



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Records, 1897-1918

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Records
Identifier:	Record Unit 55
Date:	1897-1918
Extent:	11.00 cu. ft. (22 document boxes)
Creator::	Smithsonian Institution. Assistant Secretary in charge of the United States National Museum
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 55, Smithsonian Institution, Assistant Secretary in charge of the United States National Museum, Records

Historical Note

The history of the office of Assistant Secretary can be traced to January 26, 1847 when the Smithsonian Board of Regents approved the nomination of Charles C. Jewett, of Brown University, for the position of Assistant Secretary, acting as Librarian. On July 5, 1850 the Board resolved ". . . that the Secretary be authorized to appoint an assistant secretary in the department of natural history, to take charge of the museum, and to render such other assistance as the Secretary may require . . ." Shortly thereafter, Spencer F. Baird was appointed to the position. During various periods of time, the Assistant Secretary was also in charge of publications, exchanges, and other areas. Incumbents included: (1) Spencer F. Baird, 1850-1878; (2) George Brown Goode, 1881-1896, including the years 1881-1887 when he served as assistant director of the museum without the title of Assistant Secretary; (3) Charles D. Walcott, Acting Assistant Secretary, 1897-1898; (4) Richard Rathbun, 1897-1918. During certain periods of time, the business of the office was administered by the Executive Curator, Frederick William True.

Richard Rathbun's (1852-1918) association with the Smithsonian Institution began in 1873 when Spencer F. Baird appointed him volunteer assistant in the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries (USCFF). In 1878, Rathbun was appointed scientific assistant in the USCFF and detailed to New Haven, Connecticut to work on the collection of marine invertebrates in the custody of Addison Emery Verrill. He was transferred to Washington in 1880 and the following year was appointed honorary curator of the Department of Marine Invertebrates in the U. S. National Museum (USNM), a position he continued to hold until 1914. He continued his concurrent duties with the USCFF and USNM until 1896, when he accepted appointment to the position of Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, in charge of Office and Exchanges. After the resignation of Charles D. Walcott as Assistant Secretary, in charge of the National Museum in 1898, Rathbun's duties were revised to include certain aspects of museum administration. During this time the Executive Curator, Frederick William True was the officer in immediate

charge of the museum. In January, 1901, Rathbun was made Assistant Secretary, in charge of the National Museum, in which capacity he remained until his death in 1918. On the death of Secretary Samuel P. Langley in February, 1906, Rathbun assumed the duties of Acting Secretary until the election of Charles D. Walcott in 1907. Major accomplishments of Rathbun's Assistant Secretarial years included the completion of the Children's Room of the Smithsonian Institution, 1901; the development of the National Gallery of Art, 1904-1910 (after 1937 known as the National Collection of Fine Arts); and the construction of the new National Museum building completed in 1911.

Descriptive Entry

This record unit consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence and various other records compiled during Richard Rathbun's career as Assistant Secretary. Descriptions of the records are included as part of the series descriptions.

For other records of Richard Rathbun see Record Units 79, 80, 189, 192, 201, and 7078.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Museum buildings
- Museums -- Administration
- Museums -- Collection management

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white negatives
- Manuscripts
- Nitrate materials

Names:

- Goode, G. Brown (George Brown), 1851-1896
- Langley, S. P. (Samuel Pierpont), 1834-1906
- National Collection of Fine Arts (U.S.)
- National Museum Building
- Rathbun, Richard, 1852-1918
- Smithsonian Institution Building. Children's Room
- Smithsonian Institution. Assistant Secretary in Charge of Office and Exchanges
- True, Frederick William, 1858-1914
- United States National Museum
- Walcott, Charles D., (Charles Doolittle), 1850-1927

Container Listing

Series 1: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1897-1918.

This series consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence (mostly copies) compiled by Richard Rathbun while serving as Assistant Secretary, in charge of Office and Exchanges (1897-1900) and Assistant Secretary, in charge of the United States National Museum (1901-1918). Most of the correspondence is routine, and deals with administrative policy, appropriations, USNM staff, museum publications, and exhibits. The correspondence is directed mostly to USNM administrative officers, with lesser amounts to scientific staff members and other correspondents. Subjects of special interest include the construction of the new National Museum building completed in 1911; the development of the National Gallery of Art; Samuel P. Langley's aerodrome experiments; Gerrit Smith Miller's investigation of European museums; Charles D. Walcott's paleontological field work in the Canadian Rockies, and the Smithsonian-Roosevelt African Expedition of 1909. A smaller amount of confidential correspondence with museum officials, scientific associates, and personal friends is also contained in this series. The records in this series are arranged alphabetically, and chronologically thereunder.

Box 1

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Box 1 of 22 | Folder 1 Abbot - Adee |
| Box 1 of 22 | Folders 2-3 Adler, Cyrus, 1897-1917 |
| Box 1 of 22 | Folder 4 Aero - American |
| Box 1 of 22 | Folder 5 Andrews - Ayres |
| Box 1 of 22 | Folder 6 Bain - Beeson |
| Box 1 of 22 | Folder 7 Belot - Benedict |
| Box 1 of 22 | Folder 8 Benjamin, Marcus, 1901-1917 |

Box 2

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Box 2 of 22 | Folder 1 Berg - Brinker |
| Box 2 of 22 | Folder 2 Brockett, Paul, 1902-1917 |
| Box 2 of 22 | Folder 3 Brown - Bryan |
| Box 2 of 22 | Folder 4 Bryant, Harry S. |
| Box 2 of 22 | Folder 5 Bryant, Thomas - Bushnell |

Box 2 of 22 Folder 6 Caffey - Church
Box 2 of 22 Folder 7 Clark, A. Howard, 1897-1911
Box 2 of 22 Folder 8 Clark, Austin H. - Comparette
Box 2 of 22 Folder 9 Concklin - Cowles

Box 3

Box 3 of 22 Folder 1 Cox - Curran
Box 3 of 22 Folder 2 Dabney - Desbarats
Box 3 of 22 Folder 3 Dibrell - Dyer
Box 3 of 22 Folder 4 Eastman - Eynon
Box 3 of 22 Folder 5 Fagan - Frye
Box 3 of 22 Folder 6 Gallagher - Geare, Randolph Iltyd, 1897-1910
Box 3 of 22 Folders 7-8 Geare, Randolph Iltyd, 1911-1916

Box 4

Box 4 of 22 Folder 1 Giglioli - Guggenheim
Box 4 of 22 Folder 2 Hackett - Hitchcock
Box 4 of 22 Folder 3 Hodge - Holm
Box 4 of 22 Folders 4-7 Holmes, William Henry, 1897-1917
Box 4 of 22 Folder 8 Hooper - Houghton
Box 4 of 22 Folder 9 Howard - Hyatt

Box 5

Box 5 of 22 Folder 1 Indiana - Julian-James
Box 5 of 22 Folder 2 Karr - Langley, John W.

Box 5 of 22 Folders 3-8 Langley, Samuel P., 1897-1898

Box 6

Box 6 of 22 Folders 1-7 Langley, Samuel P., 1899-1900

Box 7

Box 7 of 22 Folders 1-6 Langley, Samuel P., 1901-1905

Box 7 of 22 Folder 7 Latham - Lewton

Box 7 of 22 Folder 8 Leyon - Lyon

Box 7 of 22 Folder 9 McCreary - Marvin

Box 7 of 22 Folder 10 Mason, Otis Tufton, 1899-1908

Box 8

Box 8 of 22 Folder 1 Mason, William E. - Maynard

Box 8 of 22 Folder 2 Mearns - Merriam

Box 8 of 22 Folders 3-4 Merrill, George P., 1898-1917

Box 8 of 22 Folder 5 Meyer, A. B. - Meyer, H. H. B.

Box 8 of 22 Folder 6 Michael - Mixter

Box 8 of 22 Folder 7 Moffat - Myers

Box 8 of 22 Folder 8 National Academy of Sciences - Nutting

Box 8 of 22 Folder 9 Olmsted - Ottawa

Box 8 of 22 Folder 10 Padgett - Philosophical Society of Washington

Box 9

Box 9 of 22 Folder 1 Picaco - Putnam

Box 9 of 22 Folder 2 Quesada - Ravenel, Gaillard

Box 9 of 22 Folders 3-9 Ravenel, William de C., 1902-1913

Box 10

Box 10 of 22 Folder 1 Ravenel, William de C., 1914-1917

Box 10 of 22 Folder 2 Rea - Riemer

Box 10 of 22 Folder 3 Robbins - Roosevelt

Box 10 of 22 Folder 4 Rose - Royal

Box 10 of 22 Folder 5 Salsbury - Scudder

Box 10 of 22 Folder 6 Shandelle - Stebbing

Box 10 of 22 Folder 7 Stejneger, Leonhard, 1904-1917

Box 10 of 22 Folder 8 Stephens - Sylvester

Box 10 of 22 Folder 9 Tassin - True, Alfred Charles

Box 10 of 22 Folder 10 True, Frederick William, 1897-1898

Box 11

Box 11 of 22 Folders 1-5 True, Frederick William, 1899-1914

Box 11 of 22 Folder 6 True, Mrs. Frederick William - Wagoner

Box 11 of 22 Folders 7-9 Walcott, Charles D., 1897-1909

Box 12

Box 12 of 22 Folders 1-6 Walcott, Charles D., 1910-1917

Box 12 of 22 Folder 7 Waldren - Watkins

Box 12 of 22 Folder 8 Weber - Willige

Box 12 of 22 Folder 9 Willis - Wolfe

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Folder 10 Wood - Zepin

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Series 2: OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, 1898-1907, 6 BOUND LETTERPRESS BOOKS.

This series consists of bound letterpress books containing copies of outgoing correspondence compiled by Richard Rathbun while serving as Assistant Secretary, in charge of Office and Exchanges (1898-1900) and Assistant Secretary, in charge of the United States National Museum (1901-1907). The correspondence is both personal and official in nature. Two distinct types of personal correspondence are found in this series: (1) genuinely personal material concerning business transactions, family matters, and the like; (2) correspondence which to the reader may seem like official museum business, but to Richard Rathbun held a place of confidential importance. A good example is the voluminous quantity of correspondence regarding Samuel P. Langley's aerodrome experiments that is found in the personal letterpress books. There also exists a large number of letters of introduction, acknowledgments of publications received, and other routine correspondence. The official correspondence is mostly routine and deals with administrative policy, USNM staff, museum publications, and exhibits. Of special interest is correspondence with foreign and domestic museum directors concerning museum planning and construction. Pages 1-83 of volume 4 contain correspondence entitled "Personal - Official" and consists mostly of correspondence directed to Samuel P. Langley. The letterpress books in this series are arranged according to nature of correspondence (personal or official), and chronologically thereunder. Each volume (except No. 1) is alphabetically indexed.

Box 13

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Box 13 of 22 | Volume 1 Personal Correspondence, July 28, 1898 - May 21, 1901 |
| Box 13 of 22 | Volume 2 Personal Correspondence, May 23, 1901 - January 4, 1904 |
| Box 13 of 22 | Volume 3 Personal Correspondence, December 3, 1903 -November 21, 1905 |

Box 14

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|--------------|--|
| Box 14 of 22 | Volume 4 Pages 1-83. Personal - Official Correspondence, June 25, 1900 - October 2, 1902 |
| Box 14 of 22 | Pages 84-493. Personal Correspondence, November 22, 1905 - December 25, 1907 |
| Box 14 of 22 | Volume 5 Official Correspondence, September 24, 1900 -June 22, 1904 |
| Box 14 of 22 | Volume 6 Official Correspondence, June 7, 1904 - February 15, 1907 |

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Series 3: REPORTS ON EUROPEAN MUSEUMS, 1904 & 1907.

In 1903, Congress authorized the Board of Regents to begin construction of a new National Museum building. Shortly thereafter, Assistant Secretary Richard Rathbun instructed certain USNM staff members (who were in Europe on prior business) to visit museums and make studies which might help in the construction and installation of the new National Museum. This series consists of reports on European museums submitted by William Henry Holmes (1904) and Gerrit Smith Miller, Jr. (1904 & 1907) and various publications concerning European museum collected by Holmes.

Box 15

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Box 15 of 22 | Folders 1-4 "Report of Studies of European Museums Made During the Summer of 1904," by William Henry Holmes. 198 pages. |
| Box 15 of 22 | Folders 5-8 "Report on the Museums of Leiden, Holland" by Gerrit Smith Miller, Jr., 1904. 62 pages. (Original manuscript and one typewritten copy) |
| Box 15 of 22 | Folder 9 "Report of Mr. Gerrit Smith Miller, Jr. on the Museums of Spain visited by him in 1907." Includes photographs. |
| Box 15 of 22 | Folder 10 Publications concerning European Museums collected by William Henry Holmes. |

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Series 4: REQUESTS FOR AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF RECEIPT OF UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM BULLETIN #70, THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART , BY RICHARD RATHBUN, 1909. JANUARY- APRIL, 1910.

In 1909 the USNM published bulletin #70, The National Gallery of Art , by Richard Rathbun. The work provided a historical sketch of the National Museum's role in the field of fine arts and a description of the collections contained in the newly developed gallery. This series consists of incoming correspondence containing requests for and acknowledgments of receipt of bulletin #70. Correspondents include scientific associates, museums, art galleries, colleges and universities, congressmen, and personal friends. The records in this series are arranged alphabetically.

Box 16

Box 16 of 22	Folder 1 Abel - Cullum
Box 16 of 22	Folder 2 Dall - Julian-James
Box 16 of 22	Folder 3 Kahn - Notre Dame University
Box 16 of 22	Folder 4 Oberlin College - Rylands
Box 16 of 22	Folder 5 St. Louis - Zurich

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Series 5: HISTORICAL RESEARCH FILE, 1897-1918.

This series consists of material, compiled by Richard Rathbun, documenting the history of the Smithsonian Institution and U. S. National Museum. The bulk of material consists of administrative, divisional, and general histories. Correspondence, newspaper clippings, publications, and typescripts exist in small quantities. In 1906, Rathbun instructed each curator and museum officer to prepare a historical sketch of his division or office. Several of these sketches are contained in this series. Other histories consist of excerpts from SI and USNM annual reports. Materials of special interest include correspondence, newspaper clippings, and various other records concerning the Children's Room of the Smithsonian and several histories prepared by the museum staff. The material in this series is arranged alphabetically, by subject.

Box 16

- Box 16 of 22 Folder 6 Administration - Historical sketch of administrative and scientific divisions, 1880-1912.
- Box 16 of 22 Folder 7 Administration - Historical sketch of the administration of the USNM, undated.
- Box 16 of 22 Folder 8 Administration - Historical sketch of the offices of Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and Acting Secretary, 1846-1906.
- Box 16 of 22 Folder 9 Cataloging of Specimens - USNM regulations, undated.
- Box 16 of 22 Folder 10 Chemistry, USNM - Historical sketch, undated.

Box 17

- Box 17 of 22 Folders 1-13 Children's Room of the Smithsonian Institution. Includes correspondence (1898-1916), newspaper clippings, articles and publications, labels for ornithological exhibits, and excerpts from annual reports.

Box 18

- Box 18 of 22 Folder 1 Department of Living Animals, USNM - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1881-1889.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 2 Department of Recent Plants, USNM - Historical sketch, undated.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 3 Disbursing Agent, Office of - Historical sketch by Washington Irving Adams, 1906.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 4 Division of Comparative Anatomy, USNM - Historical sketch, 1906.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 5 Division of Correspondence and Documents, USNM - Historical sketch by Randolph Iltyd Geare, 1906.

- Box 18 of 22 Folder 6 Division of History, USNM - Historical sketch by A. Howard Clark, 1906.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 7 Division of History, USNM - Report on the Glover Collection of Chinese Coins by Paul Edmund Beckwith, 1897.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 8 Division of Insects, USNM - Historical sketch, undated.
- Box 18 of 22 Folders 9-10 Division of Insects, USNM - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1881-1913.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 11 Division of Insects, USNM - Historical sketch by Leland Ossian Howard, 1906, including "An Account of the Collection in the order Coleoptera" by Eugene Amandus Schwarz; "An Account of the Collection in the order Diptera" by Daniel William Coquillett; "An Account of the Collection in the order Hymenoptera" by William Harris Ashmead.
- Box 18 of 22 Folder 12 Division of Insects, USNM - Retrospective by Charles Valentine Riley.
- Box 19
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 1 Division of Marine Invertebrates, USNM - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1882-1898.
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 2 Division of Medicine, USNM - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1881-1911.
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 3 Division of Medicine, USNM - Historical sketch by James M. Flint, undated.
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 4 Division of Medicine, USNM - Historical sketch, undated.
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 5 Division of Medicine, USNM - Digest of Correspondence, 1904-1916.
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 6 Division of Mollusks, USNM - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1881-1898.
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 7 Division of Paleobotany, USNM - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1881-1911.
- Box 19 of 22 Folder 8 Department of Reptiles. Historical Report to 1866 by Henry C. Yarrow.

Box 19 of 22 Folder 9 Division of Reptiles and Batrachians, USNM- Historical Sketch, 1881-1906.

Box 19 of 22 Folder 10 "Expositions in which the National Museum has participated, 1876-1909."

Box 19 of 22 Folder 11 "Expositions in General." Historical sketch taken mostly from annual reports.

Box 20

Box 20 of 22 Folders 1-4 Expositions - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1876-1896.

Box 20 of 22 Folder 5 Gifts and Bequest - USNM regulations.

Box 20 of 22 Folder 6 Identification of specimens - USNM regulations.

Box 20 of 22 Folder 7 Library of the USNM - Historical sketch, undated.

Box 20 of 22 Folder 8 National Gallery of Art - Miscellaneous material, including a description of collections.

Box 20 of 22 Folder 9 National Zoological Park - Miscellaneous material mostly concerning appropriations, 1902-1907.

Box 20 of 22 Folder 10 Photographic Laboratory of the USNM - Historical sketch by Thomas W. Smillie, 1868-1906. Included is biographical information on Smillie.

Box 21

Box 21 of 22 Folders 1-6 Publications and Printing, USNM - Historical sketch, undated.

Box 21 of 22 Folder 7 Registrar, USNM - Explanation of duties.

Box 21 of 22 Folder 8 Research conducted by the USNM - Historical sketch compiled from annual reports, 1881-1906.

Box 21 of 22 Folder 9 Staff - Historical sketch of the USNM scientific staff, 1913.

Box 21 of 22 Folder 10 Staff - Report on the employment and regulation of personnel.

Box 21 of 22 Folders 11-15 Typescript, with handwritten corrections of USNM Bulletin #80, "A Descriptive Account of the Building Recently Erected for the Departments

of Natural History of the United States National Museum," by Richard Rathbun, 1913.

Box 22

- Box 22 of 22 Folders 1-7 Typescript, with handwritten corrections of "Report on the Diatoms of the Albatross voyages in the Pacific Ocean, 1888-1904," by Albert Mann and Percy LeRoy Ricker. (Contributions From The U. S. National Herbarium, Vol. X, part 5, 1907).
- Box 22 of 22 Folder 8 U. S. National Museum-Historical sketch, undated.
- Box 22 of 22 Folder 9 U. S. National Museum Building - Newspaper clippings concerning and descriptions of the new USNM building, 1911.

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