



# **Rockefeller University records, Director, Herbert Spencer Gasser, Subject Files, Series 4**

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Rockefeller Archive Center

15 Dayton Avenue

Sleepy Hollow 10591

[archive@rockarch.org](mailto:archive@rockarch.org)

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## Summary Information

<b>Repository:</b>	Rockefeller Archive Center
<b>Creator:</b>	Rockefeller University
<b>Creator - aut:</b>	Gasser, Herbert S. (Herbert Spencer)
<b>Creator:</b>	Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research
<b>Title:</b>	Rockefeller University records, Director, Herbert Spencer Gasser, Subject Files, Series 4
<b>ID:</b>	FA813
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1935-1953
<b>Physical Description:</b>	0.88 Cubic Feet 2 boxes
<b>Physical Description:</b>	2 boxes.
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English

### Preferred Citation note

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

Herbert Spencer Gasser, 1888-1963, physiologist, was Director of The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, 1935-1953. His early work at the University of Wisconsin and at Washington University was done on circulation and respiration, including the mechanism through which the heart is accelerated in exercise and the rate of decreased oxidation in the respiratory center. Later at Washington University and at Cornell University Medical College his major interest was in the physiology of nerve, developing electrophysiological techniques through the development of vacuum tube amplification and the cathode ray oscillograph. In collaboration with Joseph Erlanger, also of Washington University, he developed an exhaustive determination of the constants of nerve fibers and the classification of nerve fibers in accordance with their properties. The two men shared the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology in 1944 for this work.

<b>Biographical Note</b>	
1888	Born July 5 Platteville, Wisconsin
1907	Graduate State Normal School of Wisconsin, Platteville
1910	A.B. University of Wisconsin
1911	A.M. University of Wisconsin
1911-1912	Assistant in physiology University Wisconsin
1912-1913	Instructor in physiology, University Wisconsin
1915	M.D. Johns Hopkins University Medical School
1915-1916	Instructor in pharmacology, University Wisconsin
1916-1918	Instructor in physiology, Washington University St. Louis
1918-1920	Associate in physiology, Washington University
1920-1921	Associate Professor in physiology, Washington University
1921-1931	Professor in pharmacology, Washington University
1923-1925	Study abroad: University College, London; National Institute of Medical Research, London; Sorbonne, Paris; University of Munich
1931-1935	Professor physiology, Cornell University Medical College New York, New York
1935-1953	Director, The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, New York, New York

1953	June, retired as Director; returned to work in his laboratory; Member Emeritus RIMR
1963	Died May 11 New York Hospital, New York, N.Y. Cremated; ashes sent to sister. Interred family plot, Platteville, Wis.

### Prizes

1944	Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine Shared with Dr. Joseph Erlanger
1954	Kober Medal, Association of American Physicians

Clubs Sigma Xi, Gamma Alpha, Alpha Omega Alpha, Century Club, Quadrangle Club

### Honorary Degrees

1936	D. Sc. university of Pennsylvania
1940	D. Sc. University of Rochester
1940	LL. D. Washington University
1941	D. Sc. University of Wisconsin
1945	D. Sc. Columbia University
1947	LL. D. Johns Hopkins University
1947	D. Sc. Oxford University
1948	D. Sc. Harvard University
1949	Doctor Honoris Causa, Université Libre de Bruxelles
1949	Doctor of Medicine, Honorary. Université Catholique de Louvain
1953	Honorifique de docteur. Université de Paris

1959	D. Sc. The Rockefeller University
<b>Served</b>	
1918	Pharmacologist, Chemical Warfare Service
1936	Johnson Foundation Lecturer, University of Pennsylvania
1937-	Rockefeller Foundation Trustee
1937-	Russell Sage Institute of Pathology. Board of Directors
1941-	Princeton University. Dept. of Biology
1941-1944	National Defense Research Committee Division 9
1945	Research Board for National Security (Member)
1947	Massachusetts General Hospital, Scientific Advisory Committee

Member of American Societies, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Fellow, American Neurological Association (Associate Member), American Philosophical Society, American Physiological Society, American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, American Society of Electroencephalography (Honorary), Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease, Association of American Physicians, Harvey Society (Councilor, Vice President, President), History of Science Society, National Academy of Sciences, Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine (Pres. 1937-1939), New York State Society for Medical Research (Active Member, 1952), Foreign Societies, Academie Royale de Médecine de Belgique, correspondence member, Accademia della Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna, correspondence member, Asociación Médica Argentina, Honorary Member, Finnish Academy of Sciences, Honorary Foreign Member, Physiological Society (British) Honorary Member, Royal Society of Edinburgh, Honorary Member, Royal Society of London, Honorary Member, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Foreign Member, Sociedad Argentina de Biología, Honorary Member, Société Philomathique de Paris, Corresponding Member

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## File Plan note

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Former Classification: I 302-4

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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[archive@rockarch.org](mailto:archive@rockarch.org)

URL: <http://www.rockarch.org>

### Revision Description

### Immediate Source of Acquisition note

The Herbert Spencer Gasser collection was deposited with the Rockefeller University Archives by The University.

### Processing Information note

Processed by Ruth Sternfeld, 1977.

### Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for scholarly research.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials note

Herbert Spencer Gasser was Director of The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research 1935-1953. During his tenure he continued many of the administrative routines which had been established during the directorship of Simon Flexner. Thus, much administrative correspondence, in particular, matters dealing with personnel and administration of the physical plant are to be found in the papers of the Business Manager, Edric B. Smith, who served also, as Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

See FA137 Rockefeller University records, Business Manager, Subject Files, Series 3. See FA809 Rockefeller University records, Business Manager, Series 4.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Medical research
- Medical sciences
- Viruses -- Research
- Physiology
- Princeton University
- Rockefeller University
- Gasser, Herbert S. (Herbert Spencer)
- Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research
- Flexner, Simon
- National Academy of Sciences (U.S.)

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## Other Finding Aids

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FA143 Rockefeller University records, Herbert Spencer Gasser, Correspondence, Series 2.

FA814 Rockefeller University records, Herbert Spencer Gasser, Biography, Series 6.

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## Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements note

Materials requiring specialized equipment for access (film, audio, video, slides) may be restricted from scholarly research dependent on availability of the applicable equipment.

Brittle or damaged items, or materials otherwise in need of preservation care, may be restricted from scholarly research at the discretion of the RAC Head of Archival Services/RAC Head of Reference.

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## Collection Inventory

### Subject files, 1935-1953

#### Arrangement note

Arranged in alphabetical order.

#### Scope and Contents note

Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research Director's subject file.

One archive box of about five inches consists of materials originally arranged in a subject sequence in the Director's office.

Title/Description	Instances
Annual Scientific Reports	box 1
Abstracts made for Director's Report	
Summaries covering 13 years, 1939-1951	
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>  Not all the dates are clear. 2 sets undated (possibly 1939, 1940) ; 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, Apr. 1945, 1946, Apr. 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951.	
Cole, Rufus	box 1
Biographical data. Minute adopted by Board of Trustees, RIMR on Cole retirement; Press release on Cole retirement. Typescript copy of address made by Dr. Gasser at Cole retirement dinner, 1937 May 13	
Commission on Neurotropic Virus Diseases, 1942-1945	box 1

Correspondence between Dr. Gasser, Mr. Debevoise Edric Smith and Francis G. Blake for War Department and John R. Paul for War Department and Yale Medical School on contract involving work of Peter Olitsky Leslie Webster and A. Sabin	
Copyrights	box 1
Permissions granted from Journal Experimental Medicine	
Debevoise, Thomas M., 1939-1952	box 1
Correspondence which deals with press reports of retirements of Alexis Carrel and others; New York State Society for Medical Research and anti-vivisection legislation; Princeton sale; by-law changes as to outside compensation for Institute personnel or emeriti; function of the budget committee; tax exemptions as an educational institution; the Winterberg bequest	
Flexner, Simon	box 1
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>  Deals with S.F.'s last illness and addresses for Memorial Meeting. Correspondence with Judge Learned Hand, Peyton Rous, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Raymond Fosdick. Includes copy of address by G. Ramon (Institut Pasteur) and sent by secretary of Academic des Sciences, Paris.	
Lavoisier painting by David	box 1
Requests to borrow	
League of Nations, 1940	box 1
Correspondence from Princeton University, Institute for Advanced Study, RIMR Princeton inviting science sections of League to take up residence in Princeton for duration of the war	
Little, Ralph B., 1950-1952	box 1
Correspondence between Dr. Gasser and the University of Pa. arranging a work situation for Ralph B. Little veterinarian, after closing of Princeton labs	
National Academy of Sciences, 1951-1956	box 1
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>  Primarily nominations and voting for new members. Includes bibliography and evaluation for D.W. Woolley nomination and 1952 telegram announcing election to membership of P.D. McMaster and D.W. Woolley. 1962 October 10 letter granting H.S. Gasser emeritus status.	
Princeton Integration with New York City Laboratories	box 1
History	

## Scope and Contents note

Copies of materials from the files of J.D. Rockefeller including correspondence with Seth Low (president of Columbia University) and letters written to him by T.M. Prudden and W.H. Welch when queried about usefulness of developing a research institute modeled after the Pasteur Institute in the United States. Materials brought together to help understand the original thinking in developing RIMR in New York City. Handwritten summary by H.S. Gasser.

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### Notes

## Scope and Contents note

Considerations for integration. Background notes of considerations leading to 2 May 1947 Trustee action to move toward integration. Includes 1943 6 page N.R.S. (Norman Stoll) holograph reporting on conference with C.T. (Carl TenBroeck). Handwritten notes by HSG evaluating the scientific work of the Institute at Princeton to determine what could not have been carried on in New York City; notes on factors to be considered in making a move to NYC; copy of property appraisal in NYC by Douglas Gibbons; copy of 1947 report requested by JDR, Jr. of HSG for an evaluation of how best to insure financial stability for the Institute's continued productivity.

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### Procedure, 1947 May-1950

## Scope and Contents note

Copy of H.S. Gasser 1947 report to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Gasser correspondence with Carl TenBroeck (19 items), Richard Shope, John H. Northrop, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Harold W. Dodds (President of Princeton). Notes on meetings with Carl Ten Broeck, Northrop, and Shope and joint letter from Princeton Dept. employees reacting to integration decision. Copy of Separation Benefits established by RI for those employees to be terminated in move; notes and plans on moving benefits.

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### Princeton sale, 1947-1951

box 1

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Primarily correspondence with Lindsley F. Kimball in regard to sale of Princeton property after integration with New York City laboratories voted. Final sale in 1951 to Princeton University for James Forrestal Research Center in jet propulsion and related sciences

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### Promotion summaries

box 1

## Scope and Contents note

2 folders which consist of summary of scientific work, some letters of recommendation, in some instances list of publications and a short biography is included.

## Arrangement note

Arranged in alphabetical order.

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### A-K

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Archibald, Reginald (by Donald Van Slyke)

Braun, Armin C. (by L.O. Kunkel; H.S. Gasser)

Chang, Hsiang-Tung

Chase, Merrill W.

Dole, Vincent

Goebel, Walther F. (handwritten by H.S. Gasser)

Granick, Sam (handwritten summary by H.S. Gasser)

Hirsch, James G.

Hotchkiss, Rollin Douglas (biography, bibliography, handwritten presentation for membership)

Hunt, Carlton C. (bibliography, biography, summary)

Kunitz, Moses (biography, handwritten summary, photo of crystals)

Kunkel, H.G. (biographical sketch, summary of scientific work and covering letter by T.M. Rivers)

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### L-W

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Lancefield, R.C. (biog. sketch; summary of work to 1942), 1942

Lloyd, David P.C. (handwritten evaluation by HSG)

Longworth, Lewis G. (biog., biblio, summary of work)

Lorente de No, R. (handwritten summary by HSG)

Maramorosch, Karl

Merrifield, R.B. (Promotion recommended by D.W. Woolley)

Mirsky, A.E. (Direction of work and papers published)

Murphy, James S. (Recommendation by J.H. Northrop)

Palade, G. (biography and summary of work by HSG)

Porter, K.R. (biography and summary of work by HSG)

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Schmitt, F.O. Handwritten presentation by HSG of desirability of building a department for the study of cellular organization. Provoked by unsuccessful attempt to bring F.O. Schmitt to RI

Shaw, Elliott (Biography, bibliography and summary of work at RI)

Shedlovsky, Theodore

Stern, Herbert (recommendation by A.E. Mirsky)

Tallen, Harris H. (recommendation by Moore and Stein)

Tamm, Igor (summary of work)

Wood, Harrison F. (summary of work)

Barry, Guy (recommendation by Walther Goebel)

Jesaitis, Margeris (recommendation by Walther Goebel)

Secretary's file, 1935-1952

box 1

### Scope and Contents note

Miss Von der Osten and Miss von Berg were both secretary to Dr. Gasser during this period. The file consists primarily of copies of letters sent to Dr. Gasser from his secretary while he was away from the office, either on professional business or on vacation. Includes his letter to his secretary informing her of his addresses en route or giving certain instructions.

Included are 28 pages of assorted items; notes, packing slips, instructions from the period 1954-1961 when laboratory was run with the aid of a technician.

Addition to collection

box 2

### Scope and Contents note

H.S. Gasser material found in inactive files of the RU Corporate Secretary/Faculty Administrator.

#### Immediate Source of Acquisition note:

### Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Received February 1987 from Ms. Lila J. Magie.

Biographical material, 1964 November

box 2

folder 1

### Scope and Contents note

Includes 1935 news release re Directorship and HSG biography; RI obituary and reprint of Bio. Mem. of Fell. Roy. Soc., Nov 1964, Vol. 10.

Clippings

box 2

folder 2

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes re Directorship (1935) ; Nobel Prize (1944) ;  
death (1963) ; Robert Peter Coin (1965).

Photographs. Portraits, Nobel medal and citation	box 2	folder 3
Report on future needs of RIMR, 1946	box 2	folder 4
Correspondence		
Bronk, Detlev W., 1944-1967		
1944	box 2	folder 5
<b>Scope and Contents note</b> [See Mabel Bright/C. Belknap, 8 Jan 1964, folder 8 below].		
1956-1962	box 2	folder 6
1963	box 2	folder 7
1964-1965 1967	box 2	folder 8
Carter and Jones, Insurance, 1937-1944	box 2	folder 9
Flinn, Waldo F., 1935-1965		
1935-1936	box 2	folder 10
1937-1955 1964-1965	box 2	folder 11
Smith, E.B., 1935-1956		
1935-1936	box 2	folder 12
1937-1940	box 2	folder 13
1941-1946	box 2	folder 14
1947-1956	box 2	folder 15
Laboratory expenses, circa 1961-1962	box 2	folder 16

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