

"What in the World" television program records

0039

Last updated on March 01, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Rainey, Froelich, Director of the University Museum
Title	"What in the World" television program records
Call number	0039
Date [bulk]	1950-1966
Date [inclusive]	1950-1975
Extent	2.91 linear feet
Language	English

Cite as:

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. "What in the World" television program records. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date accessed].

Biography/History

What in the World was a TV program conceived by Penn University Museum director Froelich Rainey and first aired on April 11, 1950 on WCAU-TV (a local commercial television station in Philadelphia). Later in 1950 the program went national on CBS. However there is some confusion about the inaugural episode of the program. There are scattered references to a start in 1948 or 1949. Rainey in his

autobiography (Reflections of a Digger) states that the program was first aired in 1949 on WCAU , but was canceled after Rainey requested monetary compensation. Rainey reports that WCAU later reinstated the program after receiving a significant number of letters from viewers, and agreeing to pay Rainey \$500 for each episode. It is perhaps possible that the 1950 date was the time that the program went back on air. Since we could find no documentation from that period, we were not in a position to verify a 1949 airing. However, the 1950 date is critical because it represents the beginning of a relatively continuous airing for sixteen years.

The format of the show consisted of a three member panel, two from the museum staff, and one guest, together with a moderator. The task for the panel was to identify archaeological and anthropological objects. The design and stage setting was largely that of the WCAU staff and under the direction of WCAU producer/director Robert Forrest.

Even though the program is associated with the Museum, legally it was not a Museum endeavor. The parties to the contract were WCAU and Rainey, and the money was paid to Rainey, who divided it between himself and the panel members. Objects from the Museum collection were extensively utilized, although a significant number came from outside sources.

The program ended in 1966, and efforts were made in subsequent years to get it back on the air, but without success.

Scope and Contents

There records from the What in the World television program consist of three series, correspondence, program information, information and reviews. There are also six episodes of the program that were recorded on 16mm film (from original Kinescope recordings).

Correspondence includes specific files for panelists and viewers, in addition to an assortment of letters on general issues and the administration of the program. The letters within the general file are varied in topics, but some information about specific aspects of the program can be found. The administration file contains correspondence with WCAU and CBS as well as legal documents and letters with agents and lawyers. There was a cooperative effort with the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1954 to exchange objects for use in their Animal, Vegetable or Mineral program (which was copied from What in the World) to which the BBC file refers to. All the specific name folders following the panelists and invitees file (alphabetized) refer to individual panel members for which the volume of material warranted separate folders. Very few of the letters from viewers are actually included since they were forwarded to WCAU. The bulk of the correspondence consists of copies of letters authored by Rainey or Kidder acknowledging the viewers' responses. Separate from general comments from viewers are the requests for specific information about objects, panelists, etc. The requests for objects document the museum's efforts to obtain objects from other institutions for use in the program.

The series Program Information is largely concerned with listings of objects used in each of the aired programs, consisting of sheets and file cards. A complete inventory of panelists is housed on file cards. The vast bulk of the material in this series is concerned with objects used in the program. The year by year object list files are, as far as we can surmise, a complete compendium of all the aired programs (starting in 1950). In addition to a description of each object (complete with their source), the airing dates and panelists are included. Also included are objects used in rehearsal sessions. (None of these objects were used in the actual broadcasted programs.) Starting in late 1959 taping was introduced which allowed for several episodes to be filmed in one day. The sheets are chronologically ordered by the taping dates,

and not when they were aired. Prior to the use of taping all programs were telecasted live. The object file cards for Penn Museum artifacts are listed in order of their museum identifying number, and objects from other sources alphabetically by lender. In both series airing and/or taping dates are given. The panelist file cards are arranged in alphabetic order and include the dates of their appearance. The airing schedules are incomplete, but a more complete schedule can be obtained from the object list files.

Information of a general nature about the program and critical reviews are found in the Information and Reviews series. This slim series is primarily concerned with reviews of the program. Although only a few of the media reviews are available, there is a fairly comprehensive list of print media reviews.

Administrative Information

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Use Restrictions

Although many items from the archives are in the public domain, copyright may be retained by the authors of items in these papers, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law. The user is fully responsible for compliance with relevant copyright law.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- British Broadcasting Company.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Card catalogs

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Coon, Carleton S., b. 1904-d. 1981

- Lipchitz, Jacques, 1891-1973
- Porada, Edith, 1912-1994
- Rainey, Froelich, Director of the University Museum
- Ripley, S. Dillon, 1913-2001

SUBJECT(S)

- Antiquities
- Television

Collection Inventory

CORRESPONDENCE, 1950-1975 (BULK, 1950-1966) .

	Box
General, 1952-1966.	1
Administration, 1951-1966.	1
British Broadcasting Corporation, 1954.	1
Panelists and Invitees, 1954-1959.	1
Carleton Coon, 1958-1966.	1
John D. Cooney, 1955-1964.	1
C.C. Cunningham, 1954-1964.	1
Rene' d' Harnoncourt, 1957-1964.	1
Jacques Lipchitz, 1954-1966.	1
John A. Pope, 1954-1964.	1
Edith Porada, 1954-1958.	1
Perry T. Rathbone, 1954-1963.	1
S. Dillen Ripley, 1954-1964.	1
Matthew W. Stirling, 1953-1964.	1

Viewers' Responses (1 of 2), 1950-1954.	1
Viewers' Responses (2 of 3), 1957-1959.	1
Viewers' Responses (3 of 3), 1961-1966.	1
Viewers' Request for Information, 1950-1967.	1
Request for Objects, 1953-1964.	1
"What in the World" Members Night 1975.	1

PROGRAM INFORMATION, 1950-1966.

	Box
Broadcasting/Taping Schedules 1957-1966.	1
Object Lists, 1950.	1
Object Lists, 1951.	1
Object Lists, 1952.	1
Object Lists, 1953.	1
Object Lists, 1954.	2
Object Lists, 1955.	2
Object Lists, 1957.	2
Object Lists, 1958.	2

Object Lists, 1959.	2
Object Lists, 1960.	2
Object Lists, 1961 (1 of 4).	2
Object Lists, 1961 (2 of 4).	2
Object Lists, 1961 (3 of 4).	2
Object Lists, 1961 (4 of 4).	2
Object Lists, 1962.	2
Object Lists, 1963.	2
Object Lists, 1964 (1 of 2).	2
Object Lists, 1964 (2 of 2).	2
Object Lists, 1966.	2
Object File Cards (from Penn University Museum collection), 1950-1966. 1 Linear feet.	3
Object File Cards (from other museums and individuals), 1952-1964. 0.83 Linear feet.	4
Object File Cards (submitted, but not used). 04 Linear feet.	4
Motion Picture File Cards 1954.	4
Panel File Cards, 1952-1964. 08 Linear feet.	4

INFORMATION AND REVIEWS.

	Box
Museum Materials, 1950-1953.	2
Print Media Reviews and List, 1951-1966.	2