S. COLUM GILFILLAN PAPERS, 1921-1978
(1.0 cubic feet; 2 DB, 3 ShB.)

Biography

Seabury Colum Gilfillan was born (1889) in St. Paul, Minnesota and was graduated (AB in Social Science) from the University of Pennsylvania (1910). He served in the U.S. Army (1917-1919) and received master and doctorate degrees in sociology from Columbia University (1920). He was acting assistant professor and associate professor of social science at the University of the South (1921-1924). He was curator of transportation and social science at the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago (1929-1930) and assistant professor of social science, Purdue University (1937-1938). In 1940 he was a lecturer at Northwestern University and in 1941-1950 a research associate at the University of Chicago.

Gilfillan worked as an investigator for the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, 1930-1932 and for the Natural Resources Committee, 1936. He was a charter member of the Society for the History of Technology and a member of the Sociology Association and the Eugenics Society.

Scope and Content

The collection includes Gilfillan's correspondence during 1951-1978 and a number of papers written by him and (in some cases) published or delivered to professional societies; the dates of the papers range from 1921 to 1972. Gilfillan was a charter member of the Society for the History of Technology in 1958. His SHOT correspondence, particularly with Melvin Kranzberg, concerning several articles by Gilfillan published in SHOT's journal "Technology and Culture" constitutes a segment of the correspondence, 1957-1978. Gilfillan had made an unsuccessful attempt to organize a similar group, the Society for the Social Study of Invention in 1947. Some of the draft documents for this society are included.

For more information contact the Archives Center at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270
Much of the correspondence concerns the ideas incorporated in Gilfillan's major work, *Sociology of Invention* (1935) and the *Supplement* to it published in 1971. Gilfillan's letters to others are complicated by his use of his own method of spelling using contractions of words and phonetic techniques to increase the number of words per page.
Also included in the collection are three "shoeboxes" of 3” x 5” cards filed alphabetically by author, representing a bibliography of writings on inventions and inventors. These cards, numbering several thousand, represent Gilfillan's research notes on his reading in his area of professional interest. Unfortunately their use is made difficult by Gilfillan's unique spelling system and the scrawled handwriting used on many of them.

Provenance

Donated by S. Colum Gilfillan to Wesley C. Williams, curator, History of Science and Technology Collection, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio in November 1971. Melvin Kranzberg, formerly of Case Western Reserve, transferred it to NMAH where it was received by Archives Center May 20, 1992.

Don Darroch
September 3, 1992
S. COLUM GILFILLAN PAPERS 1921-1978
(1.0 cu. ft.; 2 DB, 3 ShB.)

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**Series 1: General Correspondence**

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9  9  1971-1972  
10 10  1973-1974  
11 11  1975-1978  

**Series 2: Major Papers and Projects**

1  Growth of Invention 1921  
2  Inventiveness by Nation 1930  
3  Inventions Affecting the Food Supply of the Future 1931  
4  On the Social Causation of Invention 1936  
5  Patent Pooling and Its Betterment 1939  
6  Invention and Its Prevention c. 1943  
7  Society for the Social Study of Invention 1947  

For more information contact the Archives Center at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270
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**Series 3: Invention Authors, Bibliography Notes**

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