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## Guide to the Papers of Joseph B. Koepfli, 1930-1983

### Collection number: Consult repository

Archives

California Institute of Technology  
Pasadena, California

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Joseph B. Koepfli papers,

**Date (inclusive):** 1930-1983

**Collection number:** Consult repository

**Creator:** Koepfli, Joseph Blake

**Extent:** 1.25 linear ft.

**Repository:** California Institute of Technology. Archives.  
Pasadena, California 91125

**Abstract:** Joseph B. Koepfli (b. 1904) was research associate in chemistry at Caltech from 1932 to 1971. His field of study was organic chemistry, principally alkaloids and other physiologically active substances such as adrenalin and insulin. He was trained in pharmacology and during World War II worked on developing antimalarial drugs. Koepfli's papers document a portion of his chemical research as well as his role as a science adviser to the U.S. State Department.

**Language:** English

### Access

The collection is open for research. Researchers must apply in writing for access.

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### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item, box and file number], Papers of Joseph B. Koepfli. Archives, California Institute of Technology.

### Acquisition Information

The original donation of the Koepfli papers by Dr. Koepfli in January 1987 comprises the first one and one-half boxes of the collection. A second donation was made by Dr. Koepfli through the Chemistry Division in August 2000. The two donations were not integrated; the second was added on to the collection, beginning with Box 2, file 6.

### Biography

Joseph Blake Koepfli was born February 5, 1904, in Los Angeles. His father, Joseph Otto Koepfli (b. 1866), was a prominent businessman and lawyer in Los Angeles. The family was of Swiss extraction on the father's side, and Norwegian on the mother's, and consequently they spent much time traveling in Europe in the years between Joseph's birth and World War I. Joseph and his sister Hortense were privately educated. Eventually Joseph was sent to the Harvard School in Los Angeles. He then attended Stanford University, where he majored in chemistry (BA 1924, MA 1925). In 1925 he enrolled at Oxford and subsequently received his PhD in chemistry there in 1928.

Koepfli returned to the US to take up a fellowship at Caltech for the year 1928-1929. As an organic chemist, his interests were mainly in natural products such as alkaloids, which were physiologically active. Beginning in January 1930, Koepfli began working under John J. Able at Johns Hopkins University. Able was renowned for his isolation of, first, adrenalin, and later, insulin. Koepfli's work with him centered on the posterior pituitary, and he was appointed instructor in pharmacology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. By 1932, Koepfli had returned to Caltech to accept a position as research associate because, according to his own memoir, he did not like teaching. He worked principally in plant hormones and collaborated with Dr. Seeley W. Mudd on cancer research. He also patented, with Linus Pauling and Dan Campbell, a blood substitute called oxypoly gelatin.

With the beginning of World War II, Koepfli was requested to work on antimalarial drugs. After the war (1948) he was invited by the Department of State to serve for a year as a foreign service reserve officer and scientific attaché in London. Upon returning to Caltech he was again called to government service in the State Department as a science advisor. He continued to keep ties with Washington in various advisory capacities, including connections with NATO, the first President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) under Eisenhower, and UNESCO.

Joseph Koepfli retired from Caltech in 1971.

### Scope and Content of Collection

The original portion of the collection relates mainly to Dr. Koepfli's involvement with government agencies. One file on Linus Pauling was closed until Dr. Pauling's death in 1994. The second group of materials, beginning at Box 2, file 6, concerns principally Koepfli's work on the antimalarial plant *Dichroa febrifuga*. Of particular interest are the lab notebooks of his graduate student collaborators and the correspondence with them and with chemists at Eli Lilly and Company. The bulk of the papers fall into the date span of the 1940s - 1950s.

### Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection.

Koepfli, Joseph Blake

California Institute of Technology

Chemistry, organic

Pharmacology

Chemists

- Joseph B. Koepfli Oral History with Elizabeth Hodes (1985)
- Caltech Archives Historical Files

**Correspondence**

	<b>Department of State</b>
Box 1, Folder 1	<b>International Resources Division 1947; Scientific Officer, US Embassy, London 1947-1948; early science attachés 1944-1945</b>
	<b>Science and Technology</b>
Box 1, Folder 2	<b>1949-1954</b>
Box 1, Folder 3	<b>1955-1984</b>
Box 1, Folder 4	<b>1945-1951 [printed matter only]</b>
	<b>North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)</b>
Box 1, Folder 5	<b>1957</b>
Box 1, Folder 6	<b>1958-1965</b>
	<b>President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC)</b>
Box 1, Folder 7	<b>1958-1960</b>
Box 1, Folder 8	<b>1961-1965</b>
Box 1, Folder 9	<b>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1960, 1964-1968</b>
Box 1, Folder 10	<b>National Academy of Sciences (NAS), Committee on International Organizations and Programs (ACIOP) 1962-1967</b>
Box 2, Folder 1	<b>Linus Pauling 1950-1983</b>
Box 2, Folder 2	<b>H. P. Robertson Memorial Lecture 1962-1966</b>

**Printed Material**

Box 2, Folder 3	<b>Korean War; germ warfare 1953</b>
Box 2, Folder 4	<b>McCarthy period (State Department)</b>
Box 2, Folder 5	<b>Reprints by Koepfli; Koepfli and others</b>

**Miscellaneous lab notebooks**

Box 2, Folder 6	<b>Rauwolfia caffra, preliminary experiments 1930-1931</b>
Box 2, Folder 7	<b>Indole synthesis [1940s?]</b>
Box 2, Folder 8	<b>Research problems [includes indole experiments] 1939-1942</b>

**Dichroa febrifuga research (antimalarial research)**

Box 3, Folders 1-3 **Lab notebooks of Brockman, Mead, Moffat, Phillips 1947-1952**

**Physical Description:** [3 notebooks]

Box 3, Folder 4 **Reprints 1947-1950**

Box 3, Folder 5 **Manuscript, "Procedure for isolating alkaloids from Dichroa febrifuga"n.d.**

Box 3, Folder 6 **Report, USPHS Antimalarial Grant 1947**

**Correspondence**

Box 3, Folder 7 **Brockman, John 1948-1950**

Box 3, Folder 8 **Chen, K. K. (Eli Lilly) 1947-1951**

Box 3, Folder 9 **Mead, James F. 1948**

Box 3, Folder 10 **Moffat, James 1950-1952**

Box 3, Folder 11 **Phillips, Robert 1951-1953**

Box 3, Folder 12 **Miscellaneous**

**Chou, T. Q. 1949**

**Coatney, Robert 1950**

**Fiske, H. H. (Eli Lilly) 1949-1950**

**Schmidt, L. H. 1949-1951**

**Van Tamelen, E. E. 1956**