

[Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library](#)

[H. Houston Merritt Papers](#)

MERRITT, H. HOUSTON, 1902-1979.

H. Houston Merritt papers, 1917-1989.

2.5 cu. ft. (6 document boxes, 2 flat boxes, 2 folders, 6 volumes)

#M-0133

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Hiram Houston Merritt (known as Houston) was a major figure in 20th century neurology, and a longtime academic leader at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. Merritt was born January 12, 1902 in Wilmington, North Carolina. He attended the University of North Carolina and Vanderbilt University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1922. He earned his medical degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1926, then interned at Yale-New Haven Hospital. He trained in neurology and neuropathology at the Boston City Hospital and in Germany. From 1931 to 1944, he held teaching positions at Harvard Medical School, and rose to the rank of Associate Professor of Neurology. At the same time, he was a Visiting Neurologist at Boston City Hospital and a Consulting Neurologist at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. During those years, Merritt conducted research that produced classic studies of cerebrospinal fluid and of neurosyphilis. Also, in collaboration with Tracy Putnam, Merritt discovered Dilantin, a major antiepileptic drug.

In 1944, Merritt moved to New York to become Chief of Columbia's Division of Neuropsychiatry at Montefiore Hospital. In 1948, he became Chairman of the Department of Neurology at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and Director of the Neurology Service at the Neurological Institute of Presbyterian Hospital. He held these two posts for 20 years and established the Neurological Institute as one of the world's leading neurological centers. In 1958, Merritt also became Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Vice-President of Medical Affairs at Columbia University, a post he held until his retirement in 1970. Under his leadership, Columbia established an affiliation with Harlem Hospital in the 1960s and constructed the William Black Building in 1965. During these years, Merritt was also a neurological consultant to many world leaders, including President Dwight Eisenhower and Premier Antonio Salazar of Portugal.

Merritt wrote over 200 articles and several books, including a textbook of neurology long regarded as the standard reference work in the field. He served on the Editorial Board of the *Archives of Neurology* from 1956 to 1962 and was its Editor-in-Chief from 1962 to 1971. Merritt also served in various capacities for numerous government agencies, foundations, and professional organizations, including the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the United Cerebral Palsy Association, the Muscular Dystrophy Association of America, the Epilepsy Association of America, and the Parkinson's Disease Foundation. He was Director of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology from 1942-50, President of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease in 1952, and President of the American Neurological Association in 1956-57. He held honorary

degrees from Harvard and Columbia and honorary memberships in neurological societies around the world.

Merritt married Mabel Carmichael in 1930, and he and his wife were longtime residents of Bronxville, N.Y., and Branford, CT. Houston Merritt died on January 9, 1979.

ARRANGEMENT: Arranged in four series: Series I: Awards, Correspondence & Printed Matter; Series II: Photographs & Other Non-Print Media; Series III: Reprints; Series IV: Oversize.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: The Merritt papers consist largely of memorabilia documenting Houston Merritt's professional career. Series I, Awards, Correspondence, and Printed Matter, consists of a diverse range of documents, and includes awards, certificates, academic records, personnel records, programs, invitations, and newspaper clippings. Of particular interest is a scrapbook assembled for Merritt's 65th birthday, which includes photographs of the Neurological Institute's house staffs during Merritt's tenure, along with letters from each of his chief residents. The correspondence files in this series are arranged chronologically, and consist largely of congratulatory letters from friends and colleagues honoring Merritt for receiving an award or beginning a new professional post. There are also two letters and a Christmas card from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a patient of Merritt's in the 1950s. One unusual folder in this series consists of case studies from Clinical Pathological Conferences. Merritt was known for his gift for diagnosis, and these case studies provide both facts and the correct diagnosis.

Series II, Photographs and Other Media, consists predominantly of photographs of Merritt at various professional meetings and Columbia events. There are also photographs of Merritt with notable neurologists, physicians, politicians, New Yorkers, Columbia administrators, and philanthropists. Of particular interest is a scrapbook prepared by Merck documenting events related to the dedication of new Merck laboratories. These photographs feature a large number of eminent doctors, Nobel Laureates, and Merck executives.

Series III is reprints both loose and bound. It is not clear if either set of reprints is complete. The bound set ends in 1952; the loose set goes up to 1977 but is missing many earlier papers that can be found in the bound volumes.

The fourth series, Oversize, consists of materials too large to fit in document boxes. This series contains Merritt's numerous awards, certificates, and diplomas. More Neurological Institute house staff photographs from Merritt's 65th scrapbook are also located in this series.

LANGUAGE: English.

RESTRICTIONS: None.

PRESERVATION: Clippings will be photocopied onto acid-free paper. The audio recordings and the film require conservation treatment before use.

PROVENANCE: Gift of Mabel Merritt, 1981-82. The reprints were received separately at an unknown date. Five color snapshots taken in 1996 of Merritt's boyhood home in Wilmington, N.C., were donated by Dr. Katherine L. Bick in 2008 and added to the papers (accession #2008.07.10).

RELATED COLLECTIONS: The [Central Records](#) of the Office of the Vice President for Health Sciences/Dean of the Faculty of Medicine hold the records of Merritt's tenure in that office. Archives & Special Collections also holds the research files created by Dr. Lewis Rowland for his book *The Legacy of Tracy J. Putnam and H. Houston Merritt: Modern Neurology in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) which were unprocessed as of 2021.

SUBJECTS:

Merritt, H. Houston (Hiram Houston), 1902-1979
Neurological Institute of New York.
Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center.
Columbia University. College of Physicians and Surgeons.
Presbyterian Hospital (New York, N.Y.)
Medical colleges – New York (State) – New York.
Medical education – New York (State) – New York.
Neurology – New York (State) – New York.
Neurology – Research.
Neurologists.
Schools, Medical – New York City.
Audiotapes.
Awards.
Certificates.
Diplomas.
Motion pictures (visual works).
Photographs.
Reprints.
Scrapbooks.

Processed by Bob Vietrogoski, December 2003; revised by Stephen E. Novak, October, 2021.

H. HOUSTON MERRITT, 1902-1979
Papers, 1917-1979

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

Box Folder Contents

SERIES I: AWARDS, CORRESPONDENCE, AND PRINTED MATTER

- | | | |
|----------|--------------|---|
| | | Awards and Certificates |
| 1 | 1 | American Neurological Association, George Jacoby award, 1965
Columbia University |
| | 2 | Dean Emeritus, 1970 |
| | 3 | Henry and Lucy Moses Professor Emeritus, 1970 |
| | 4 | Vice President Emeritus, 1970 |
| | 5 | Parkinson's Disease Foundation, 1971 |
| | 6 | United Epilepsy Association, n.d. |
| | 7 | United Hospital Fund, 1979 |
| | 8 | Book reviews of Merritt's <i>The Cerebrospinal Fluid</i> , 1937-39 |
| | 9 | Boston City Hospital, 1928-34 |
| | 10 | Clinical pathological conferences, 1941-49, n.d. |
| 2 | 1-4 | Clippings, ca. 1930s-1978 |
| | 5-6 | Columbia University, general administrative correspondence and
materials, 1946-74 |
| | 7-11 | Correspondence, general, 1927-33, 1947-78, n.d. |
| | 12 | Educational records, 1917-26 |
| | 13 | Harvard College, 1929-35 |
| | 14-16 | Lectures, 1951-62, 1969-70, n.d. |
| | 17 | National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, 1955-62 |
| | 18-21 | Programs and invitations, 1930, 1953, 1959-77 |
| | 22 | Reprints signed by others, 1948, 1952 |
| | 23-27 | Scrapbook, 65 th birthday (contains photographs of Neurological Institute
house staffs, 1950-51, 1951-52, 1953-54, 1960-61), 1967. Note:
oversize house staff photos, 1961/62-1966/67, in Series III |
| 3 | 1 | <i>Triumphant Journey</i> , Dick Miller (biography of golfer Bobby Jones), 1980 |

SERIES II: PHOTOGRAPHS/OTHER NON-PRINT MEDIA

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 2 | Audio recordings- Merritt memorial service, 1979 (1 reel-to-reel, 1
cassette) |
| 3 | Film- 8mm silent movie of Merritt, 1976
Photographs |
| 4 | American Cancer Society Luncheon, 1977
(Merritt, Chuck Scarborough?, others) |

Box Folder Contents

		Photographs (cont.)
3	5	Black Building dedication, 1966 (Merritt, Mr. and Mrs. William Black, Augustus C. Long, others)
	6	Boston?, ca. 1930s (group photographs with Merritt)
	7	Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center 50 th Anniversary Exhibit, 1961 (Merritt, Josephine Bay Paul, Dwight Eisenhower, Augustus C. Long, A. J. Binkert, others)
	8	Columbia University graduation, n.d. (Merritt honorary degree, 1971?)
	9	Joe DiMaggio and Merritt, n.d.
	10	Ruth Dudley and Merritt, 1976, n.d.
	11	Duke University Medical Center, visiting committee, 1964
	12	Dwight D. Eisenhower and Merritt, n.d.
	13	Epilepsy Association of America award, 1965
	14	Joseph Foley and Merritt, n.d.
	15	General Infirmary at Leeds, Intensive Care Ward, 1967 (Merritt, Hugh Garland, Donald Kaberry, Sister Hutton)
	16	Joseph Hinsey and Merritt, 1967, n.d.
	17	H. Houston Merritt Clinical Center for Muscular Dystrophy and Related Disorders, dedication, 1974 (Merritt, Abraham Beame, William McGill, Henry Watts, others)
	18	Humorous drawings, n.d.
	19	Institute of Living (Hartford, CT), n.d. (Merritt, Francis Braceland, Lawrence Kolb, others)
	20	International Congress of Neurological Sciences (1 st , Brussels), 1957
	21	International Neurological Congress (5 th , Lisbon), 1953
	22	International Neurological Congress (7 th , Rome), 1961 (Merritt, Russell Brain, others)
	23	John Lindsay and Merritt, 1967

Box Folder Contents

		Photographs (cont.)
3	24-26	Merck Research Facilities dedication scrapbook, 1966 (3 folders) (Includes photographs of Merritt, Edward L. Tatum, Werner Koll, Kalman C. Mezey, Max Tischler, Chester S. Keefer, Dickinson W. Richards, Macfarlane Burnet, George Pickering, Charles W. Mushett, Nathan B. Eddy, Severo Ochoa, Robert F. Loeb, Grayson Kirk, Byron H. Waksman, Erwin Chargaff, Ernst B. Chain, W. Henry Sebell, G. Burroughs Mider, Karl H. Beyer, Francis O. Schmitt, Stanley E. Bradley, Hudson Hoagland, Hans T. Clarke, Karl Pfister, Robert H. Silber, Thomas H. Hunter, Vincent Du Vigneaud, Wendell M. Stanley, Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, George E. Boxer, Vannevar Bush, William H. Stewart, Henry W. Gadsen, Selman A. Waksman, William L. Dempsey, Randolph T. Major, Charles S. Garland, Louis F. Fieser, Carl M. Anderson, Hans Molitor, Maurice Hillman, Thomas H. Weller)
	27	Merritt, early photographs, n.d.
	28	Merritt boyhood home, 1989
	29	Merritt portrait painting, 1954
	30	Merritt portrait proofs, n.d.
	31	Merritt 75 th birthday symposium, 1976
4	1	Montefiore Hospital, ca. 1944-48 (group photographs with Merritt)
	2	Lucy Moses, various events, n.d. (Moses, Merritt, Mr. and Mrs. William Black, Oleb Hornykiewicz, Lewis Rowland, others)
	3	Luis Muñoz Marin and Merritt, 1957 (Münoz, Merritt, Pearce Bailey)
	4	Muscular Dystrophy, event, 1960 (group photograph with Merritt)
	5	Muscular Dystrophy Association of America, 1973
	6	NANDS (? – not NINDS), 1963 (Merritt, Richard Masland, others)
	7	National Institutes of Health, unidentified meetings, n.d.
	8	Neurological Institute, house staff?, 1951
	9	New York City Police Department, 1949
	10	Photographs of others, n.d. (Includes Donald Harter, Henry Viets, Joseph Hahn, Philip Solomon, Basil O’Conner, ? Fishbein, ? Middlefait)
	11	Parkinson’s Disease Foundation, 3 rd Annual Dinner, 1966 (Merritt, Mr. and Mrs. William Black, John Eccles)
	12	Lewis J. Pollock plaque dedication, ca. 1966
	13	Portuguese Embassy, award to Merritt, 1969

Box Folder Contents

		Photographs (cont.)
4	14	Professional meetings, unidentified, 1961, n.d. (Merritt, David Nachmanson, Samuel Wortis, Charles Ragan)
	15	Willard Rappelye and Merritt, n.d.
	16	School of Nursing graduation, 1963
	17	Silver Hill Foundation scientific session, 1960 (Merritt, Lawrence Kolb, Franklin S. Dubois)
	18	Sol Spiegelman reception, 1970
	19	United Cerebral Palsy, 9 th annual conference, 1958 (Merritt, Sidney Farber, Roger Firestone)
	20	United Cerebral Palsy, n.d. (Merritt, Sidney Farber, Fred Mettler, Leonard Goldensohn)
	21	United Cerebral Palsy, Medical Committee, 1952
	22	United Cerebral Palsy, Research Award, 1956 (Merritt, Louis Flexner)
	23	United States Navy, Board of Honorary Civilian Consultants, 1953
	24	Edwin Zabriskie, portrait and photograph with Merritt, n.d.
	25	Unidentified Grand rounds?, n.d.
	26	Unidentified event, n.d. (Merritt, Lister Hill, Mrs. William Black, Arvid Carlsson, Melvin Yahr)
	27	Unidentified group photographs with Merritt, n.d.
	28	Unidentified photographs of Merritt, n.d.
	29	Unidentified photographs, miscellaneous, n.d.

SERIES III: REPRINTS

		Loose reprints
5	1	1930-1933 (#1-19, with gaps)
	2	1935-1939 (#21-50, with gaps)
	3	1940-1943 (#52-72, with gaps)
	4	1944-1946 (#73-100)
	5	1947-1950 (#101-130)
	6	1951-1952 (#131-152, with gaps)
6	1	1953-1957 (#155-190, with gaps)
	2	1958-1964 (#191-216, with gaps)
	3	1965-1977 (#217-228, with gaps)

Bound reprints (shelved separately)
Collected Papers, 1930-1952 (5 volumes)
Selected Reprints, circa 1930-1950 (1 volume)

Box Folder Contents

SERIES IV: OVERSIZE

Flat Box 1

- 1 Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Diploma, 1926
- 2 New Haven Hospital, Certificate of Internship, 1927
- 3 Boston City Hospital, Certificate of Residency, 1929
- 4 American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Certificate of election as Fellow,
 1966
- 5 Awards, certificates, 1931-1945
- 6 Awards, certificates, 1940-1976
- 7 Awards, certificates, 1964-1969
- 8 Certificates, undated
- 9 Certificates, foreign countries & societies, 1952-1961
- 10 Printed matter, miscellaneous: (includes printed Merrill Moore poem,
 1935; lecture posters, 1956; print of Harvard, undated; 4 issues of
 The Stethoscope, 1971-78)
- 11 Printed matter re: epilepsy, 1942-1948 and undated
- 12 Photograph: Eisenhower, Dwight David, portrait, inscribed to Merritt,
 1967?
- 13 Photograph: Honorary consultants to the Surgeon-General, 1955
- 14 Photographs: Neurological Institute House Staff, group portraits, 1961/62-
 1966/67, from Merritt 65th birthday scrapbook
- 15 “Spinal fluid charts used in Saunders book – H.H. Merritt.” Undated but
 probably for *The Cerebrospinal Fluid* by Merritt and Frank
 Fremont-Smith, published by Saunders in 1937
- 16 National Board of Medical Examiners, Certificate as Diplomate of the
 Board, 1927

Flat Box 2

- 1 Honorary Doctor of Science degree, Columbia University, 1971 (in
 portfolio case)
- 2 Resolution of the Columbia University Faculty of Medicine, 1970
- 3 Honorary degree, New York Medical College, 1967 (in portfolio case)
- 4 Phonograph records (78 rpm), American Medical Association Bureau of
 Health Education, “Facts About Epilepsy” Drs. Merritt and Henry
 Sands, undated (in album)

Map Case 2:8

High school (1918) and Vanderbilt University (1922) diplomas (1 folder)
Miscellaneous newspaper and magazine clippings, 1945-74 (1 folder)
Scrapbook, 65th birthday, 1967 (the scrapbook itself, now empty)