



Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Correspondence, 1883-1889

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# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Historical Note.....	1
Descriptive Entry.....	2
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	4

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Correspondence
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 210
<b>Date:</b>	1883-1889
<b>Extent:</b>	1 cu. ft. (2 document boxes)
<b>Creator::</b>	United States National Museum. Taxidermist
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 210, United States National Museum, Taxidermist, Correspondence

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## Historical Note

The history of taxidermy in the Smithsonian Institution, in its early years, closely parallels the development of the public exhibition role of the United States National Museum. Prior to 1858, specimens in the possession of the museum were made up chiefly for purposes of scientific study where the art of the taxidermist was not in great demand. The transfer of the national collections, including that of the Wilkes Exploring Expedition, from the Patent Office to the Smithsonian in 1858 formed the initial impetus for the development of the United States National Museum's exhibition series and of the skills needed to properly prepare and maintain it.

In 1858, the museum expended money for outside contractors to do taxidermic work and for the hiring of a staff member skilled in the art. C. Drexler, of Philadelphia, joined the museum staff in November of 1858 and remained on the payroll until 1860. Although he was not salaried staff after 1860, he continued to do piece work for the museum until 1866.

Taxidermic work lagged at the museum from 1866 to 1869. This apparently was due to the fire of 1865, which held up much new work at the Museum while the staff labored to repair the damage. In 1869, a small amount of work was contracted out, and a staff member, Jose Zeledon, was hired, who apparently did some taxidermic work from 1869 to 1872.

Increased appropriations from Congress in 1872 allowed the hiring of a permanent taxidermist, Joseph Palmer. Palmer was originally from England, where he assisted B. Waterhouse Hawkins with the restoration of extinct animals for the Crystal Palace. In 1868, Hawkins received a commission to perform similar work for Central Park in New York City and came to the United States accompanied by Palmer and his family. After the project was abandoned, Palmer stayed on as taxidermist at the Park, general assistant at the museum and later as head of the zoological garden. He left this position in 1872 to join the United

States National Museum. In 1874, his son William also joined the taxidermic staff. Both Palmers continued their association with the Smithsonian until their deaths, Joseph in 1913 and William in 1921. In his later years, Joseph Palmer worked chiefly with the Department of Anthropology, modeling figures for exhibit.

William Temple Hornaday became taxidermist in 1882 and remained with the museum until 1889. Born in Indiana in 1854, he later moved to Iowa and entered Iowa State College. While there, Hornaday became interested in zoology and taxidermy and left college without graduating to study at Ward's National Science Establishment in Rochester, New York. In 1874, Ward's sent him on the first of his many collecting expeditions. These expeditions took him to Florida, Cuba, the West Indies, South America, and Asia.

When the position of chief taxidermist was offered to him in 1882, Hornaday accepted the appointment. In the course of his taxidermic work at the museum, Hornaday began to collect live animals to serve as models for his mountings. The public interest that these animals generated led to the creation of the Department of Living Animals in 1888 with Hornaday as its first curator. This eventually became the nucleus of the National Zoological Park, which was started in 1890. Hornaday was named the first superintendent, but policy differences arose that eventually led him to resign in 1890, and he moved to Buffalo, New York. In 1896, he became director of the New York Zoological Park and held that position for 30 years. On Hornaday's resignation, William Palmer was appointed chief taxidermist.

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## Descriptive Entry

This record unit includes an alphabetical file of correspondence of William Temple Hornaday as taxidermist and curator of living animals. The correspondence deals mainly with the collecting and shipping of specimens and live animals, Hornaday's trip to Montana in 1886, taxidermy, and the operations of Hornaday's departments. Correspondents include museum officials, collectors, shippers, and taxidermists.

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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:

- Museums -- Public relations
- Taxidermists
- Taxidermy

Names:

- Hornaday, William Temple, 1854-1937
- National Zoological Park (U.S.)
- New York Zoological Park
- Palmer, Joseph
- Palmer, William, 1856-1921
- United States National Museum
- United States National Museum. Department of Anthropology
- United States National Museum. Department of Living Animals
- United States. Patent Office

Geographic Names:

Montana

## Container Listing

### Box 1

Box 1 of 2	Folder 1 A
Box 1 of 2	Folder 2 B
Box 1 of 2	Folder 3 C
Box 1 of 2	Folder 4 D
Box 1 of 2	Folder 5 E
Box 1 of 2	Folder 6 F
Box 1 of 2	Folder 7 G
Box 1 of 2	Folder 8 H
Box 1 of 2	Folder 9 I, J, K

### Box 2

Box 2 of 2	Folder 1 L
Box 2 of 2	Folder 2 M
Box 2 of 2	Folder 3 N
Box 2 of 2	Folder 4 O, P
Box 2 of 2	Folder 5 R
Box 2 of 2	Folder 6 S
Box 2 of 2	Folder 7 T
Box 2 of 2	Folder 8 U, V
Box 2 of 2	Folder 9 W, Y, Z