



Newsletter

Office of NIH History

NIH History Lives Here

Summer 2002



NIH Campus, c. 1950
Looking toward the National Naval Medical Center

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WELCOME to the first issue of the Office of NIH History Newsletter! Our goal with this publication is to make our collections, services, publications, and exhibits more widely known and used. We also hope the newsletter will encourage NIH staff to alert us to photographs, documents, instruments, and other artifacts that will enhance our collections and will remind scholars about our travel grants and postdoctoral fellowship programs.

Scholars, journalists, or interested members of the public who want to do research related to NIH history should begin their projects with a consultation with our office. With 27 institutes and centers, the NIH can seem daunting. Our historians, curators, archivist, and photo cataloguer will make every effort to guide you to the repositories and people who can help you.

If you would like to be added to our regular mailing list, please send an email to history.newsletter@nih.gov. Announcements of each issue will also be sent to various listservs and will be mailed in hardcopy upon request.

The Office of NIH History is made up of the Historical Research Unit and the Stetten Museum. It is a component of the Office of Communications and Public Liaison, NIH. Contact us at:
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Archival Collection

Have you ever wondered how NIH began? Have you wanted to find out more about the history of the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute of Mental Health, or the original uses of the land that NIH now inhabits? Well, you're in luck. The Office of NIH History maintains an extensive archival collection documenting the history of NIH's institutes and of the NIH as a whole. The Office, located in Building 31B, seeks out archival collections from institutes, organizes the records for reference use, and provides access to researchers.

What kinds of material might you find in this collection? There are biography files on key NIH scientists and administrators, files on each institute, general NIH history files, a special collection of materials on the NIH intramural response to AIDS, and files documenting NIH's centennial celebration. The collection also holds audio tapes of oral histories with NIH staff, videotapes of selected events, and books on the history of medicine, infectious diseases, and genetics.

Here at the Office of NIH History we depend largely on the generosity of NIH employees to pass along items for the collection. For example, a collection of NIH phone books, which has helped researchers locate staff members since 1950, was donated by an employee who had kept his phone books during his entire career. It turns out that no one else preserved them, so the NIH History Office now holds a unique resource.



Documents in the collection include newspapers from the 1930s, such as this one, as well as speeches, programs, notebooks, oral histories, and much more.

If you would like to use the archival collection or donate records, please contact archivist Brooke Fox at foxb@od.nih.gov.

Photography Collection

Over the last several years the Office of NIH History has begun to catalogue systematically and preserve its collection of historical photographs, negatives, slides, and posters. The aim of the photographic database and accompanying archival collection is to broaden NIH's understanding of its history by collecting and organizing images which depict persons, places, or procedures associated with the National Institutes of Health's intramural programs. This project will help to preserve important historical resources as well as to disseminate these images and encourage additional donations.

The photo collection includes portraits of NIH directors, institute directors, researchers, and photographs of laboratories. There are also shots of the campus, building construction, building dedications, visits from dignitaries, and scientific meetings.



NIH Director James Shannon
and President Lyndon Johnson



(5) Mystery Photo (see p. 7)

If you have photographs you would like to donate to our collection, or would like to see what we have on certain subjects, contact Richard Myers at rmyers@od.nih.gov.

From the Stetten Museum Collection

In 1933, the Nazis dismissed 34-year old Theodor von Brand from his post at Hamburg's Institute for Tropical and Parasitic Diseases. Von Brand had served in the German cavalry during WWI, but had not hidden his anti-Nazi views from his senior professors, some of whom were Nazi party members. Von Brand "recognized that in Germany there was not much more for me to do," and he soon left on a quest for a place to join the new field of parasite physiology.

Von Brand found a position with a Nobel laureate at the University of Copenhagen, but soon moved to the United States, first to Johns Hopkins and then to Barat College in Lake Forest, Illinois, which was located near the Chicago stock yards. There he found ample parasites to collect for study. Moving to Washington, D.C., in 1940, he turned to investigating parasites found in fish. Von Brand joined the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) in the Laboratory of Tropical Diseases in 1947 to study the pathogenic parasite *trypanosoma cruzi*. At NIAID, Von Brand had free reign to set up a section on parasite physiology, and he stayed at the NIH until his retirement at age 70. He wrote two standard textbooks, - Chemical Physiology of Endoparasitic Animals (1952) and Biochemistry of Parasites (1973) and is now known as a founder of parasitic physiology.

The Stetten Museum is pleased to have Von Brand's hydrometer set (pictured below) in its collection. It was donated by Dr. Allen W. Cheever of the Laboratory of Parasitic Diseases, NIAID. The set, made by CENCO, consists of twenty glass tubes with enlarged bulbs filled with lead shot at one end, and a calibrated scale inserted at the other end. The set includes two selection spindles, which are filled with mercury instead of lead shot to help the user quickly determine which spindle to use, as well as having enclosed thermometers. In 1960, this set cost about \$125.00.



Theodor von Brand's hydrometer set

Von Brand used the hydrometers to determine the density or the specific gravity of a liquid—how many times heavier or lighter a liquid is than water. To do this, the hydrometer is carefully placed in a sample liquid of a known temperature where it floats upright. The user reads the calibrated scale to find the measurement, and then adjusts the measurement if the sample is not at 60° F.

Michele Lyons is the Curator of the Stetten Museum. For more information on the Museum or to donate instruments, contact her at lyonsm@od.nih.gov.

Stetten Fellow Research: When the Gold Standard was Controversial

For many NIH researchers, the idea of large population-based studies seems self-evident. In its most rigorous form as a randomized controlled clinical trial, it is often held up as the “gold standard” for scientific inquiry. However, it is important to remember that today’s “taken-for-granted” assumptions often conceal yesterday’s controversies. One interesting example of this phenomenon involves the National Collaborative Perinatal Project, which was launched by the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness (NINDB) in the 1950s.

Conceived by the Institute’s first director Dr. Pearce Bailey, the project followed over 50,000 women from their pregnancies until their children reached eight years of age. The study, which collected data into the 1970s, generated an enormous amount of empirical information. In a 1986 editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the epidemiologist Nigel Paneth praised the support that had been provided by the NIH and singled out the Director of NINDB: “The kind of vision that Richard Masland demonstrated when he created the National Collaborative Perinatal Project may yet be found among our funding agencies. Research is costly, but childhood neurologic handicap is costlier still.”

Anyone who read only Paneth’s comments might assume that the scientific merit of the NCPP had never been questioned. However, in the 1950s, the Human Embryology and Development Study Section voiced concern that large amounts of money would be spent without adequate oversight. In 1965, a Presidential Committee urged that all collaborative projects be kept “as small as possible.” In 1967, Charles W. Whalen, a Republican Congressman, cited the 75 million dollars that had been spent on the NCPP as an example that “the taxpayers’ dollars are not always wisely spent.”

Despite these criticisms, the NCPP survived. By promoting interdisciplinary research, the project helped establish the contemporary field of pediatric neurology. Also, it was one of a number of studies that led researchers to question the belief that birth asphyxia (suffocation) often contributed to cerebral palsy.

What is the historical lesson of the NCPP? It can serve as an antidote to complacency. In an era when “evidence-based medicine” is widely touted (often in the name of cost-effectiveness), it is important to remember that the process of collecting empirical evidence can itself be a very costly (and potentially controversial) process.

J. Rosser Matthews is a DeWitt Stetten, Jr., Memorial Fellow in the History of Biomedical Sciences and Technology. Contact him at matthewsj@od.nih.gov

Documentary Film: Building 3 in Historical Perspective

On May 1, 2002, Buhm Soon Park, a DeWitt Stetten, Jr., Memorial Fellow in the History of Biomedical Sciences and Technology, premiered his documentary film on Building 3 on the NIH campus. The video was made to show the history of the building's construction and give an idea of the scientific research that has been done there, focusing especially on the four laboratories that operated in Building 3 in the spring of 2000 before the building's renovation.

Built in 1938 along with Buildings 1 and 2, Building 3 was home first to the Division of Public Health Methods, with animal surgery rooms on the third floor, and an animal breeding area in the attic. Furnace and mechanical equipment occupied the basement. After World War II, Building 3 became the home for the intramural laboratories of the National Heart Institute, as well as Arthur Kornberg's laboratory in the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic



Diseases. In 1962, Earl Stadtman became the chief of the Laboratory of Biochemistry in Building 3, and in 1974, Edward Korn became the chief of the Laboratory of Cell Biology. In 2000 there were four labs in Building 3: Ed Korn's Laboratory of Cell Biology; the Laboratory of Biochemistry led by Boon Chock, who had succeeded Earl Stadtman; Sue Goo Rhee's Laboratory of Cell Signaling; and James Ferrati's section in the Laboratory of Biophysical Chemistry. These laboratories subsequently moved to Building 50, as Building 3 is now under renovation to be used as office space.

Five Nobel laureates, Arthur Kornberg, Julius Axelrod, Christian Anfinsen, Michael Brown, and Stanley Prusiner worked in Building 3, along with three NIH directors, James Shannon, Donald Fredrickson, and James Wyngaarden, and several dozens of members of the National Academy of Sciences.

The film is based on Dr. Park's interviews with scientists, technicians, and secretaries in Building 3. The scientists discuss their research, explain the circumstances that led to their arrivals at NIH, and point out some key research instruments. The film, which includes historical photographs from the Office of NIH History, ably demonstrates the scientists' passion for science, and the friendly research atmosphere in Building 3. It will provide an excellent historical document for future scientists and historians.

The film is available to those interested through Buhm Soon Park, parkbs@nhlbi.nih.gov

Mystery Photos!

Please help us identify the scientists and objects in these photographs. The Office of NIH History has a large collection of unidentified photos. If you think you could help us with these or others in the collection, please email [nih.history.photos@nih.gov](mailto:.nih.history.photos@nih.gov).



(1)



(2)



(front and back of medal)



(3)



(4)