

Boas-Rukeyser Collection
1869-1940
Mss.B.B61ru

American Philosophical Society
3/2002
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Summary Information

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|---------------------------|---|
| Repository | American Philosophical Society |
| Creator | Boas, Franz, 1858-1942 |
| Title | Boas-Rukeyser Collection |
| Date [inclusive] | 1869-1940 |
| Call number | Mss.B.B61ru |
| Extent | 2.0 Linear feet |
| Extent | 2 lin. feet |
| Location | LH-B-14-2 |
| Language | English |
| Abstract | <p>Material collected by Muriel Rukeyser in the late 1940s and 1950s for a proposed biography of Franz Boas, including original manuscript materials of Boas, correspondence between Boas and Rukeyser, biographical data, early family letters and documents relating to him, school and military records, family reminiscences of Boas, and some professional correspondence. There is one box of material specifically related to the publication of Rukeyser's biography, including notes, a synopsis of the book, and correspondence with publishers and funding agencies. There are also boxes of Boas-related newsclippings, and publications concerning Boas.</p> |
| Preferred Citation | Cite as: Boas-Rukeyser Collection, American Philosophical Society. |

Background note

Born in Minden, Germany, on July 8, 1858, the anthropologist Franz Boas was the son of the merchant Meier Boas and his wife, Sophie Meyer. Raised in the radical and tradition of German Judaism, Franz's youth was steeped in politically liberal beliefs and a largely secular outlook that he carried with him from university through his emigration to the United States.

At the universities of Heidelberg and Bonn, Boas studied physics and geography before completing a doctorate in physical geography at Kiel in 1881. Intending on testing then-current theories of environmental determinism, he signed on to an anthropological expedition to Baffin Island in 1883-1884, expecting that he would document the close adaptative fit of Central Eskimo cultures to their extreme climate. His experiences in the arctic, however, led him to the contrary conclusion: that social traditions, not environmental, exerted a dominant influence over human societies, and from this point onward, he was led to pursue the cultural over than physical dimensions of humanity.

Although he returned to Berlin after the expedition, Boas emigrated to the United States in 1885 to assume an editorial position with the journal *Science*, hoping to use it as a stepping-stone to an academic appointment. In 1886, he embarked upon a second major field excursion into what would become his most famous ethnographic project, working among the Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw) Indians of the Northwest Coast, after which he secured his first academic position in 1889, at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. After three years at Clark and a failed appointment at the Field Museum in Chicago in 1892 (during which he played a part in organizing the anthropological exhibits for the Columbian World's Fair), Boas moved to New York City.

The restless activity of Boas's early years slowed in New York. Hired by the American Museum of Natural History (1895-1905), which became the recipient of the amazingly rich anthropological collections he accumulated on the Northwest Coast, Boas began to teach classes at Columbia University in 1896, where three years later he was appointed Professor of Anthropology. For the next 37 years, Boas ruled the anthropological roost at Columbia, accruing unprecedented power in his discipline, wielding grants, recommendations, and appointments with remarkable dexterity, and collecting about him a remarkable group of younger scholars as students and colleagues.

Distancing himself from some of the main currents of contemporary anthropological thought in the United States, and particularly from the evolutionist assumptions that riddled the discipline, Boas championed an anthropology that viewed human cultures as shaped more by historical "tradition" than biological propensity. Claiming to resist any overarching, synthetic theories of human relations, and particularly evolutionary theories of sociocultural development, Boas laid the theoretical groundwork for what became modern cultural relativism. In the process, he helped to clarify the demarcation between the concepts of culture and race and its expression in the divergence of the four fields in anthropology -- linguistics, ethnography, physical anthropology, and archaeology.

Boas's relatively few forays into physical anthropology included a pioneering anthropometric study in 1910-1911, demonstrating that the alleged mental and physical inferiority of immigrants disappeared statistically by the second generation. Opposed to immigration quotas and disdainful of the claims to

science used to justify them, Boas was a consistent, strident opponent of racial determinism in intellect or behavior. A committed, politically active Socialist, he was frequently an outspoken critic of American policy. During the First World War, he spoke out against the treatment of German Americans and "enemy aliens" -- to the point of putting himself at risk -- and the rise of the Nazi party in Germany proved an even greater crusade. Despite his age, Boas took an active role in the anti-fascist struggle in the United States and was involved with numerous committees to assist refugee scholars. He was equally ardent in his efforts to criticize racial and ethnic bigotry in the United States.

As a mentor, Boas had a reputation of being directive, at times overbearing, and at the same time of doing too little to prepare his students for the rigors of fieldwork. The extraordinary number of students coming out of Columbia under his care, however, has arguably done as much to extend the Boasian approach than Boas's own writing. Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Elsie Clews Parsons, Alfred Kroeber, Frank Speck, Edward Sapir, Zora Neale Hurston, Ella Deloria, Melville Herskovits, Leslie Spier, Paul Radin, and Ashley Montagu are all students of Boas. Many continued in the same intellectual stream, some diverged, yet all bore traces of Boas's influence. He left a mark as well on the institutions of the discipline, as one of the founders of the American Anthropological Association and of the *International Journal of American Linguistics*.

Scope & content

Material collected by Muriel Rukeyser in the late 1940s and 1950s for a proposed biography of Franz Boas, including original manuscript materials of Boas, correspondence between Boas and Rukeyser, biographical data, early family letters and documents relating to him, school and military records, family reminiscences of Boas, and some professional correspondence. There is one box of material specifically related to the publication of Rukeyser's biography, including notes, a synopsis of the book, and correspondence with publishers and funding agencies. There are also boxes of Boas-related newsclippings, and publications concerning Boas.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 3/2002

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Gift of William Rukeyser, 1983 (accession number 1983-1515ms).

Related Materials

Related Material

Other Franz Boas Collections

Franz Boas Papers, 1862-1942 (Mss B B61)

[View Collection](#)

Franz Boas Professional Papers, ca. 1860-1942 (Mss B B61p)

[View Collection](#)

Boas Family Papers, 1862-1942 (Mss B B61f)

[View Collection](#)

Franz Boas field notebooks and anthropometric data, ca. 1883-1912 (Mss B B61.5)

[View Collection](#)

The American Council of Learned Societies Committee on Native American Languages, Franz Boas Collection of Materials for American Linguistics ([Mss 497.3.B63c](#)) is a large collection of primary materials on Native American languages assembled, in part, under Boas's supervision, and including a large quantity of material written by Boas himself.

Boas appears as a correspondent in numerous APS collections, and in addition to its rich collections for the history of anthropology, the library houses the papers of several of Boas's former students and proteges, including Frank Speck ([Mss. Ms. Coll. 126](#),), Elsie Clews Parsons ([Mss. Ms. Coll. 29](#),), John Alden Mason ([Mss. B M384](#),), Paul Radin ([Mss. 497.3 R114](#),), and Ashley Montagu ([Mss. Ms. Coll. 109](#)).

The APS also houses a microfilm (372.3, reel 1) of original materials in the Office of Anthropology Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., relating to Boas's trips to Baffin Island (N.W.T.) and British Columbia, during which he studied and collected cultural materials, 1885-1909.

The papers of Boas's son Ernst Boas ([Mss. Ms. Coll. 10](#)) are housed at the APS. A physician, Ernst Boas shared his father's liberal political outlook and activist social views.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Clippings.

Occupation(s)

- Anthropologists -- United States.

Personal Name(s)

- Baird, Spencer Fullerton, 1823-1887
- Bandelier, Adolph Francis Alphonse, -- 1840-1914.
- Baur, Georg, -- 1859-1898.
- Benedict, Ruth, 1887-1848
- Benedict, Stanley Rossiter, -- 1884-1936.
- Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936
- Brinton, Daniel Garrison, 1837-1899
- Butler, Nicholas Murray, 1862-1947
- Cattell, James McKeen, 1860-1944
- Champion, Martha.
- Clarke, Hans Thacher, 1887-1972
- Dakin, H. D., (Henry Drysdale), 1880-1952
- Dorsey, James Owen, -- 1848-1895.
- Goldenweiser, Alexander, 1880-1940
- Hale, Horatio, 1817-1896
- James, William, -- 1842-1910.
- Kroeber, A. L., (Alfred Louis), 1876-1960
- Laufer, Berthold, 1874-1934
- Mead, Margaret, 1901-1978, comp.
- Nuttall, Zelia, -- 1858-1933.

- Rukeyser, Muriel, 1913-1980
- Tozzer, Alfred M. -- (Alfred Marston), -- 1877-1954.
- Tylor, Edward Burnett, -- Sir, -- 1832-1917.

Subject(s)

- Anthropology--United States--History.
- Authors and publishers.

Bibliography

Rohner, Ronald P., ed., *The Ethnography of Franz Boas: Letters and Diaries of Franz Boas, Written on the Northwest Coast from 1886 to 1931* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1969). **Call no.:** B B61e.r

Stocking, George, ed., *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911: A Franz Boas Reader* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1974). **Call no.:** 572.081 B63s

Cole, Douglas, *Franz Boas: The Early Years, 1859-1906* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington, 1999).

Boas, Franz, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1911). **Call no.:** 572 B63m

Boas, Franz, *Ethnology of the Kwakiutl* (Washington, D.C.:Government Printing Office, 1921). **Call no.:** 572.97 B63e

Boas, Franz, *Primitive Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927). **Call no.:** 571.7 B63p

Boas, Franz, ed., *General Anthropology* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1938). **Call no.:** 572 B63g.r

Boas, Franz, *Race, Language and Culture* (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1940). **Call no.:** 572.081 B63r

Boas-Rukeyser Collection

Collection Inventory

| Boas-Rukeyser Collection | 1869-1940 | 2 linear feet B B61ru |
|--|------------------|------------------------------|
| American Anthropological Assoc. | 1903 | |
| American Folk-Lore Society -- W. W.Newell | 1904 | |
| American Museum of Natural History -- Albert S. Bickmore | 1887 | |
| Andree, Richard | 1897 | |
| Andrew?, R | | |
| Averkiewa, Julia | 1934 | |
| Baird, Spencer F. | 1886 | |
| Bakwin, Harry | 1934 | |
| Bandelier, Ad F | 1905-07 | |
| Bastian, Adolph | 1893 | |
| Baur, Georg - Synopsis of letters, 1885-1915. (In possession of Frances Baur Henkel) | | |
| Beckwith, Martha Warren | 1934 | |
| Benedict, Ruth | 1934 | |
| Benedict, Stanley | 1911-35 | |
| Letters from: Lafayette B. Mendel | | |

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H. H. Dale

Otto Folen

Berle, Adolf A. Jr. 1934

Bertholet, 1934

Beynon, William 1934

Bilden, Rudiger 1934

Black, Algernon D 1934

Blooah, Charles G 1934

Boas - Arctic Expedition - Reminiscence (4 folders)
written for children, n.d.

Sketches

- Birthday greetings, 1907,39,41

- Biographical - Reminiscences of
relatives

- Biographical materials

- Family - Letters & documents,
1862-1915

- Military records 1882

- Poetry

- Portrait, 1934

- Radio broadcast, 1949. 1946 "The
Min, of Primitive Man" Moderator:
Robert Redfield; with Leon Duprez

Boas-Rukeyser Collection

(ACLU Counsel) & W. Lloyd Warner
(Univ.Chicago.)

- Schooling - Certificates/Diplo

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Boas, Franziska | 1924 |
| Boas, Ernst - "Franz Boas: His work as described by some of his contemporaries" n.d. | post 1946 |
| Boas, Henry - re. Condolences on his death,1925 | |
| Boas, Marie - re. Condolences on his death,1930 | |
| Bolling, G M | 1934 |
| Bogoras, Waldemar | 1900,1903 |
| Borbolla, D.F. Rubin de la | 1934 |
| Brinton, Daniel G | 1887,1897 |
| Brooklyn Jewish Center | 1934 |
| Buchner, M | 1898 |
| Buckstein, Jacob | 1934 |
| Buschman, Harold | 1934 |
| Butler, Nicholas M | 1910 |
| Canyes, Manuel | 1934 |
| Carney, Mabel | 1934 |
| Cattell, James McKeen | 1934 |

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| Chamberlain, Joseph C. | 1934 |
| Champion, Martha | 1934 |
| Chase, Chancellor of N.Y.Univ. | 1934 |
| Clarke, Edwin L. | 1934 |
| Clarke, Hans T. | 1934 |
| Cleveland, Treadwell | 1934 |
| Cohen, Morris R | 1934 |
| Cole, Fay-Cooper | 1934 |
| Collier, John | 1934 |
| Commission Investigating Fascist Activities Edward Dahlberg | 1934 |
| Committee on Academic Freedom | |
| Congres International des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques,1934 | 1933-34 |
| Cooper, John M | 1934 |
| Corbin Transient Service Bureau, Kentucky (re. Proposed survey of transient mountaineers) | 1934 |
| Cowell, Henry | 1934 |
| Cranmer, Dan | 1934 |
| Cushing, Frank Hamilton | 1898 |
| Czekanowski, Jan | 1934 |
| Dakin, Henry D | 1932,34 |

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|---|-----------|--------------|
| Dawson, George M | 1898 | |
| Dixon, Roland B | 1904 | |
| Dorsey, J. Owen | 1893,1907 | |
| Ehrenreich, P | 1898 | |
| Ellis, Havelock | 1898 | |
| Emergency Society on German & Austrian Science & Art, 1921 | | (10 folders) |
| Finsch, Otto | 1894,1897 | |
| Fletcher, Alice C | 1898 | |
| Gatschet, Albert S | 1898 | |
| Gatschet, Mrs. Albert S | 1910 | |
| The German American | 1942 | |
| Goddard, Pliny Earle | 1910 | |
| Goldenweiser, Alexander | 1910 | |
| Grasse, E | 1897,98 | |
| Grinnell, George B | 1899 | |
| Haddon, Alfred C | 1905 | |
| Hale, Horatio | 1888,94 | |
| Heger, F | 1897 | |
| Holmes, Wm. H Berthold Laufer | 1894 | |
| Internationales Archif fur Ethnographie | 1882 | |
| Jones, William | 1905 | |

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|--|-----------|-------------|
| Keller, Helen | 1940 | |
| Kroeber, Alfred L | 1916-35 | |
| Laufer, Berthold | 1901,02 | |
| Livi, Ridolfo | 1896 | |
| Luschan, Felix von | 1893,97 | |
| Map of N. American Indian Groups | | |
| (Boas notations on paterlineal & matrilineal kinship) Native American Images note: Map of North American Indian groups | | |
| Mason, Otis | 1898,1906 | |
| Mead, Margaret | 1925 | |
| Meyer, A B | 1931 | |
| Mooney, James | 1905 | |
| Moore, Clarence B | 1905 | |
| Motion Picture Films - re. "Race" film, c.1939 | | (4 folders) |
| <i>Films For Democracy</i> (company) | | |
| *Gardner Jackson | | |
| Robert K. Speer | | |
| Samuel J. Rodman | | |
| Louis D. Brandeis, Justice | | |
| Walter F. Wanger | | |
| <i>Frontier Films</i> (company) | | |

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| | |
|---|---------|
| Muller, F. Max | 1899 |
| Myers, John L | 1910 |
| Newell, William Wells | 1894 |
| Newsclippings | |
| Nuttall, Zelia | 1905 |
| Putnam, Frederick Ward | 1905 |
| Ranke, F | 1905 |
| Ratzal, F | 1890 |
| Rink, H | 1885 |
| Rus, W | 1885 |
| Schwatka, Frederik | 1885,86 |
| Seler, Eduard | 1898 |
| Societe des Americanistes de Paris | 1919 |
| re. Eloquent letter on nationalism & internationalism | |
| Steinen, Karl von den | 1903 |
| Steinthal, Prof. | 1897 |
| Tozzer, Alfred | n.d. |
| Turner, Lucien M | 1887 |
| Tylor, Edward B | 1898 |
| Wilson, Daniel | 1889 |
