

Register to the Papers of  
Ethel Cutler Freeman

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[National Anthropological Archives](#)  
Smithsonian Institution

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## **Biographical Note**

Ethel Cutler Freeman was born in 1886 in Morristown, New Jersey. Freeman was the daughter of a prosperous family, which gave her the opportunity to study abroad in England at Mademoiselle Marie Souvestre's Academy for girls. After studying in England, Freeman returned to the United States, and was married to Leon S. Freeman, a New York broker, in 1909.

By 1934, Freeman had become bored with the typical social activities available to her; while discussing the matter with a friend, Marcellus Hartley Dodge, she described herself as having a "brain full of cobwebs." Dodge, a former trustee at Columbia University, suggested that Freeman enroll in some courses at Columbia. Acting on Dodge's advice, Freeman started taking graduate courses in psychology and sociology at Columbia University, but soon became fascinated with anthropology. During her studies at Columbia, Freeman spent time in the western United States while her husband recuperated from a horse riding accident, studying the Arapaho and Shoshone; it was at this point that she developed a taste for field work and an interest in Native American cultures. After completing her studies, Freeman decided that she wanted to study the Seminole people of Florida, near whom she and her family owned a winter home in Naples.

Back on the East Coast, Freeman met Dr. Clark Wissler, then Curator of the Indian Division of the American Museum of Natural History. Wissler was supportive of Freeman's aspirations to continue her anthropological studies, but balked at her expressed interest in the Seminole, whom at that time had a reputation for not being open to contact with outsiders. Undaunted, Freeman contacted W. Stanley Hansen, the man in charge of Seminole settlement; after repeated correspondence with Hansen convinced him she was no mere hobbyist, and he agreed to help her make connections within the Seminole community.

Freeman made two visits to the Big Cypress Reservation for the American Museum of Natural History with a government representative before taking her 14-year-old daughter, Condict, and 12-year-old son, Leon Jr., for an extended stay with a group of Seminoles at the heart of the Everglades in February of 1940. After that first winter stay with the Seminoles, Freeman spent virtually every winter living within their remote communities and studying their culture. Over time, Dr. Wissler became impressed by Freeman's thorough and insightful reports and analysis of her findings among the Seminoles, and got the American Museum of Natural History to back her winter field studies. Eventually Freeman's work gained her a reputation for being an expert on Seminole culture, which often placed her in the role of consultant to government agencies on issues dealing with Seminole and broader Native American concerns.

As a result of her long acquaintance with the Seminoles, Freeman also became interested in how different groups of Native Americans and other cultures adapted to changes brought about by contact with modern society. Freeman made several trips to the

Southwestern United States and Mexico to study such tribes as the Arapaho, Shoshone, Navajo, Pueblo, Choctaw, and Hopi; she also made less extensive studies of various other cultures in the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and Haiti. In 1950, Freeman went to Africa to study tribal music and chants of several tribes. Much later, in 1968, the American Museum of Natural History sent Freeman to Portugal to study local costumes.

In the 1940s Freeman took part in publishing studies for the Department of Agriculture about the Seminoles, and worked as an advocate for the Navajo, whom at that time were in tense relations with the United States government over their living conditions. From 1947 to 1957, Freeman worked as a representative for the American Civil Liberties Union on the National Coordinating Committee for Indian Affairs; she also was a member of the Indian Rights Committee for the American Civil Liberties Union from 1946 to 1966. From 1948 to 1950, Freeman served as a member of the Hoover Commission for Reorganization of Government within the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Throughout her studies in the field and her activities as an advocate for Native American rights, Freeman published her work frequently and gave many talks at a variety of conferences and special events. In 1964, Freeman traveled to Moscow to deliver her paper, *The Correlation between Directed Culture Change and Self Determination* at the 7th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences; she attended the same conference series the following year in Japan to deliver another paper, entitled *Lawlessness in an Indian Tribe as a Microcosm of a World Trend*. Freeman continued visiting and studying the Seminoles in Florida late into her career, making her last visit the year before her death.

Ethel Cutler Freeman passed away on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1972.

#### Sources Consulted

Letter to Mrs. Margaret Blaker, Archivist at the Smithsonian Institution's Anthropological Archives; Washington, D.C. from Ethel Cutler Freeman. Dated April 24, 1972. Located in vertical files, folders on Ethel Cutler Freeman, in the reading room of the National Anthropological Archives.

*Morristown Anthropologist; Mrs. Leon Freeman Likes Seminole Indians.* Newark Sunday News, Newark, New Jersey. February 16, 1947.

*New Vernon Woman, Indian Authority.* The Morris Observer, Morris Township, New Jersey. October 13, 1955.

Recorder Community Newspapers. <<http://www.recordernewspapers.com/>>  
Company History. <[http://www.recordernewspapers.com/company\\_history/](http://www.recordernewspapers.com/company_history/)>  
Accessed 3.26.2009

*She's 'Hooked' On Seminole Indians.* Leading Authority On That World, Daily Record, March 6, 1970.

*The Sentinel Visits – Indian Authority Mrs. Leon Freeman: Who Is Now Working To Rescue A Nation.* Sunday Sentinel, February 2, 1947.

## **Chronology**

- 1886 Born in Morristown, New Jersey.
- 1909 Married Leon S. Freeman.
- 1934 Began taking graduate courses at Columbia University in philosophy before changing to anthropology.
- 1936 Field work with the Arapaho and Shoshone.
- 1938 Joined American Anthropological Association.  
First became associated with American Museum of Natural History.
- 1939-43 Winter field work with Florida Seminoles.
- 1940-48 Special Field Assistant, American Museum of Natural History.
- 1943 Joined American Ethnological Society.
- 1944 Field work in Mexico searching for a lost tribe of Seminoles; studied the Mascogas, Papagos, and Kickapoo.
- 1945 Field work in New Mexico, studying the Pueblo and Navajo.
- 1946 Joined the Society of Women Geographers.  
Field work with the Navajo, Papago, and Hopi.
- 1946-48 Winter field work with Florida Seminoles.
- 1947 Field work with the Navajo, Papago, and Pueblo.
- 1947-57 Represented the American Civil Liberties Union on the National Coordinating Committee for Indian Affairs.
- 1947-66 Member Indian Rights Committee, American Civil Liberties Union.
- 1948 Appointed first female trustee of the American Institute of Anthropology.

- Became Field Associate, American Museum of Natural History.
- 1948-50 Member Hoover Commission for Reorganization of Government – Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- 1949 Field work in the Bahamas, studying native culture.
- 1950 Field work in Africa, studying the Zulu, Masai, and pygmy peoples.
- 1951 Winter field work with Florida Seminoles.
- 1952 Field work studying native cultures of the Virgin Islands and Haiti
- 1953-55 Winter field work with Florida Seminoles.
- 1955-57 Acting Chairman, American Civil Liberties Union.
- 1957 Field work studying Mexican Seminoles.
- 1957-58 Winter field work with Florida Seminoles.
- 1959 Attended annual meeting of American Anthropological Association in Mexico City.
- 1960-65 Winter field work with Florida Seminoles.
- 1963 Field work in Oklahoma, studying Seminoles
- 1964 Presented paper, “The Correlation between Directed Culture Change and Self Determination” VII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Moscow.
- 1968 Studied costumes of Portugal for American Museum of Natural History.
- 1965 Presented paper, “Lawlessness in an Indian Tribe as a Microcosm of a World Trend” VIII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan.
- 1970-71 Winter field work with Florida Seminoles.
- 1972 Field work in Portugal and the Azores.
- Died, July 14.

## Scope and Content Note

These papers, which span from 1886 to 1972, reflect the anthropological interests of Ethel Cutler Freeman. The papers in this collection include her notes and diaries, published articles, unfinished manuscripts, and source materials. The bulk of the collection is material relating to the Seminole Indians of Florida. From 1939 until 1971, Mrs. Freeman spent almost every winter with the Seminoles on their reservations in the Everglades. The major part of this series is the notes and diaries, which she kept during these field trips.

There is also material that represents her interest in cultural change. As a result of her long acquaintance with the Seminoles, she became interested in how different groups of American Indians and other cultures adapted to changes brought about by contact with modern society. The material relating to this interest is grouped into two sections: North American Indians and other cultures. Mrs. Freeman made several trips to the Southwest and Mexico to study such tribes as the Arapaho, Shoshone, Navajo, Pueblo, and Hopi. There is substantial information from these studies. She also made less extensive studies of various other cultures in the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and Haiti. In 1950, she studied tribal music and chants of several African tribes. The material from these studies forms the major portion of the series on other cultures.

The series of source materials consists of newspaper clippings and notes grouped by subject, including religion and the Seminoles. Mrs. Freeman grouped some of the material for use in several books, which she was writing and is so labeled. There is also the working material for many of the articles, which she wrote about the Seminoles and cultural change. The manuscripts for these articles, both published and unpublished, are grouped with the manuscripts of monographs, which Mrs. Freeman worked on during the thirty years of her studies.

The collection also contains several sound recordings made by Mrs. Freeman. One set contains chants and music of African tribes, which she studied. The other contains recordings of Josie Billie's discussion of religion and magic. There are also numerous photographs, negatives, and slides, which are unarranged. During rehousing, additional materials including index cards and notebooks from field trips were located and incorporated into the collection. These materials are located in boxes 84 and 106-112. A small amount of material relates to the Hoover Commission on Indian Affairs, of which Freeman was a member.

Correspondents include several Seminole Indians and government officials, personal acquaintances, organization, and associates of the American Museum of Natural History as well as Dean Amadon, Richard Archbold, Conrad M. Arensberg, Dana W. Atchley, Jacques Barzun, Ruth Benedict, Leonard J. Brass, Louis Capron, Frances Densmore, Margery S. Douglas, John W. Griffin, A.J. Hanna, Ronald F. Lee, Margaret Mead, Robert Cushman Murphy, Kenneth W. Porter, Harry L. Shapiro, Howard Sharp, Frank Speck, Charlton W. Tebean, and Clark Wissler.

## **Restrictions**

By Ethel Freeman's instructions, the collection was restricted for ten years dating from the receipt and signing of the release forms on October 12, 1972. Literary property rights to the unpublished materials in the collection were donated to the National Anthropological Archives.

## **Provenance**

The papers of Ethel Cutler Freeman were left to the National Anthropological Archives by the terms of her will. Her son, Leon Freeman, Jr., donated the collection to NAA in August 1972.

## **Extent**

54 linear feet (111 boxes, 1 manuscript folder, 17 sound recordings)

## **Processing Note**

Most of the updates to the finding aid in 2010 were formatting changes. The only substantive changes made to this document was the addition of a biographical note written by Lisa Labovitch and updates to the container list for *Series 11. Sound Recordings*. In 2009, the sound recordings were separated from the collection and moved to the audio cabinets. Loose notes were separated from the recordings and placed in a folder titled "[Audio ephemera]" and filed with the rest of the collection.

One box of unprocessed materials can be found at the end of the finding aid.

## Series Descriptions and Container List

### **Series I. Biographical Information and Miscellaneous Personal Papers, 1944-70**

0.75 linear feet

This series contains several narrative autobiographical sketches written for writing seminars. There is also biographical data compiled at the request of various groups. The series also contains lists of speeches and radio talks given at various times throughout FREEMAN's life. Some of the actual speeches are included. There is also some of her records from Columbia University and miscellaneous personal papers.

#### **Box 1**

Autobiographical sketches  
Talks, speeches, and interviews  
University records  
Miscellaneous personal papers

#### **Box 2**

Miscellaneous personal papers

### **Series II. Correspondence**

3 linear feet

This series is divided into three groups: anthropological colleagues, committees, and organizations of personal membership. It is arranged alphabetically within each group. With the exception of Leonard Brass and Richard Archbold of the Archbold Biological Station in Florida, none of the correspondence is extensive or carried on over any length of time. There is also correspondence in other series.

#### **Box 2**

Anthropological Colleagues (A-B)

#### **Box 3**

Anthropological Colleagues (B-M)

#### **Box 4**

Anthropological Colleagues (M-Z)  
Committee Correspondence

**Box 5**

Organizations of personal membership (A)

**Box 6**

Organizations of personal membership (A-N)

**Box 7**

Organizations of personal membership (N-S)

**Box 8**

Organizations of personal membership (S-Z)

**Series III. Manuscripts, 1941-68**

4.75 linear feet

The manuscripts in these series are divided into three sections: published articles; unpublished or unfinished articles; and unfinished monographs. The manuscripts of published articles are arranged by date of publication. The other two groups are arranged alphabetically by title. There are usually several drafts of the articles written at different times. Criticisms of the drafts by various people are grouped with the drafts. The section of monographs contains criticisms and chapter units as well as larger units. There are three main monographs: one on the Seminoles; one on Indians of the Southeast; and one on cultural change.

**Box 9**

Correspondence

Published articles (1941-44)

**Box 10**

Published articles (1944-64)

**Box 11**

Published articles (1964-68)

Unpublished articles

**Box 12**

Unpublished articles

**Box 13**

Unpublished articles

**Box 14**

Unpublished articles  
Unfinished monographs

**Box 15**

Unfinished monographs

**Box 16**

Unfinished monographs  
Collection of talks

**Box 17**

Collection of talks  
Criticisms and reviews by FREEMAN

**Box 18**

Criticisms and reviews by FREEMAN  
Advice and ideas on writing style

**Series IV. Source Material, 1934-70**

5 linear feet

This series consists of notes and newspaper clippings grouped by subject. The groups are course notes from Columbia University, 1934-36, 1957; notes labeled simply research notes and ideas, 1942-69; religion, 1967; the Seminoles, including trait lists and vocabularies, 1942-70; Southeast Indians, 1946, 1967-68; working materials for articles and monographs, 1942-63; and bibliographies.

**Box 19**

Columbia University course notes (1934-36, 1957)

**Box 20**

Research notes and ideas (1942-49)

**Box 21**

Research notes and ideas (1965-69)  
Religion (1967)

**Box 22**

Religion (1967)  
Seminoles

**Box 23**

Seminoles (1943-58)

**Box 24**

Seminoles (1958-63)

**Box 25**

Seminoles (1966-70)  
Trait List  
Vocabularies

**Box 26**

Vocabularies  
Southeast Indians (1946, 1967-68)

**Box 27**

Working material for articles and books (1942-63)

**Box 28**

Working material for articles and books (1963-66)  
Bibliographies

**Series V. Seminole Indians, 1939-71**

9.75 linear feet

The bulk of this series is the notes and diaries from FREEMAN's field trips among the Florida Seminoles. The notes and diaries are dated from 1939 to 1971. The rest of the series includes correspondence with government officials, nurses, school teachers and

others working with the Seminoles; letters, clippings and articles on several aspects of Seminole culture, arranged by subject; government material relating to Seminole claims and FREEMAN's proposals to government officials concerning handling of claims; reprints and other information on Florida's environment and history, and on the Everglades. The group of cultural materials includes a synopsis of Josie Billie's discussion of religion and magic, which Mrs. Freeman recorded in private sessions at the Archbold Biological Station in 1954.

**Box 29**

Correspondence (A-W)

**Box 30**

Correspondence (Y & General Inquiries)  
Culture

**Box 31**

Culture

**Box 32**

Culture

**Box 33**

Seminole claims and FREEMAN proposals  
Photo lectures  
History: Seminoles, Florida

**Box 34**

Florida environment  
Bibliographies

**Box 35**

Notes and diaries (1939-49)

**Box 36**

Notes and diaries (1940)

**Box 37**

Notes and diaries (1941-42)

**Box 38**

Notes and diaries (1942-44, 1946)

**Box 39**

Notes and diaries (1943-44, 1946)

**Box 40**

Notes and diaries (1946-47)

**Box 41**

Notes and diaries (1948)

**Box 42**

Notes and diaries (1951-53)

**Box 43**

Notes and diaries (1953-54)

**Box 44**

Notes and diaries (1954-55, 1957-58)

**Box 45**

Notes and diaries (1960-62)

**Box 46**

Notes and diaries (1962-64)

**Box 47**

Notes and diaries (1965, 1967, 1970)

**Box 48**

Notes and diaries (1971)

**Series VI. North American Indians, 1936-63**

4 .5 linear feet

The largest section of this series is also FREEMAN's notes and diaries from her field trips. Her studies involved the Arapaho, Shoshone, and Navajo in particular. There is also material on the Alaskan land question, general Indian problems, the Hoover Commission on Indian Affairs (of which she was a member), the Southwest Indians, and Oklahoma Seminoles. The rest of the series includes correspondence with government officials and organizations, information on culture and cultural change, and government materials in the form of policies, proposals, legislation, and official reports.

**Box 49**

Correspondence  
Culture and cultural change

**Box 50**

Culture and cultural change

**Box 51**

Culture and cultural change  
Government materials and proposals

**Box 52**

Government materials and proposals

**Box 53**

Southwest tribes  
Bibliographies

**Box 54**

Notes and diaries, Arapaho and Shoshone (1936)  
Notes and diaries, Southwest Indians (1945)  
Notes and diaries, Navajo (1945-48)

**Box 55**

Notes and diaries, Navajo (1945-48)

**Box 56**

Notes and diaries, Hoover Commission (1948)  
Notes and diaries, Alaskan Land Question (1947-49)  
Notes and diaries, General Indian Problems (1951-52)  
Notes and diaries, Oklahoma Indians (1963)

**Box 57**

Notes and diaries, Oklahoma Indians (1963)

**Series VII. Cultures other than North American Indian, 1946-68**

**2.75 linear feet**

The largest part of this series is the material from FREEMAN's 1950 field trip to study the cultures of several African tribal groups including the Zulu, Masai, and Pigmies. She was particularly interested in tribal music and chants. This series contains materials from studies of other cultures including Samoa, Haiti, the Bahamas and the Virgin Islands. Her interest on these trips was the correlation between different cultures.

**Box 58**

Anthropological theory  
Miscellaneous cultures

**Box 59**

Africa (1950-51)

**Box 60**

Africa (1950-51)

**Box 61**

Africa (1950-51)

**Box 62**

Africa (1950-51)  
Russia (1964)

**Box 63**

Russia (1964)

**Series VIII. Meetings, 1959-68**

0.75 linear feet

This series consists of materials gathered during three meetings which Freeman attended: the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Mexico City, 1959-60; the VII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Moscow, 1964; and the VIII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Japan, 1968.

**Box 63**

American Anthropological Association, Mexico City (1959-60)  
VII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Moscow  
(1964)

**Box 64**

VIII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Japan (1968)

**Series IX. Printed Materials, 1939-70**

2.5 linear feet

This series is arranged in three groups: articles by Freeman in final printed form; copies, reprints, and typescripts of articles by other persons; and newspaper clippings primarily concerned with the Seminoles.

**Box 65**

Articles published by Freeman

**Box 66**

Articles published by Freeman

Articles published by others

**Box 67**

Newsclippings: Florida Seminoles (A-Z)

**Box 68**

Newsclippings: U.S. Government and Florida Seminoles (1939-42)

Newsclippings: Development of Everglades and Florida Seminoles

Newsclippings: Everglades and Florida Seminoles

Newsclippings: Florida Seminoles, Environment and Problems

**Box 69**

Newsclippings: Florida Seminoles, Government and Organization

Newsclippings: Part I Seminole Political Organization: Part II Local History (1968-69)

**Series X. Pamphlets**

7 linear feet

This series contains a wide range of informational pamphlets relating to Indians, culture, environment and history.

**Box 70**

Seminoles

**Box 71**

Seminoles

**Box 72**

Indians other than Seminoles

**Box 73**

Indians other than Seminoles

Cultures other than North American Indian

**Box 74**

Cultures other than North American Indian

Cultural Change

**Box 75**

Archaeology

**Box 76**

Art

Ecology

Flora & Fauna

**Box 77**

Flora & Fauna  
Florida  
Education  
Health

**Box 78**

Florida's agriculture and industry  
Juvenile delinquency

**Box 79**

Juvenile delinquency  
Government policy

**Box 80**

Government policy  
History

**Box 81**

History  
Linguistics

**Box 82**

Music  
Religion  
Bibliographies

**Box 83**

Bibliographies  
Maps

**Series XI. Sound Recordings**

0.5 linear feet (6 reels, 11 phonographs)

Unarranged. Includes recordings of Josie Billie's discussion on religion and magic and African tribal chants and music.

**Manuscript folder 85**

Synopsis & notes on Josie Billie Recordings

**Audio Cabinets**

Josie Billie on religion and magic  
African tribal chants and music

**Series XII. Lists of Photographs**

0.5 linear feet

Several lists of photographs made by Freeman.

**Box 86**

Lists of photographs by Freeman

**Series XIII. Photographs**

10.5 linear feet

Photo albums, negatives, prints, and slides. Unarranged.

**Boxes 86-94**

Negatives, prints, etc.

**Boxes 95-105**

Photo Albums

**Series XIV. Index Cards**

3 linear feet

Bibliographies, Dictionaries, and Notes.

**Boxes 106-109**

**Boxes 110-111**

Bibliography

**Box 112**

Seminole/English & English/Seminole Dictionary

## **Unprocessed Materials**

### **Box 84**

Manuscripts

Scrapbook

Population & Material Culture

Notebooks from field trips