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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title: Correspondence and Memoranda
Identifier: Record Unit 167
Date: 1885-1914
Extent: 14.26 cu. ft. (3 document boxes) (22 tall document boxes)
Creator: United States National Museum. Administrative Assistant
Language: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 167, United States National Museum.
Administrative Assistant, Correspondence and Memoranda

Historical Note

The chief clerk's appointment was an administrative one. Under his charge was the general supervision of the expenditure of United States National Museum appropriations; preparing proposals for supplies, issuing orders for the purchasing of supplies; settlement of accounts; awarding contracts; supervision over nonscientific or specimen related correspondence; general supervision of employees, their assignments to duty, granting leaves of absence; and conducting boards of inquiry and investigation of complaints. The chief clerk also acted as special agent and at times was appointed representative of the Museum and the Smithsonian at international expositions.

William V. Cox, designated chief clerk of the Museum in 1885, was the first and last chief clerk of the Museum. When Cox left the Museum in 1902 the title of the position was changed to administrative assistant. Duties of the administrative assistant were somewhat modified but the differences between these duties and those of the chief clerk were never enumerated in the Museum reports.

Descriptive Entry

Records consist of outgoing letterpress book correspondence concerning general fiscal matters, estimates of appropriations, appropriation and expenditure statements; certified vouchers for the disbursement clerk; and personnel matters including leaves of absence, appointments, promotions, terminations, and salaries; also included are fiscal records pertaining to USNM exhibits at international expositions. Originally these records had been kept in three separate series, (1) general museum business; (2) personnel; and (3) copied letters addressed to the Secretary transmitting vouchers for payment. These series were combined at an unknown date and volumes pertaining to exposition financial matters were added. Most
of the correspondence was signed by Cox, and William De C. Ravenel. Other correspondents include Secretaries Samuel P. Langley, and Charles D. Walcott; executive curator, Frederick William True; and acting chief clerks, J. E. Rockwell, and J. L. Willige. Volumes are individually indexed. A Volume list follows.

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**Names and Subject Terms**

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

**Subjects:**
- Appropriations and expenditures
- Budget
- Budget process
- Museum exhibits
- Museums -- Administration

**Types of Materials:**
- Letterpress copybooks
- Manuscripts

**Names:**
- Cox, William Van Zandt, 1852-1923
- Ravenel, W. de C. (William de Chastignier), 1859-1933
- Smithsonian Institution -- Administration
- Smithsonian Institution. Chief Clerk
- United States National Museum