

Ernest W. Peterkin Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Joseph Sullivan



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2009

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

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Latest revision: 2010 April

Collection Summary

Title: Ernest W. Peterkin Papers

Span Dates: 1946-1992

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1946)

ID No.: MSS83615

Creator: Peterkin, Ernest W.

Extent: 400 items ; 1 container ; 0.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Naval officer and engineer. Correspondence, journal, writings, notebook, orders, photoreproduction of sketchbook, and other papers kept by Peterkin relating to Operation Crossroads, the nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Peterkin, Ernest W.

Subjects

Nuclear weapons--Testing.

Operation Crossroads, Marshall Islands, 1946.

Places

Bikini Atoll (Marshall Islands)--History.

Occupations

Engineers.

Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Ernest W. Peterkin, naval officer and engineer, were given to the Library of Congress by his wife, Betty B. Peterkin, in 1995.

Processing History

The papers of Ernest W. Peterkin were arranged and described in 1997. The finding aid was revised in 2009.

Transfers

Watercolor paintings, charcoal and pencil drawings, sketches, a sketch book, and photographs have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the Ernest W. Peterkin Papers.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Ernest W. Peterkin is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Ernest W. Peterkin are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Ernest W. Peterkin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Ernest Wilson Peterkin (1920-1995) span the years 1946-1992, but are concentrated in the year 1946 and consist of correspondence, a journal, a photoreproduction of a sketchbook, a notebook, writings, orders, commendations, and miscellany. The material relates to Operation Crossroads, the first nuclear testing by the United States after World War II, conducted on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, July 1946. Peterkin was a member of the scientific group that photographed the two atomic blasts.

The collection includes Peterkin's personal log of the event and a description of the atomic blasts. Drawings and illustrations of the experiment by Peterkin, who was a professionally trained artist and illustrator, have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. The notebook and sketchbook focus on the human experience of the nuclear test. The United States Navy, which controlled and monitored the demonstration, sought information regarding ship damage from atomic blasts and requested suggestions from engineers at the site to improve ship design. Peterkin responded with designs for an advanced cruiser and destroyer which are also in the Prints and Photographs Division.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material and topic.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Articles from magazines about Bikini Atoll, 1968, 1986-1987
BOX 1	Biographical note, 1988
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1946-1948, 1992
BOX 1	"Crossroads," a bulletin of Operation Crossroads by Christian L. Engleman, electronics coordinating officer, 1946, July
BOX 1	Icaroscope, information and installation, 1946
BOX 1	Information and instructions, 1946, undated
BOX 1	Journal ("Personal Log"), 1946, Mar. 16-Sept. 11
BOX 1	Original
BOX 1	Photocopy with typewritten transcription
BOX 1	Miscellany, 1946, 1968, 1989, undated
BOX 1	Newspaper clippings, 1946, 1968, 1984-1985
BOX 1	Notebook, circa 1946
BOX 1	Orders and commendations, 1946-1947, undated
BOX 1	Sketchbook, photocopy, 1940, May 1-1946, Sept. 7, undated
BOX 1	Ship designs, correspondence and drafts, 1946
BOX 1	Writings, 1946, undated