Finding Aid To
THE ROBERT F. PITTS, MD (1908-1977) PAPERS

Dates of Papers:
1930-1974

101 Linear Inches
(12 Boxes)

Finding Aid Prepared By:
Barbara Niss
Elizabeth Shepard
Assistant Archivist
01/1984, updated 06/2008

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PROVENANCE:

These papers were received by the Archives in bits and pieces: Dr. Roger Greif contributed the 1938 New York University Medical School Yearbook and reprints in 1983; Dr. Erich Windhager and the Department of Physiology sent the bulk of the material in April 1980, and the Archives itself has added assorted reprints.

ADMINISTRATIVE/BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Born: Indianapolis, Indiana - October 24, 1908. (John Franklin Pitts, Estella Coffin)  
Married: Marjorie Anna Wallace - December 25, 1936  
Children: Robert Wallace - July 11, 1939  
Marjorie Ann - May 4, 1944  
Died: June 6, 1977, Gainesville, Florida

Education

B. S. 1929 Butler University; Senior Scholar; Phi Kappa Phi  
Ph.D. 1932 Johns Hopkins University; Bruce Fellow; Sigma Xi; Phi Beta Kappa  
M.D. 1938 New York University College of Medicine: Cellano Gold Medal in Pathology; Alpha Omega Alpha; A.O.A. Senior Prize in Medicine; Senior Prize in Surgery

Appointments

Adam T. Bruce Fellow in Biology, Johns Hopkins University 1931-1932  
Assistant in Physiology, New York University Medical College 1932-1933  
Instructor in Physiology, New York University Medical College 1933-1938  
Medical Fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation  
at the Neurological Institute, Northwestern University 1938  
at the Eldridge Reeves Johnson Foundation for Medical Physics, Univ. of Pennsylvania 1939  
Assistant Professor of Physiology, New York University Medical College 1940-1942  
Assistant Professor of Physiology, Cornell University Medical College 1942-1944  
Associate Professor of Physiology, Cornell University Medical College 1944-1946  
Professor and Chairman of the Department of Physiology:  
Syracuse University Medical College 1946-1950  
Cornell University Medical College 1950-01/1973  
Professor of Physiology, Cornell University Medical College 01/1973-07/1974
Emeritus Professor of Physiology, Cornell University Medical College 07/1974-6/1977
Research Professor, Renal Medicine & Physiology, University of Florida, Gainesville 07/1974-6/1977

Awards-Honors

Borden Award in Medical Science 1960
New York University Medical Alumni Award 1962
Homer W. Smith Award in Renal Physiology, New York Heart Association 1963
Visiting Fellow, St. Catherine's College, England 1967-1968
Honorary Master’s Degree, Oxford, England 1967
American College of Physicians Award for Distinguished Contribution in Science as Related to Medicine 04/1970
Association of Chairmen of Departments of Physiology, First Annual Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Teaching of Physiology 04/1972
Honorary Fellowship Award, Cornell University Medical College Alumni Association 04/1972
Honorary Doctor of Science Degree, Indiana University 05/1972

Dr. Pitts did pioneering work on the kidney and its role in maintaining the body's balance of acid and alkaline states. He was one of the world's leading kidney physiologists, but was also known for work he did from 1938 to 1942 on the neurophysiology of cats. He isolated the areas of the cat's brain that controls respiration and the rhythm of breathing.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

This collection only offers a small glimpse of Dr. Pitt's work in the field of physiology. The collection has been organized into four series: correspondence (1932-1971), research notebooks (1960s), lecture notes (1930-1962), reprints (1932-1971), and miscellaneous (1938-1974).

The miscellaneous series includes a box of awards. The photographs have been removed to the personal photographic collections. See photo catalog.

Two series were discarded. One series was physiology equipment catalogs, and the other was abstracts and citations written on index cards.

Series I: Correspondence, 1949-1973 (Boxes 1-3)

The bulk of the correspondence deals with various accounts and grant projects. The series, arranged alphabetically, does not include any personal correspondence.
Series II: Research Notebooks, 1942-1974  (Boxes 4-5)

The research notebooks record Dr. Pitts and others research. The notebooks have not been organized.

Series III: Lecture Notes, 1930-1962  (Boxes 6-7)

The series, arranged alphabetically, includes Dr. Pitts lecture notes on anatomy, body fluids, histology, neurophypothesis, renal function, and respiration. The series also includes a bound volume of lectures on development by H.S. Jennings, his professor at Johns Hopkins.

Series IV: Reprints, 1932-1971  (Boxes 7-9)

This series, arranged chronologically, consists of a bound set of his reprints from 1932-1971.

Series V: Miscellaneous, 1937-1974  (Boxes 10-12)

The miscellaneous series includes awards and certificates and his 1938 yearbook from New York University School of Medicine.

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS:

ACCESS POINTS:

RELATED MATERIAL:

Reprints by other physiology faculty were either placed with their papers or in their biography files. They included Drs. Erich Windhager, David Thompson, Thomas Meikle, Jr, and Graham Lusk.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST:

Box 1:   Series I, Correspondence, 1949-1973

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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Box 2: Series I, Correspondence, 1949-1973

Folder: Description:

1. Life Insurance Medical Research Fund, 1965-1970
2. National Science Foundation, Application, 1960-1961
3. New York Community Trust, 1950-1956
4-5. NIH Career Award, 1967-1968

Box 3: Series I, Correspondence, 1949-1973

Folder: Description:

1. NIH Grants, Closed, 1955-1970
2. Permit for Fresh Blood, 1955
3. Pharmacological Studies, 1957
4-6. Physiology Shop, 1949-1961

Box 4: Series II, Research Notebooks, 1942-1974

Box 5: Series II, Research Notebooks, 1942-1974

Box 6: Series III, Lecture Notes, 1930-1962

Folder: Description:

1. Anatomy, Endocrines, prior to 1962
2. Body Fluids, Lecture Notes, 1951
3. Curriculum, Exams, Lectures, 1971
5. Neuroanatomy, Lectures, 1933
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<td>9-10</td>
<td>Respiration</td>
<td>Lecture Notes</td>
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**Box 7: Series III, Lecture Notes, 1930-1962**

**Folder:** Description:

1. Bound Lectures on Development by H.S. Jennings, 1930-1931 (Pitts Johns Hopkins Class when he was a student)

**Box 7: Series IV, Reprints, 1932-1971**

**Folder:** Description:

1. Bound Reprints, 1932-1946

**Box 8: Series IV, Reprints, 1932-1971**

**Folder:** Description:

2. Bound Reprints, 1954-1964

**Box 9: Series IV, Reprints, 1932-1974**

**Folder:** Description:

1. Bound Reprints, 1965-1971
2. Reprints, 1944-1952
4. Duplicates

**Box 10: Series V, Miscellaneous, 1937-1974**

**Folder:** Description:

1. Awards & Certificates, 1954-1974
3. Yearbook for New York University School of Medicine, 1938 (Pitt has on the physiology faculty and received his MD in 1938)

**Box 11: Series V, Miscellaneous: Memorabilia, 1937-1974**

**Box 12: Series V, Miscellaneous: Awards and Certificates, 1937-1974**