



Markle Foundation records

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Summary Information

Repository:	Rockefeller Archive Center
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Biographical / Historical

John Markle was born in Hazelton, Pennsylvania, in 1858. He graduated from Lafayette College in 1880 with a degree in mining engineering and soon took charge of the firm his father had founded, G. B. Markle and Company, which operated the Jeddo mine. Markle was a successful businessman who became known nationally as the builder of the Jeddo drainage tunnel, which reclaimed Pennsylvania mines inundated by floods in 1886. In April 1884, Markle married Mary Estelle Robinson (1863-1927). The couple moved from Hazelton, Pennsylvania, to New York City in 1902. They had no children. In 1926, John Markle retired from business, and the following year he established the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation with an initial endowment of \$3 million. Eventually the total endowment from John Markle reached \$15 million. John Markle served as president and treasurer of the Foundation until his death in July 1933. The Foundation was chartered "to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge among the people of the United States and to promote the general good of mankind." This charter was sufficiently broad to permit supporting virtually any cause and allowed the directors to spend principal as well as income, which the Foundation did in its early years. (The founder rectified the difference.) Grants, averaging a total of \$400,000 annually, went primarily to charities which the Markle family had previously supported. In addition, the Markle Foundation financially supported individuals, including relatives and needy strangers who came to John Markle's attention and in whom he took a personal interest.

After John Markle's death, the Foundation trustees sought direction from Frederick Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Following his advice, the Foundation changed from a private organization to a focused public foundation. There were no new individual beneficiaries after 1934, and

the trustees began to formulate a plan of action. From 1936 to 1945, the Markle Foundation primarily supported medical research: 627 grants were made to 336 projects, and 1,400 scientific papers were published regarding work supported wholly or in part by the Foundation.

In 1946 John Russell, formerly with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, became the executive director of the Foundation. After making an assessment of the Foundation's work, Russell and the Foundation embarked on an ambitious program - the Markle Scholar Program, which became the principal program of the Markle Foundation from 1947 to 1969. Approximately 25 Markle Scholars were chosen each year. They received five years of financial assistance so that they might continue in academic medicine or research rather than enter more lucrative private practices. A total of 506 Markle Scholars were chosen from 90 medical schools in the United States and Canada.

In 1969 John Russell retired, and Lloyd Morrisett, also formerly with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, came to the Foundation. In the last months of Russell's tenure, it had been determined that the Markle Scholar program had run its course, and after an evaluation, the Foundation embarked on an ambitious program in the field of mass communications. Beginning in 1969, the Markle Foundation's program aimed to strengthen the performance of the media and to understand the potential of communications technology. Mass communications and information technology had not been a traditional focus of philanthropy, and the grants reflect challenge and innovation. Disbursements averaged \$2 million annually.

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Scope and Contents

Includes grant files, administrative files, correspondence, reports, minutes, financial material, annual reports and a small selection of personal materials. The collection is not comprehensive. Due to routine file purges, this collection primarily includes the records of the final personal beneficiaries, Markle Scholars, and the communications program, along with administrative files, board records and grant and program records from the 1990s-2000s.

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Arrangement

Arranged in 4 record groups, each comprised of multiple subgroups and series. The record groups and associated accessions are representative solely of when the materials were transferred to and processed by RAC, and do not imply an original order of the records. Records are further arranged primarily by record type. Additional finding aids are created as records are processed and open for research.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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