller University
Title:	Rockefeller University records, History of the University, Site History
ID:	FA910
Date [inclusive]:	1901-2000
Physical Description:	3.04 Cubic Feet 3 boxes and 2 packages (Boxes 4 and 5).
Language of the Material:	English

Preferred Citation

Information regarding the Rockefeller Archive Center's preferred elements and forms of citation can be found at <http://www.rockarch.org/research/citations.php>

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Biographical/Historical note

The work of The Institute concentrated on basic research. The hope was that the discoveries might, in the long run, be applied to the public welfare, but the basic purpose was to provide an environment for exploratory original research by individuals under no compulsion to produce immediately useful results.

Scientific work of The Institute was first carried on through grants-in-aid made to researchers in scattered laboratories. This program decreased as the Institute's own laboratories developed. July 1, 1904 temporary quarters were rented at 127 East 50th Street, New York and work began there about Nov. 1, 1904. Those recruited for the first staff were Eugene L. Opie, Samuel J. Meltzer, Hideyo Noguchi and Joshua Edwin Sweet. Added to the staff very shortly were Phoebus Aaron Theodor Levene and John Auer. Alexis Carrel joined The Institute in 1906 and Jacques Loeb in 1910. On June 13, 1907 the Board of Directors voted to establish various classes of association with The Institute. The classes were: Member (for an indefinite period); Associate Member (for five year periods; amended in 1911 Rules to "a term of years"); Associate of The Institute; Fellow of The Institute; Scholar of The Institute (which

was dropped in the Rules amended 1928). The first Members of The Institute were Simon Flexner, S.J. Meltzer, E.L. Opie, and P.A.T. Levene.

In April 1906 the Central Laboratory with animal house and power house, located on York Avenue and 66th Street were ready for use. Simon Flexner, the first Director of the laboratories had been unanimously elected Director of The Institute on Oct. 25, 1902. However, not until a meeting on Jan. 17, 1920 did the Board make clear its sense that these were two offices, both held by Simon Flexner. The Office of Director of The Institute was clearly added in amended Rules Oct. 18, 1924. Simon Flexner was Director of The Institute and Director of the laboratories until his retirement in 1935. He was succeeded in both offices by Herbert S. Gasser, 1935-1953.

In 1910, at the York Avenue site a Hospital was opened so that the investigations of the Laboratories could be supplemented by the study of certain diseases as they actually occur in man. The Rules for the Scientific Directors as adopted on Jan. 21, 1911, provided that The Institute be comprised of two coordinate departments, Laboratories and Hospital. Rufus Cole was the first Director of the Department of the Hospital and continued in this post until his retirement in 1937 when he was succeeded by Thomas M. Rivers. The Hospital accepted only a limited number of patients, limited further to classes of diseases under study in the Hospital laboratories. The By-Laws of the Corporation provided that The Institute make no charge to persons treated at the Hospital for professional care rendered or for board and lodging. Classes of appointment to the Hospital were Physician, Assistant Physician, Resident Physician, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. In 1946 an amendment to the Rules provided that the titles be as follows: Physician-in-Chief to the Hospital; Physician to the Hospital; Assistant Physician to the Hospital; Resident Associate Physician; Senior Assistant Physician; Superintendent of the Hospital; Assistant Superintendent of the Hospital.

In 1914, at a location about three miles from Princeton, N.J. with Theobald Smith as Director, a new Department of Animal Pathology was established. In June 1915 the Rules were amended to make this coordinate with the Departments of Laboratories and Hospital. When Theobald Smith retired in 1930 Carl TenBroeck became Director of the Department which in 1931 was expanded by the appointment of Louis O. Kunkel who headed the new division of plant pathology into the Department of Animal and Plant Pathology.

The Director of each Department was appointed by the Board of Scientific Directors, and the Director of The Institute by the Corporation. In the different departments separate laboratories were organized under the guidance of a Member or Associate Member. The broad divisions of scientific fields varied from time to time in accordance with scientific developments and the interests of the Members, but always with consultation, approval and direction of the Board of Scientific Directors.

In 1953, after the retirement of Herbert S. Gasser, an extensive reorganization was undertaken. Thomas M. Rivers, who served for two years as Vice-President of the Corporation and at the same time, Director of the Laboratories, Director of the Department of the Hospital and Physician-in-Chief to the Hospital retired in 1955. The position of Director of The Institute was abolished and also the organization into departments.

On and after November 19, 1954 when the Charter of the Corporation was amended so that the Corporation became part of the University of the State of New York The Institute had the power to confer degrees. On June 27, 1958 by amendment to the Charter the corporate name was changed to The

Rockefeller Institute and on May 27, 1965 the Charter of The Institute was amended in its entirety and the name changed to The Rockefeller University.

The University is organized into laboratories, each headed by one or two senior scientists rather than into categorical departments. The scientific work of the laboratories is under the direction of the President.

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Scope and Contents

Photographs, pamphlets, news, articles, summaries, notes, drawings.

A collection of historical material related to The University site collected from varying sources over a period of time by the Business Manager.

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Arrangement

Arranged by subject.

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File Plan note

Former Classification: I 412

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for research. Brittle or damaged items are available at the discretion of RAC.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Medical research
- Operations management
- Life sciences
- Medical sciences
- Medical education
- Cell and biomolecular sciences
- Biology -- Research

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
History of site, 1879-2000		
Six pamphlet publications about the East Side in Early New York City. In one is picture of Schermerhorn farm house at foot of East 64th Street	box 1	folder 1
Newspaper articles, A sampling of the newspaper articles which showed recurrent interest in East Side properties, 1921-1964	box 1	folder 2
Photographs and historical notes	box 1	folder 3
3 photographs of Pastime Athletic Club at 66th Street and East River circa 1889 with collection of handwritten notes by T.M. Prudden, circa 1889		
1 photograph of temporary laboratory building at 127 East 50th Street, 1904-1906		
1 photograph of 1908 housekeeping staff, 1908		

1 photograph showing original building, animal house and power house, 1906

5 snapshots supplied by Jerome P. Jacobsen, resident construction engineer for Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, showing cornerstone laying; animal house; power house; laboratory

6 photographs showing various glimpses of Schermerhorn Farm house

13 photographs showing various stages of growth and additions, 1973 April

Scope and Contents note

Includes air rights hearing

"An Anniversary Album" photographs used for exhibit

Notes and summaries on property through, 1947

box 1

folder 4

Evening Telegram, 1903 February 13

New York Sun, 1903 October 18

Typescript copies of articles which appeared at time of land purchase

Notes about Schermerhorn Farm house (primarily made by T.M. Prudden)

Copy of notes placed in cornerstone, 1904

Accounting sheets showing costs and taxes on Schermerhorn property, 1903-1911

Listing of investments and valuations, 1908-1910

Description of buildings from standpoint of fire insurance, 1919 October 10

Extracts from Minutes on location of RIMR; purchase of land; original staff

Miscellaneous notes regarding location in NYC of RIMR, circa 1947

Notes and correspondence about property and buildings

box 1

folder 5

Summary of gifts; land acquisitions; buildings and costs, 1901-1912

10 Letter from E.B. Smith to S. Flexner on Dean and Sheppard (occupants of buildings on North Plot), 1920 September

Memo from T.M. Prudden notes of role played by L. Emmett Holt in early history of Institute, 1924

Letter from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to Simon Flexner about mantel in old Schermerhorn house, 1929

Summary of construction dates, costs and valuations of buildings 1906-1934, 1935		
Copy of address apparently made at opening of playground on land held for Memorial Hospital, 1935 October 14		
8 items dealing with appraisal of RIMR buildings and grounds done by Douglas Gibbons and Co. for John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1947 January-February		
6 items dealing with history of Institute site, including copy of painting at foot of 61st Street including old stone house and copied group of informational items from Museum of City of New York, 1949 May-July		
Correspondence with Jerome P. Jacobsen, sending snapshots of cornerstone and early buildings, 1954		
Certificate of Occupancy - Welch Hall, 1956 April 11		
9 Items on lighting for library, 1957 April-August		
2 Items on building contract for new laboratory, 1957 August		
3 announcements on new buildings, 1962-1965		
3 Items on landmark status for Founder's Hall, 1974		
Apartment building at 500 East 63rd St, 1975		
Drawings of Proposed Hospital Building, 1931 (not used), 1931	box 1	folder 6
Clipping book, 1928-1960	box 2	
Scope and Contents note		
Collection of clippings dealing with real estate development of East Side area.		
"Life on the East River, Part I" Avenue Magazine, May 1984, 1906	box 3	folder 1
Scope and Contents note		
Includes photograph of Schermerhorn house and the summer camp for babies (1906). pp. 72-73.		
Articles, The New York Times, 1910. "Rockefeller Gives Word" 17 April 1910, "Summer Camp for Babies", 1910 June 15	box 3	folder 2
John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and David Rockefeller Building - Dedication, September 23-26, 1992. Booklet outlining the ceremonies and events, 1992 September 23-26	box 3	folder 3
"The Rockefeller University: A Building-By-Building Guide", 1992	box 3	folder 4
Clarke and Rapuano, Inc., "The Rockefeller University Master Plan", 1972	box 3	folder 5

The Rockefeller University - Plaza Dedication, Thursday, Booklet, 2000 May 25	box 3	folder 6
A Guide to the Campus Landscape and Sculpture, 1997 May	box 3	folder 7
A Guide to the President's House, 1997 May	box 3	folder 8
Certificate from Department of the Interior, designating Founder's Hall "A National Historic Landmark", 1974 September	box 4	
Charts, 1951	box 5	

Scope and Contents note

Data assembled by the Housing Office of Memorial Center and arranged on charts.

Deals with the area extending from 59th Street to 72nd Street and East from 3rd Avenue.

Charts deal with: Assesses valuations of land parcels, Present zoning: use height and area districts, Joint area study - land use, Age of buildings, Prospective new construction.

Framed color print, Schermerhorn Farm House. Gift of Dr. Joshua Lederberg, March 1983. Hanging in University Librarian's Office. [See Corner's History, Appendix II pp. 585-86].