



JESUIT ARCHIVES &
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CLAUDE HEITHAUS PAPERS
1898-1997 [BULK 1937-1976]

MIS.5.005

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Collection Summary

Collection number: MIS.5.005

Repository Code: MoSIJA

Repository: Jesuit Archives & Research Center

Title: Claude Heithaus papers

Date [bulk]: 1937-1976

Date [inclusive]: 1898-1997

Extent: 1.35 linear feet (3 boxes)

Creator: Heithaus, Claude H.

Language of material: English

Abstract: Father Claude Heithaus, S.J., professor of Archeology and Classics, is best known for his work as an activist for racial equality in Saint Louis, as well as his contribution to efforts taken to desegregate Saint Louis University. Heithaus' papers document his life and career, and include Heithaus' Missouri Province personnel file, correspondence with related enclosures, sermons and essays, notebooks and notes, photographs, personal ephemera.

Processing history: Processed by Father William Faherty and Nancy Merz; Some processing completed by Saint Louis University Archives Staff. Additional processing by Alexandra M. Bisio in 2017.

Conditions governing access: This collection is open for research. Heithaus' Missouri Province personnel file is restricted until 2026.

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Preferred citation: [Identification of item], [Box number], [Folder number]. Claude Heithaus papers, MIS.5.005. Jesuit Archives & Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri. [Date accessed].

Father Claude Heithaus, S.J., professor of Archeology and Classics, is best known for his work as an activist for racial equality in Saint Louis and his contribution to desegregation efforts at Saint Louis University in the 1940s. Heithaus was born in Saint Louis on May 28, 1898. He attended Saint Louis University where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy in 1920. His undergraduate studies were briefly interrupted when he volunteered for service during the First World War. Heithaus finished his U.S. Army career with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

In 1920, Heithaus entered the Saint Stanislaus Jesuit Novitiate in Florissant, Missouri, and after his two-year novitiate, was placed on the faculty for a year as an instructor of Latin and Greek. From 1925 to 1928, Heithaus served as both the acting head of the Department of Classical Languages and the director of public relations at the University of Detroit. In 1928, Heithaus resumed his studies in Theology at Saint Louis University and was ordained into the priesthood in 1930.

In 1933, Heithaus was given the opportunity to study classical art and archaeology at University College London where he received his PhD in 1940. During his years in Europe, Heithaus traveled extensively throughout Europe photographing the classical collections of the continent's greatest museums. As part of his doctoral thesis, Heithaus made expeditions to Syria and Lebanon where he studied the remains of ancient temples.

Heithaus returned to Saint Louis in 1940, where he taught Classical Art and Archaeology at Saint Louis University. In addition to his teaching duties, Heithaus served as the director of university publications and publicity, and used his position to publicly press for the admission of African-American students to the university.

In 1944, he delivered a sermon to five-hundred students at Saint Francis Xavier (College) Church that declared that prejudice and discrimination against African-Americans were un-Christian aberrations. He induced the congregation to stand up and recite a pledge repudiating racial prejudice and promising to cooperate in whatever efforts would be made to bring about racial integration at Saint Louis University.

The fallout caused by this sermon resulted in Heithaus' transfer away from Saint Louis in 1945. He was first sent to Fort Riley, Kansas where he served as a military chaplain, and then to Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he joined the Department of Classical Languages. While in Milwaukee, he continued his work promoting interracial justice by serving on the Milwaukee Commission on Human Rights.

Heithaus finally returned to Saint Louis University in 1958. In addition to returning to his teaching post, he worked to establish the Museum of Western Jesuit Missions.

Claude Heithaus died on My 12, 1976.

Scope and content note

The papers of Father Claude Heithaus, S.J. document Heithaus' life and career as a member of the Society of Jesus, archeologist, college professor, and activist for racial equality. Material in this collection includes Heithaus' Missouri Province personnel file, correspondence with related enclosures, sermons and essays, notebooks and notes, photographs, and personal ephemera. Papers and writings of others related to Heithaus' work as an activist have also been included in this collection.

Heithaus' Missouri Province personnel file serves as basic record Heithaus' career as a member of the Society of Jesus, and includes' vital documents, correspondence with superiors, and biographical newspaper clippings. This file is closed for research until 2026. The correspondence and enclosures series consists of the personal and professional correspondence of Father Claude Heithaus, as well as topically related enclosures and documents. The sermons and essays series contains theological writings, travel stories, and academic presentations.

The notebooks and notes series contains notes on archeology and Heithaus' travels in the Middle East. The photographs and negatives series contain photographs both taken by and of Father Heithaus. Photos in this series include family photographs, portraits of Heithaus, event photographs, and travel photographs. The personal ephemera series contains personal mementos collected and kept by Father Claude Heithaus including library cards, museum passes, event fliers, and awards. Papers and writings of others contains essays and biographical information of individuals connected with the racial integration of Saint Louis University.

Arrangement note

The Claude Heithaus papers are arranged in seven series:

- Series 1. Personnel file, 1922-1984
- Series 2. Correspondence and enclosures, 1937-1978
- Series 3. Sermons and essays, 1941-1976
- Series 4. Notebooks and notes, 1939-1949
- Series 5. Photographs and negatives, circa 1898-1990s, undated
- Series 6. Personal ephemera, circa 1941-1959
- Series 7. Papers and writings of others, 1961, 1980-1997

Collection Contents

Series 1. Personnel file, 1922-1984

Scope and content note:

Created by the Office of the Provincial, Heithaus' Missouri Province personnel file serves as basic record Heithaus' career as a member of the Society of Jesus. This file includes Heithaus' vital documents and statistics, lists of placements, legal documents, correspondence with superiors, biographical newspaper clippings, and obituaries.

Arrangement note:

This series contains two files.

Access note:

Heithaus' Missouri Province personnel file is restricted until 2026.

Personnel file, 1922-1984

Box 5.0053: Folder 1-2

Series 2. Correspondence and enclosures, 1937-1978

Scope and content note:

The correspondence and enclosures series consists of the personal and professional correspondence of Father Claude Heithaus, as well as topically related enclosures and documents. General correspondence includes letters to and from Heithaus family members, other members of religious life, and letters regarding the establishment of the Museum of the Western Jesuit Missions in Florissant, Missouri.

Correspondence and enclosures also includes, letters written during the Second World War by archaeologist and art historian Bernard Ashmole and his wife, Dorothy.

Saint Louis University racial integration materials relate to the debates surrounding the acceptance of African-American students at Saint Louis University, and the aftermath of Father Heithaus' 1944 sermon supporting integration given at Saint Francis Xavier (College) Church. Correspondence with fellow Jesuits and civil rights activists, John and William Markoe, is included in this series.

Mary Ann Van Hoof Marian vision materials include correspondence and clippings regarding the debunking of Mrs. Mary Ann Van Hoof claim to have received nine visions of the Blessed Mother in her backyard in Necedah, Wisconsin between 1950 and 1956.

Arrangement note:

This series is arranged chronologically.

General correspondence, 1937-1978	Box 5.0053: Folder 3
Bernard and Dorothy Ashmole correspondence, 1939-1943	Box 5.0053: Folder 4
Saint Louis University racial integration materials, 1939-1961	Box 5.0053: Folder 4-9
Mary Ann Van Hoof Marian vision materials, 1950-1975	Box 5.0054: Folder 1-2

[Series 3. Sermons and essays, 1941-1976](#)

Scope and content note:

The sermons and essays series contains theological writings, travel stories, academic presentations, and remarks made by Heithaus during the celebration of his Jubilee in 1971.

Arrangement note:

This series contains one file.

Sermons and essays, 1941-1976	Box 5.0054: Folder 3
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[Series 4. Notebooks and notes, 1939-1949](#)

Scope and content note:

This series contains notes taken by Father Heithaus between 1939-1949. Most of these, particularly those notes taken in a set of seven alphabetically identified notebooks, are notes on archeology, archeological digs, and Heithaus' travels in the Middle East in the late 1930s.

Arrangement note:

This series is arranged alphabetically.

Archeology notebooks, 1939	Box 5.0054: Folder 4-6
Art and archeology, 1945-1949	Box 5.0054: Folder 7
Topics for travel stories, circa 1940	Box 5.0054: Folder 8

Series 5. Photographs and negatives, circa 1898-1990s, undated

Scope and content note:

The photographs and negatives series contain photographs both taken by and of Father Claude Heithaus. Family photographs include portraits of Heithaus' parents and siblings, as well as baby pictures of Heithaus himself. Several portraits of Heithaus, including some of Heithaus in his World War I military uniform, are included in this series. Several event photographs, including shots of Heithaus celebrating his Jubilee mass, are available. Heithaus himself took photographs while traveling in the Middle East in the late 1930s. Several photographs of his travels in Syria, and rolled negatives of travel photographs are preserved as part of this series. Copy negatives, most likely created by the Archives in the 1990s, have also been included in this series.

Arrangement note:

This series is arranged chronologically.

Family photographs, circa 1898-1971	Box 5.0054: Folder 9
Portraits, circa 1918-1972	Box 5.0054: Folder 10
Travel photographs, 1938	Box 5.0054: Folder 11
Events, 1948, 1972	Box 5.0054: Folder 12
Jubilee photographs, 1970 September	Box 5.0054: Folder 13
Copy negatives, circa 1990s	Box 5.0054: Folder 14
Negative roles, undated	Box 5.0054.5

Series 6. Personal ephemera, circa 1941-1959

Scope and content note:

This series contains personal mementos collected and kept by Father Claude Heithaus. These items include library cards, museum passes, and event fliers. Heithaus' honors metal from Saint Mary's College, Kansas is also included. Many of these items were kept together by Heithaus in a cigar box.

Arrangement note:

This series contains one folder.

Personal ephemera, circa 1941-1959

Box 5.0054: Folder 15

Series 7. Papers and writings of others, 1961, 1980-1997

Scope and content note:

This series contains essays, newspaper clippings, and biographical information of individuals connected with the racial integration of Saint Louis University. This material was most likely added to Heithaus' papers by Midwest Jesuit Archives staff members.

Arrangement note:

This series is arranged alphabetically.

Bond, Anita Lyons, 1980-1995

Box 5.0054: Folder 16

Floyd, Jane Aileen Gordon Kaiser, 1990, 1997

Box 5.0054: Folder 17

Holland, C. Denny. "The Saint Louis Story Retold," draft, 1961

Box 5.0054: Folder 18