

# Oral Histories of the Oregon State University Microbiology Department, 1964-1989

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Horner Museum.
<b>Title</b>	Oral Histories of the Oregon State University Microbiology Department
<b>Dates</b>	1964-1989 (inclusive) 1964 1989 1986-1987 (bulk) 1986 1987
<b>Quantity</b>	0.8 cubic feet, including 26 audiocassettes and 45 photographs, (3 boxes)
<b>Collection Number</b>	OH 24
<b>Summary</b>	The Oral Histories of the Oregon State University Microbiology Department recount the department's history through the perspective of Walter Bollen and Mabel Pernot. Bollen earned two degrees from Oregon Agricultural College prior to his beginning a career on the OSU microbiology faculty that spanned nearly sixty years. Pernot was the daughter of Emile F. Pernot - the father of the university's microbiology program - and the granddaughter of George Coote, an early campus horticulturist. The Pernot interviews discuss, at length, both the history of the department as well as the story of the Pernot and Coote families.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Oregon State University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives Research Center</a> Special Collections and Archives Research Center 121 The Valley Library Oregon State University Corvallis OR 97331-4501 Telephone: 541-737-2075 Fax: 541-737-8674 <a href="mailto:scarc@oregonstate.edu">scarc@oregonstate.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Collection is open for research.
<b>Languages</b>	English

---

## Historical Note

The first biology classes taught at Oregon Agricultural College were offered by the School of Physics in the 1876-77 academic year and included training on the use of microscopes. Bacteriology as a separate course was not made available until 1899 when Emile F. Pernot, a bacteriologist and photographer, began providing instruction in the discipline. Pernot also conducted many bacteriological studies on behalf of the Agricultural Experiment Station on topics ranging from contaminants in milk to diseases of goats and hogs to the production of clover. By 1909 Pernot had acquired an assistant and

fourteen courses formed the curriculum, as supported by the new Department of Bacteriology. Pernot left OAC in 1910 for a position as City Bacteriologist in Portland.

In 1912 T.D. Beckwith became head of the department and over the next handful of years, new study options came online in pharmacy bacteriology, immunity and vaccine therapy, zymology, and sewer and water bacteriology. In 1922 the unit was transferred administratively from the School of Agriculture to the new School of Basic Arts and Sciences. Bacteriology formally became a department in the School of Science in 1936; that same year, the staff of the Hygiene department was merged into Bacteriology.

Over the next three decades the department evolved in a number of ways, all the while growing steadily. In 1946 its name was changed to Bacteriology and Hygiene, and a graduate program was introduced. Marine bacteriology was added to the curriculum in 1953 and the department's name was changed yet again, to Microbiology and Hygiene, in 1961. From 1936 to 1965 the department's staff grew from 3 to 21 and its total class enrollment swelled from 167 to 496. By the mid-1960s all of the department's instruction and a portion of its research were administered by the School of Science, with the other portion overseen by the Agricultural Experiment Station.

Now located within the OSU College of Science, the Microbiology department's research agenda continues to serve the missions of both its parent college as well as that of the College of Agricultural Sciences. By the close of 2012, over 300 OSU students were majoring in microbiology and the department was home to 30 faculty and an equal number of graduate students.

Walter B. Bollen (1896-1989) was born in Portland and spent the majority of his life in Oregon. Bollen attended Oregon Agricultural College, receiving a bachelor's degree in horticulture in 1921 before earning a master's in bacteriology the following year. Bollen then moved on to Iowa State College, where he took a doctorate in soil fertility, awarded in 1924. Bollen returned to Corvallis in 1929, assuming a position as Associate Bacteriologist. Over the course of his career, Bollen served as both teaching faculty and research scientist affiliated with the Agricultural Experiment Station. Bollen's primary scholarly focus was legume inoculation for use in agricultural production. He retired from the university in 1965 but maintained an association with the Microbiology department up until his death in 1989.

Mabel E. Pernot (1900-1991) was the daughter of Emile F. Pernot and the granddaughter of George Coote. Born in Corvallis, Mabel moved with her family to Portland in 1910 before returning to Corvallis in 1925 to care for her ailing grandmother. Later in life, she worked as the OSU clothing and textile stock room manager from 1947 to her retirement in 1965.

Emile F. Pernot (1859-1927) was a bacteriologist and photographer who is considered to be the originator of microbiology at Oregon State University. Pernot taught the first bacteriology classes offered at Oregon Agricultural College before leaving Corvallis in 1910 for the position of City Bacteriologist in Portland, where he also founded Portland Bacteriological Laboratory. Pernot likewise served two long terms as State Bacteriologist, from 1903-1913 and again from 1916-1923. His research interests were wide-ranging, but perhaps his most important contributions were to the study of tuberculosis, particularly as it effects poultry.

George Coote (1842-1908), a native of England, emigrated directly to Corvallis in 1877, where he established himself as a farmer. In 1888 Coote accepted a position within Oregon Agricultural College's Department of Horticulture - eventually becoming its chair - which he maintained until months before his death in November 1908. During his tenure, Coote was responsible for the college's grounds and greenhouses, and also published several Extension Service Bulletin articles on fruits, flowers, vegetables and nuts.

## Content Description

The Horner Museum expressed an interest in conducting oral history interviews with OSU Microbiology Department staff Walter B. Bollen and Paul R. Elliker as early as 1979. This interest was not pursued until 1986 when John L. Fryer, then chair of the Microbiology department, approached the museum with a proposal that interviews be carried out with Bollen and Mabel Pernot. (Fryer shared the museum's desire that Elliker be interviewed, but none appear to have been conducted with him.) In 1986 and 1987, Horner Museum oral historian Jennifer Lee recorded three interviews with Walter Bollen and eight with Mabel Pernot. In both instances Lee sought to document the full history of the OSU Microbiology department and its antecedents as well as the biographies of her interviewees. In the case of Mabel Pernot, Lee expanded the scope of the project to capture a larger history of the Pernot and Coote families. Pernot also shared lengthy recollections of her interactions in the early 1900s with the Siletz tribe Native Americans at the Oregon Coast.

The resulting collection consists of interviews recorded to audiocassette (including duplicate copies of most interviews); project files consisting of correspondence, historical research materials and interview notes; draft transcripts; a final transcript of the Pernot interviews in typescript form; and multiple copies of the Bollen interviews published by the Horner Museum as a monograph. The collection also contains signed permissions forms and photographic slides, negatives and proofs. The photographic images include 35-mm slide portraits of Walter Bollen and Mabel Pernot taken in 1986-1987. Also included are negatives and black and white proofs of Microbiology department staff, activities and apparatus (including fermentation equipment) taken by Robert W. Henderson in 1964 and 1967.

The Bollen monograph features a table of contents and an introduction that incorporates a capsule biography of Walter Bollen. The publication is also divided up into chapters titled: "Early Life - Family, Employment and Education"; "College Studies and Military Duties"; "University Employment During the Twenties and Thirties"; and "Microbiology Research, Teaching and Students." The finalized Pernot typescript is likewise coupled with an introduction and is divided into chapters: "Pernot Family"; "Coote Family"; "Native Americans at the Coast"; "The Pernots in Corvallis and the Bacteriology Department at O.A.C."; "Friends and Colleagues"; "The Move to Portland (1910), Emile Becomes City and State Bacteriologist and Professor"; "Grandfather George Coote - Gardner and Professor at O.A.C."; "Mabel Works in Portland and Returns to Corvallis (1925); and "Mabel Works for Whiteside and O.S.U."

## Use of the Collection

### Preferred Citation

Preferred Citation

Courtesy of the Oral Histories of the Oregon State University Microbiology Department (OH 24), Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries

## Administrative Information

### Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series: I. Audiocassettes; II. Transcripts and Project Files. Each series is arranged chronologically or by material type, as appropriate. An alphabetical view of the oral history interviewees whose recordings and transcripts are held in this collection is as follows:

**Bollen, Walter**

Three interviews: August 8, 1986; August 25, 1986; October 16, 1987

**Pernot, Mabel**

Eight interviews: July 28, 1986; August 4, 1986; August 6, 1986; March 25, 1987; March 26, 1987; October 26, 1987; October 30, 1987; November 13, 1987

## Acquisition Information

### Acquisition Information

The collection was originally created by the staff of the Horner Museum with support from the OSU Microbiology department. The materials were transferred to the University Archives upon the closure of the Horner Museum in 1996 and later described as part of the Horner Museum Oral History Collection (OH 10). In 2013 the materials were separated out and described as their own collection.

## Processing Note

### Processing Note

Arrangement and description by Chris Petersen

## Related Materials

### Related Materials

An additional oral history interview with Mabel Pernot is held in the [College of Home Economics Oral Histories \(OH 11\)](#) and photographs of the Pernot and Coote families, many taken by Emile Pernot, are available in the [Emile Pernot Photographs \(P 230\)](#) and [Pernot Family Photograph Collection \(P 220\)](#). Additional photographs taken by Emile Pernot are held in the [College of Agricultural Sciences Photographs \(P 036\)](#). Specific files devoted to Emile Pernot, George Coote and the OSU Microbiology Department are held in the [Oregon State University Memorabilia Collection](#). A publication titled *Under the Microscope: One Hundred Years of Microbiology at Oregon State University*, authored by Jim Fisher, is available in the OSU Libraries general collection as well as SCARC's History of Science book collection.

The Microbiology Department Motion Picture Films ([FV P 117](#)), Photographs ([P 117](#)) and Records ([RG 191](#)) further document the activities of the department. Likewise, SCARC holds the personal papers of a number of OSU Microbiology faculty including [Arthur W. Anderson](#), [Paul R. Elliker](#), [John L. Fryer](#), [Richard Y. Morita](#) and [William E. Sandine](#).

---

## Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

### I: Audiocassettes, 1986-1987

26 items

Horner Museum accession numbers are included with each set of audiocassettes. All interviews were conducted by Jennifer Lee. Eleven of the fifteen recordings created for the project were duplicated by the project team and have been arranged into this series alongside the originals.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<b>Box</b>		
1	Bollen, Walter Horner accession numbers 986-1-84a-b, including two duplicate cassettes.	August 8, 1986
1	Bollen, Walter Horner accession numbers 986-1-84c-d, including two duplicate cassettes.	August 25, 1986
1	Bollen, Walter Horner accession number 987-1-84e.	October 16, 1987
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession numbers 986-1-83a-b, including two duplicate cassettes.	July 28, 1986
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession numbers 986-1-83c-d, including two duplicate cassettes.	August 4, 1986
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession numbers 986-1-83e-f, including two duplicate cassettes.	August 6, 1986
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession number 986-1-83g.	March 25, 1987
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession number 986-1-83h.	March 26, 1987
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession number 986-1-83i.	October 26, 1987
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession number 986-1-83j.	October 30, 1987; November 4, 1986
1	Pernot, Mabel Horner accession number 986-1-83k.	November 13, 1987

## II: Transcripts and Project Files, 1964-1989

11 folders

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
2.1	Project Notes	1979-1987
2.2	Interview Notes and Historical File: Bollen, Walter Folder includes paper titled "History of the Department of Microbiology at Oregon State University," written by Bollen and other OSU Microbiology staff, circa 1967.	1967-1989
2.3	Draft Interview Transcripts: Bollen, Walter	1986-1987
2.4	Monograph: <i>An Oral History with Walter B. Bollen: Soil Microbiologist, Teacher, Native Oregonian</i> , by Jennifer A. Lee	1989
3.1	Interview Notes and Historical File: Pernot, Mabel Folder includes materials documenting the nomination of the Pernot House to the National Register of Historic Places.	1970-1987
3.2	Draft Transcript: Pernot, Mabel	1986-1987
3.3	Draft Transcript: Pernot, Mabel	1986-1987
3.4	Draft Transcript: Pernot, Mabel	1986-1987
3.5	Final Transcript: Pernot, Mabel	1987
3.6	Signed Permission Forms	1986
3.7	Photographic Slides, Proofs and Negatives Contents include 35-mm slide portraits of Walter Bollen and Mabel Pernot taken in 1986-1987. Also included are negatives and black and white proofs of Microbiology Department staff, activities and apparatus (including fermentation equipment) taken by Robert W. Henderson in 1964 and 1967.	1964-1987

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Bacteriology--History.

Siletz Indians -- Oregon, Western.

Oral Histories of the Oregon State University Microbiology Department, 1964-1989  
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv33972>

**Personal Names :**

Coote, George, 1842-1908.

Pernot, E. F. (Emile Francis), 1859-

**Corporate Names :**

Oregon State University. Department of Horticulture--History.

Oregon State University. Department of Microbiology--History.

**Family Names :**

Pernot family.

**Form or Genre Terms :**

Film negatives.

Oral histories (document genres)

Photographic prints.

Slides.

**Other Creators :****Personal Names :**

Bollen, Walter Beno, 1896-

(interviewee)

Henderson, Robert W. (Robert Wesley), 1914-

(creator)

Lee, Jennifer A.

(creator)

Pernot, Mabel.

(interviewee)

Finding aid prepared by Chris Petersen.

2013



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Creative Commons Licenses in Archives West:

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/cc-attr.shtml>