

## John Adair Archives

### Finding Guide

#### Acquisition of the Collection

Jonathan Batkin, Wheelwright Director, acquired the archives of John Adair for the Wheelwright Museum in 1995, after some years of discussion with the Adair family. When the acquisition was finally accomplished, it was accompanied by an agreement between the Wheelwright Museum, the Adair Family and members of the Pine Springs Association. The agreement basically laid out rights of access to and use of the collection for a) Pine Springs Association, b) the Adair Family (now consisting of Nancy and Margot Adair), and c) the Wheelwright Museum. These are written into the Use Policy for this collection. The collection consisted of extensive papers, photographs, film and audio tape, as well as a couple of cameras and some oversized maps.

Pine Springs is a small Navajo community, in which John Adair did his work on silversmiths in 1938, and on Navajo film in 1966, and to which he returned throughout his life. His ties to the community were strong, and he hoped that his archives, particularly his photographs, might be of interest to community members and, perhaps, be of use to them in building a community association. Adair had been involved in the application of anthropology all his life. He recognized the possibility of 'application' - or use - of his archives to the community as well as the appropriateness of making sure they had copies.

As a result of conversations with John Adair about such use, when he transferred the archives to the Wheelwright, Jonathan Batkin also acquired funding from the Educational Foundation of America (EFA) for a project which would use these archives to contribute to the development of the Pine Springs Association. The plan included archival processing, film and tape preservation, and work with Pine Springs, and the director chosen for the project was Willow Powers, an anthropologist with archival certification. Through funding from the Wheelwright and EFA, the Association renovated a building for a community center, and obtained a computer for general use as well as to view images, and a TV/video player to view duplicated films of Pine Springs in 1938. (For a description of this project, see the files.)

#### Biographical Note

John Adair (1913-1997) was an anthropologist whose interests combined aesthetics and application, and whose area of focus was the American Southwest. Adair earned his PhD and the University of New Mexico in 1948; taught at Cornell University 1948-1950, and at San Francisco State University, 1966-1978. Three major projects on which he worked included research on silversmithing in the Southwest and work for the Navajo Tribe to encourage the craft; the Cornell University/Navajo Tribe/Indian Health Service research clinic at Many Farms, 1956-1960); and the filming project of 1966 known as 'Through Navajo Eyes' (see Worth and Adair 1972, and Worth, Adair and Chalfen 1997). For an account of his full and productive life, see the obituary by Powers, (1999, *American Anthropologist* xx(x)) and the article by Barnett, Chalfen, Faris, McGreevy, and Powers, 1999: John Adair, 1913-1997: Work Across the Anthropological Spectrum (*Journal of Anthropological Research* 55:429-445). Copies of both

are included in this folder.

## JOHN ADAIR ARCHIVAL COLLECTION 1938-1995

### **Scope and Content of Collection**

The archival collection consists of 77 document boxes of papers, 13 record boxes of film and audio tape (including two cameras), 9 document boxes and one oversized flat box of photographs (loose prints and contact prints), 6 shoeboxes of negatives, one file drawer and one document box of slides, 3 boxes of CDs of digitized images created from the negatives, and 1 box of videos created for use from some of the earlier, identified, films.

The collection contains journals, notes, correspondence, photographs, audio tapes and film resulting from Adair's research projects, his teaching, his interest in film and ethnographic film in particular. In particular, there are journals, notes, photographs, and some films, for his 1938 work in Pine Springs on silversmithing; his 1947 work in Zuni Pueblo on veterans; his 1955-1960 work in many Farms on the Cornell/Navajo Tribe/PHS health clinic project; his 1966 work with Richard Chalfen and Sol Worth in Pine Springs on teaching Navajos to make film; his 1977-79 work with Navajo filmmakers; his 1985-86 work assisting with the film *A Weave of Time*; and for his unfinished research on current [i.e. 1980s] Pueblo and Navajosilversmiths. Tape recordings include taped 'journals', some interviews, and recordings of discussions in 1977-1979 relating to Navajo filmmaking. These latter are difficult to hear and in no cases are the speakers identified, though sometimes the labels give names.

In addition to this guide, there are several indices (see attached) and inventories, which include:

- . a general index to the whole collection (p. )
- . a general series and box index for the papers
- . box lists, or lists of folder titles by number
- . list of titles of folders containing photographic prints
- . inventory of digitized images
- . inventory of films
- . inventory of audio (cassette) tapes
- . inventory of slide pages.

### Papers

The 77 boxes of papers were brought to the Wheelwright in considerable disorder. Marie Byrne, a retired Bancroft Library archivist who volunteered her time, arranged these papers into series and then by subject (or, in the case of such series as Journals, chronologically), placing them in acid-neutral folders which she titled and numbered.

### Computer Cataloguing

The folders have all been catalogued on the computer, by folder, searchable by words in the series, title or by number.

There is a printout of the folders, listed by Box number, Series number, and folder number and title. These are the Box lists. Each box has a box list in it; there is also a folder containing all Box Lists in the administrative file, box 3, of the Adair Archives.

### Photographs

John Adair's still photographs consist of many portraits, taken around 1938-1947, of Navajos, Zunis, and many others. In addition, there are photographs of silversmiths both from this period and for 1977-1988 (approximately), various other craft makers, family scenes, photographs of people wearing jewelry, of buildings (at Pine Springs, Zuni, and many other places such as Gallup, New Mexico, and San Francisco, California). Photographs document his work, and include the Many Farms project but not very much on the Navajos film themselves project at Pine Springs. There are various negatives of street scenes in Albuquerque, Gallup, New York and San Francisco, as well as slides. There are also many (mostly unidentified) slides of jewelry taken in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

#### Arrangement and Description

The basis of the Photo Series is the negatives. Although there are many contact prints of negatives, not all negatives have prints (and some have neither contact prints nor negatives). John Adair had typed a list of photographs, dated 1938, from his fieldwork at Zuni and Pine Springs on silver. Most of the negatives are numbered, and many digitized. There are prints, but these have not been matched to digitized images or negatives, and remain unnumbered.

Arrangement of the negatives was made, first, by matching them (where possible) to this 1938 inventory, and secondly according to John Adair's negative filing system which related to contact sheets. This left many unidentified negatives without any print or contact sheet; some of these could be identified from comparison with other negatives, others could be generally identified as Navajo, Zuni, or Adair family life. Some could not be recognized or sorted. The majority of negatives are black and white - many of them nitrate - but the collection includes color transparencies. All negatives were sleeved in acid-neutral paper sleeves, and numbered, beginning with the number PA1995.16.0001. After organizing the negatives, digitized images were made of almost half of the negatives

Images were selected for digitization by the following criteria:

- a) those which could be matched to the 1938 inventory; some duplicates were eliminated, as were some of less interest (landscapes or duplicates);
- b) those which were of some interest to Pine Springs or Zuni, both of which communities received copy CDs
- c) a few images which gave some biographical detail of Adair's life
- d) a few images (portraits, in particular) which might be able to be identified if they could be seen more widely
- d) color transparencies of good quality, on the following subject areas: Many Farms and the health project; southwestern architecture (mission churches, houses, other buildings); southwestern landscapes; some miscellaneous images of interest (filming, or portraits).

## Computer Cataloguing of photographs

Most of the images have been computer catalogued, as follows:

- . all those on the 1938 inventory, whether digitized or not;
- . all those which have a contact print, whether digitized or not;
- . and all the color images, whether digitized or not.

A printout has been made listing the number and title of each digitized image, broken down by CD number.

Images on the catalogue can be searched by: ID number, words in the title, key words, and some elements of curatorial detail, i.e., color, nitrate, digitized. There is a handwritten inventory for the entire set of numbered negatives.

Some of the photographs in the print collection were not taken by John Adair, and are for research only. This research file includes photographs by John Collier Jr., Milton Snow, Ben Wittick, and older photographs from other collections. These images may not be reproduced from the Wheelwright's collection; the user must go to the institution indicated on the file. This includes a set of negatives by Ken Marthy, boxed separately.

## Film and Audio

There is a large collection of film, some of it nitrate, much of it much later safety film. Unfortunately, this film was rarely adequately identified by Adair. Sometimes there is an indication on the leader which will perhaps allow serious researchers to match it to specific projects or films. During the processing of the collection, there was no equipment available to play the film on in order to assist decisions regarding preservation. All films have been inventoried, using whatever description is given on the case or leader (which may or may not be accurate).

There is very old 16 mm. film in poor condition, from Adair's 1938 fieldwork in Pine Springs. Much of this has been reformatted onto new film, and some of this reformatted film has been made into videos for use, during the Wheelwright's processing. Several films which were labelled as duplicates of 1938 material were sent to Vidipax, in New York City, for cleaning and to be duplicated (in Video) for use. There is an inventory of these duplicated use videos. In two cases, the films turned out to be virtually identical, though not labelled the same; in one other case, the film (a later shot) is useless as it does not have the audio section - although it was accompanied by a reel labelled (apparently in error) 'sound.'

Other film is labelled Circle Film, possibly the 1970s Navajo filming project, but this is not well identified. The bulk of the film appears to be from the 1970s and 1980s, and may all be the same project as Circle Films.

A small group of very short 16 mm. Nitrate film does not come from Adair, but rather, was shot as part of the child studies being done at Ramah Navajo, directed by Clyde Kluckhohn. These are listed on the inventory, with the titles and names on the boxes. It is unclear to whom these films belong. Kluckhohn's archives are at the Pusey Library at Harvard, but these may

have been done by students of John Whiting at the Education Department. An ideal project lies in wait for the future.

As mentioned above, audio tapes consist of reel to reel and cassette tapes. Tape recordings include taped 'journals', some interviews, and recordings of discussions in 1977-1979 relating to Navajo filmmaking. These latter are difficult to hear and in no cases are the speakers identified, though sometimes the labels give names. No equipment existed, during the processing, for playing the reel-to-reels. The cassettes, however, have been listened to, numbered, inventoried with notes (including whether they were audible), and several were selected for duplication and transcription.

Guide written by Willow Roberts Powers, February 4, 2000