

# The history of the smithsonian institution and it' flashcard



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s founder, has truly had an impact on what the elaborate, extensive, and complete Smithsonian Institution looks like today. The Smithsonian Institution began when James Smithson, an extremely intelligent scientist, was born in 1765. James Smithson was born in the South of France to Sir Hugh Smithson, the Duke of Northumberland, and to Elizabeth Hungerford Keate Macie. Smithson graduated from Oxford in the year 1786. After he graduated, he was accepted to the Royal Society of London group of scientists. Because he discovered the mineral zinc carbonate, it was named after him, Smithsonite.

In his will, Smithson left all his money and property to his nephew Henry James Hungerford, who was born a illegitimate, like Smithson. Smithson wrote the following; “ Should Hungerford die without leaving a family, I then bequeath the whole of my property... to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name Smithsonian Institution, and establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men. 1” Why Smithson left his money to America, a country he had never visited, remains a mystery.

Two years after writing his will, Smithson died in Genoa, Italy, in the year 1835, without a wife or any children. Two years after that, Henry James Hungerford died without any family either.

When news reached Washington DC about the news of Smithson’s bequeath, Congress debated over eleven years on what to do with the money. One thing Congress agreed on, to get the money out of England as soon as possible. Richard Rush set sail for England to claim the money.

Smithson's mother attempted to claim a lot of the money; she fought for two years. Finally, on May 9, 1838, the court awarded Smithson's mother 150 pounds per year<sup>2</sup>, and awarded America 100, 000 pounds<sup>3</sup>.

President John Quincy Adams committed himself to the making of the Smithsonian Institution. Unfortunately, by spring of 1846, all plans for the making of the Smithsonian Institution were rejected. The main reason the plans were rejected was because the war with Mexico was taking up most of the attention of Congress. In August 10, 1846, President James K. Polk signed a bill for the making of the Smithsonian Institution.

A big castle-like structure was built by the White House and down the street from the Capital. Because the Smithsonian looked like a castle, it was later called the 'castle.' The Smithsonian was expected to house a great collection of specimens, and art gallery, a chemistry laboratory, and a scientific library. Also, all items of curious research, natural history, plants, geographical, and mineralogical specimens that belonged to America were to be kept in the Smithsonian.

The secretary of the Smithsonian was the person that was in charge of the Smithsonian. The first appointed secretary of the Smithsonian was Joseph Henry. Congress selected Henry when they asked a lot of scientists for advice on what to do with the Smithsonian, also, other scientists recommended him.

When the building of the Castle was finished, Henry and his family moved into the East wing of the Smithsonian, and lived there. Henry's efforts formed the basis of the United States Weather Bureau.

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To add to the collection of the Smithsonian Institution, United States

Exploring Expeditions were sent out between the years 1838 and 1848. In 1876, the Centennial exhibition closed, and sixty-six freight cars full items headed for the Smithsonian Institution.

In 1846, Henry fulfilled his promise to ‘diffuse knowledge among men’ by beginning the International Exchange Service by publishing its first publication; *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*. The *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* became the first volume of the Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge Series. When Henry died in 1878, at the age of 81, Congress made a \$15,000 bronze statue in his honor which stands close to the Castle.

Spencer Fullerton Baird was the next appointed secretary. Baird established the Marine Biological Station at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Baird also initiated policies to protect America’s wildlife. Baird supported the Bureau of American Ethnology, which later became known as the home of American anthropology.

By the late nineteenth century, the Smithsonian had so many items that it had to get more employees to sort the items, but, unfortunately, Congress didn’t really want to pay for more employees. To make matters worse, Congress passed an act in 1880 stating that all rocks, minerals, soils, fossils, and objects of natural history were to be placed in the Smithsonian. In 1881, the Smithsonian was forced to open another building (the Arts and Industries building) to place all the extra items that they didn’t have space for; unfortunately, this only temporarily relieved the problem.

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When Baird died, Samuel Pierpont Langley became secretary. Langley catapulted aircrafts, which flew several thousands of feet. On December 8, 1903, Langley launched a manned aircraft, in public, which immediately fell, and humiliated Langley. Nine days later, Wilbur and Orville Wright's Kitty Hawk Flyer made history in North Carolina after being the first plane to ever fly. Unfortunately, the Smithsonian stubbornly said that Langley was the first person to fly, and as a result of this, the Wright brothers gave the their plane to a museum in London. In 1942, the Smithsonian Institution apologized to the Wright brothers, and the Wright brothers gave the Smithsonian Institution their Kitty Hawk Flyer to the Smithsonian Institution.

In 1889, the Smithsonian Institution opened the National Zoological Park which had a small herd of buffalo. There were only about 800 buffalo<sup>5</sup> in the United States in that time.

In 1903, building plans threatened to destroy the grave of Smithson. Alexander Graham Bell went to Italy to recover Smithson's sarcophagus. Smithson's sarcophagus now rests in the Castle's crypt room.

In 1906, Charles Lang Freer donated his whole collection of art. Freer also donated \$3, 000, 000<sup>6</sup>, to the Smithsonian. This money went to the creation of the Freer Gallery of Art.

After Langley retired, Charles D. Walcott became secretary. Walcott became secretary after World War I.

After World War I, everyone had cars. Because everyone had cars, there were a lot of people touring the country. The Smithsonian became a big

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tourist attraction. Because so many people toured the Smithsonian, word spread about the Smithsonian Institution, and people began to give specimens to the Smithsonian. In 1923, over 40, 000 specimens<sup>7</sup> flooded into the Smithsonian alone.

In 1928, Charles G. Abbot became the secretary. That same year, Charles Lindbergh, who was the first person to fly by himself across the Atlantic ocean, donated his plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, to the Smithsonian. People look at Lindbergh's plane as a symbol of individual heroism.

Even through the Great Depression, the Smithsonian managed very well. For example; in 1935, a typical Great Depression year, the Smithsonian Institution still sent out 20 expeditions.

In 1937, Congress passed an act which allowed the making of the National Gallery of Art. Andrew W. Mellon sponsored the National Gallery of Art. Mellon also donated his complete private collection of art to the National Gallery of Art. The National Gallery of Art is the largest marble building in the world<sup>8</sup>. The National Gallery of Art also holds some of the paintings from the 13th to the 19th century

During World War II, the Smithsonian devoted laboratories and instrument shops to work on war projects. They translated many Japanese documents to English. They also compiled glossaries of geographical and topographical terms. During the War, the Smithsonian Institution also published twenty pamphlets to inform Americans about the foreign peoples and places mentioned in the press. By 1944, the demand for these pamphlets were so

high, that the Smithsonian had to begin to charge money for the pamphlets. The prices ranged from 10 to 25 cents<sup>9</sup>.

In 1945, Abbot retired, and Alexander Wetmore became the secretary. Wetmore became secretary on one condition, that the board of regents replace him as soon as possible. Because of his lack of enthusiasm for his job, there was no big real change in the Smithsonian Institution during his reign of 7 years. His lack of enthusiasm was mainly because of his passion for science<sup>10</sup>.

Wetmore was replaced with Doctor Leonard Carmichael in 1953. Carmichael had a large imagination, and pushed the Smithsonian Institution toward the future.

By 1952, many people believed that the Smithsonian was too much antiquated. Magazines and newspapers commented on how overcrowded the Smithsonian's facilities were. The magazines and newspapers also commented on the Smithsonian's outdated research projects. One critic described the Smithsonian's research efforts as 'relics of pre-molecular science, conducted by techniques as outdated as Henry's electric motors or Langley's airplane.'

Why was the Smithsonian Institution so behind in modern science? During World War II, science had developed a lot, there were a lot of new sciences. Some examples of these sciences are: nuclear physics, electronics, computer technology, and molecular biology.

Eventually, Carmichael modernized the Smithsonian Institution. During his eleven-year term, Carmichael oversaw the building of the Museum of History and Technology, the expansion of the Museum of Natural History, and the complete renovation of the National Zoological Park. After they modernized the Smithsonian Institution, the number of visitors increased by 500%<sup>11</sup>. Magazines and newspapers applauded these changes.

S. Dillon Ripley II became the secretary after Carmichael retired in 1964. Because he was on the museum administration before becoming secretary, he knew exactly how to translate his visions of the Smithsonian Institution into reality. Ripley envisioned the Smithsonian as a ‘society of scholars,’ a ‘university without classes.’ In other words, he wanted to have vast buildings enclosed with shops, restaurants, and rest areas. He wanted events to entertain and educate the public. To reach these goals, he got another 50 scientists, developed an Office of Education and Training to make programs for students and young professionals. Ripley also extended the evening hours in the galleries and the museums. Luckily, Ripley’s plans coincided with those of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s plans of “Great Society” programs of the late 1960’s.

Johnson sought to improve the lives’ of all Americans. So, on Ripley’s first mission to Congress, he was awarded \$4, 000, 000<sup>12</sup>, more than the Smithsonian Institution had ever received before.

As the Smithsonian Institution became more popular, more private sources began donating money.



In 1970, the Smithsonian Institution began to publish Smithsonian, a full color magazine that promotes the Smithsonian Institution. Smithsonian quickly attracted over 500, 000 subscribers<sup>13</sup>, and became the fastest growing magazine of the early 1970's.

Ripley's shows were for everyone, old and young, there were numerous amounts of topics.

Because the Smithsonian Institution had so many different divisions, it created many jobs.

Robert McCormick Adams became secretary in 1984. Adams is the current secretary. So far he has made a new museum on African, Near Eastern, and Asian cultures. He has also expanded the National Zoological Park which attracts over 3, 000, 000 visitors<sup>14</sup> annually.

When Congress accepted the Smithsonian trust, it incorporated the Smithsonian in a body known as the Establishment. The Establishment consists of the President of the United States of America, the Vice President of the United States of America, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, and the President's cabinet members.

Congress set up a board of regents to administer the trust. The board regents consists of distinguished American citizens. Two members of the Establishment, the Vice President and the Chief Justice, automatically serve on the board. The other members consist of three members of the Senate, three members of the House of Representatives, and nine citizens appointed by a joint resolution of Congress. Four members of the board of regents

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serve on the Smithsonian's executive committee and work closest with the secretary.

The secretary is selected by, and reports to, the board of regents. The secretary acts as the chief justice officer and directs the Smithsonian to the public. He also supervises the museums and other divisions of the Smithsonian. Because the Smithsonian Institution is now so big and complex, the secretary must rely on the assistant secretary, director, or other top officers of each division to keep him informed of what is happening.

The Smithsonian Institution relies on three major financial resources. The first is federal appropriations, usually to pay for property maintenance and to support the Smithsonian's present programs in exhibitions, research, publishing, and education.

The second major money source of income is private funding, grants, gifts, endowment, and fund investments, and activities such as the Smithsonian membership program. There are different types of memberships. Members get many benefits, including study tours, museum shops discounts, and a subscription to Smithsonian magazine.

Federal agency grants and contracts contribute the smallest amount to the Smithsonian's budget. Federal agency grants and contracts support important research work and bring the Smithsonian's expertise to other federal agencies.

There are many divisions to the Smithsonian Institution. The museums are the following:

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The Anacostia Museum specializes in African-American history and culture. The exhibits show the historical experiences the African-Americans have been through in the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, as well as social issues.

The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery is connected to the Freer Gallery of Art by an underground exhibition space. This gallery houses a permanent collection of art from China, South and Southeast Asia, ancient and Islamic Iran, Japan, and changing exhibitions of Asian art drawn from collections in the United States and abroad. It was founded in honor of Arthur M. Sackler, a 20th century medical researcher publisher, and art collector.

The Cooper-Hewitt Museum, National Design Museum possesses many decorative items, representing cultures from antiquity through the present; and about a lot drawings, including many by the American artist Winslow Homer. It is housed in the Carnegie Mansion in New York City.

The Freer Gallery of Art features exhibitions representing art in Asia from Neolithic times to the present. This gallery was established through a gift of the American art collector Charles Lang Freer. The Freer Gallery houses more modern art, from the 19th to 20th century.

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is in an astonishing structure designed by the American architect Gordon Bunshaft, this museum contains paintings and sculptures by the 19th to 20th century American and European artists. Most of the collection was donated by Joseph H. Hirshhorn.

The National Air and Space Museum is a comprehensive museum displaying the evolution of air and space technology over the years.

The National Museum of African Art specializes in African Art. It offers public education and houses a photographic archive, a research library, and numerous African artworks, including objects of wood, metal, ceramic, cloth, and ivory.

The National Museum of American Art contains about innumerable works of American paintings, sculptures, graphics, folk art, and photographs from the 18th century to the present.

The National Museum of American History traces the development of the United States of America through scientific, technological, and cultural exhibitions. It contains the original Star Spangled Banner – the flag that inspired the American poet, Francis Scott Key, to write the national anthem.

The National Museum of Natural History is one of the world's great centers for the study of humankind and the natural surroundings. It maintains reference collections and exhibits some of the largest dinosaur skeletons ever discovered. Among the exhibits of minerals are many of the world's most famous gems, such as the Hope diamond.

The National Museum of the American Indian is dedicated to the preservation, study, and exhibition of life, arts, culture, and history of the native peoples of the western hemisphere. The original collection was assembled by the George Gustav Heye Foundation.

The National Portrait Gallery is located in the former United States Patent Office Building, one of the oldest government buildings in Washington DC, the gallery displays portraits of people who have made significant contributions to the development of the United States of America. It shares a research library with the National Museum of American Art.

The National Postal Museum details the history of the United States of America mail services, this museum displays three mail planes, a replica of a railroad mail car, and about various amounts of priceless American and foreign stamps. Also on view are postal uniforms and exhibitions that document the history of the mail service during Colonial times, the American Civil War, the Pony Express, and modern times.

The National Zoological Park houses an incalculable amount of living animals. The National Zoological Park also studies animal behavior, and is engaged in international efforts to preserve endangered species.

The Renwick Gallery is in a building designed in 1859 by the architect James Renwick. The Renwick Gallery the dwelling to 20th century crafts; glass, ceramics, wood, fiber, and metal. This gallery is a department of the National Museum of American Art.

The Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory is in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The observatory conducts research in major areas of astronomy.

The Smithsonian Environment Research Center is located in Edgewater, Maryland, and carries out research programs to measure and examine the chemical, physical, and biological interactions in the environment.

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The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute researches in tropical biology. This institute is located on Barro Colorado Island in Gatun Lake, Panama.

Other divisions of the Smithsonian Institution include the Archives of American Art, the Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, and the Office of Smithsonian Institution Archives.

1 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 23

2 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 25

3 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 25

4 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 35

5 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 42

6 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 44

7 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 46

8 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 48

9 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 50

10 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 51

11 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 53

12 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 54

13 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 54

14 J. F. Watts, *The Smithsonian* (Edgemont, Pa.: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 54