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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu

Creator: Smithsonian Institution, Disbursement Clerk

Title: Records

Dates: 1882-1907

Quantity: 1.6 linear meters.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 165, Smithsonian Institution, Disbursement Clerk, Records

Historical Note

Records of the disbursement clerk consist entirely of outgoing letterpress financial statements, most of which were signed by William W. Karr. Karr was appointed to the position of "factotum" in 1879. His assignment included time-keeping, keeping accounts of expenditures and making out bills for payment for the contractors during the construction of the Arts and Industries Building. As a result of his efficiency, Karr was appointed to the USNM force as a clerk, November 1880, although he was also called bookkeeper, assistant, and cashier. In 1884 he became the accountant for the Smithsonian. Karr became disbursement clerk in 1888, and from 1888 to 1905 he held the joint position of accountant and disbursement clerk with his salary coming from both Smithsonian private funds and museum federal funds. In 1905 Karr was discharged from his duties on charges of embezzlement.

Prior to 1873, all accounts for the National Museum were paid by the Smithsonian and audited by the Executive Committee. From 1873 until 1888, bills for the USNM were approved by the Secretary and disbursed by the disbursing agent at the Department of Interior. In a similar fashion beginning in 1874, the Secretary of the Treasury disbursed Smithsonian funds and made payment on checks signed by the Secretary. In 1888 funds for the Museum and International Exchange Service as well as those from the Treasury Department were turned over to the disbursement clerk for the Smithsonian. Funds appropriated for North American Ethnology were transferred to the Smithsonian disbursement clerk in 1892.

Descriptive Entry

These records include copies of disbursement vouchers, statements, abstracts of disbursements, monthly disbursement statements, cash vouchers, and summary balance and debit statements; also correspondence regarding the history of the disbursement clerk position. Disbursement of funds included both the private and federal side of the Smithsonian, in particular, the operations of the USNM, National
Zoological Park, and International Exchange Service. Form vouchers are also signed by Secretaries Spencer F. Baird and Samuel P. Langley. Most volumes are individually indexed. A volume list follows.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
Museums -- Administration.

Names:
Adams, W. I.
Baird, Spencer Fullerton, 1823-1887
Disbursement Clerk
Disbursement Clerk. United States National Museum
International Exchange Service
Karr, William W.
Langley, S. P. (Samuel Pierpont), 1834-1906
National Zoological Park. Department of Living Animals (USNM)
United States National Museum. Division of Correspondence and Documents (USNM)
Container Listing

Box 1

Volume 1. November 30, 1882-May 31, 1883
Volume 2. June 1, 1883-December 14, 1883
Volume 3. December 14, 1883-May 15, 1884
Volume 4. May 15, 1884-November 11, 1884

Box 2

Volume 5. November 12, 1884-April 15, 1885
Volume 6. April 16, 1885-August 24, 1885
Volume 7. August 24, 1885-January 14, 1886
Volume 8. January 14, 1886-May 17, 1886

Box 3

Volume 10. May 17, 1886-November 20, 1886
Volume 11. November 20, 1886-April 4, 1887
Volume 12. April 6, 1887-September 19, 1887

Box 4

Volume 14. January 12, 1888-June 4, 1889
Volume 15. March 22, 1888-January 26, 1889

Box 5

Volume 17. September 11, 1888-June 20, 1890
Volume 18. January 26, 1889-November 9, 1889
Volume 19. August 7, 1889-October 25, 1890
Volume 20. November 9, 1889-July 15, 1890

Box 6

Volume 21. Monthly Disbursement Statements, April 1890-July 1891
Volume 22. July 17, 1890-November 25, 1890
Volume 23. November 25, 1890-February 20, 1891
Volume 24. February 20, 1891-May 2, 1891

Box 7
Volume 25. May 2, 1891-July 20, 1891
Volume 27. Monthly Disbursement Statements, July 1891-July 1892
Volume 28. October 17, 1891-January 8, 1892

Box 8
Volume 29. January 9, 1892-April 29, 1892
Volume 30. April 29, 1892-July 18, 1892
Volume 31. July 18, 1892-January 7, 1893
Volume 32. Monthly Disbursement Statements, August 1892-November 1893

Box 9
Volume 33. January 9, 1893-September 30, 1893
Volume 34. September 30, 1893-January 4, 1895
Volume 35. Monthly Disbursement Statements, November 1893-August 1894

Box 10
Volume 37. October 7, 1896-February 9, 1898
Volume 38. February 10, 1898-January 24, 1900
Volume 39. March 3, 1899-June 24, 1902
Volume 40. June 25, 1902-October 19, 1904

Box 11
Volume 41. October 24, 1904-July 21, 1905
Volume 42. April 11, 1900-May 26, 1905
Volume 43. June 13, 1905-April 24, 1907
Folders 1-3 Incoming correspondence, 1898-1905