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Correspondence, 1870-1893

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Correspondence
Date:	1870-1893
Identifier:	Record Unit 220
Creator::	United States National Museum. Division of Plants
Extent:	11 cu. ft. (21 document boxes) (25 microfilm reels)
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 220, United States National Museum. Division of Plants, Correspondence

Historical Note

The foundations of the present Department of Botany of the National Museum of Natural History are the extensive collections of plants gathered by the government exploring expeditions of the 1800s and those assembled by the United States Department of Agriculture in connection with its investigations. The Smithsonian had original control of the specimens collected by the expeditions, and these were forwarded to John Torrey at Columbia College in New York, who had offered to house and prepare the collection without remuneration. When Torrey returned the specimens in 1868, lack of facilities and manpower led Joseph Henry to arrange for the Department of Agriculture to act as repository for the collection. There it was merged with the existing collection of the Department. Charles Christopher Parry was named botanist of the Department of Agriculture in 1868 to care for the collection and served until 1871. George Vasey was appointed botanist and curator of the National Herbarium in 1872.

Lester Frank Ward, who had been appointed honorary curator of fossil plants in the United States National Museum in 1881, put together another collection of plants for comparison with his fossil specimens. This collection grew to the point where Ward was also named honorary curator of the Department of Recent Plants in 1885. In 1889, Vasey was given charge of the collection and appointed honorary curator of the Department of Botany. He retained this title until his death in 1893.

In 1894, arrangements were made by Frederick Vernon Coville, Vasey's successor, to have the collections housed at the Department of Agriculture moved to the museum. There they were merged with Ward's collection, although transfer of appropriations and personnel did not occur until 1896. Since that time, administration of the United States National Herbarium has come from the United States National Museum's Division of Plants and its successors.

Descriptive Entry

Most of these records are the official files of George Vasey as botanist of the United States Department of Agriculture and curator of the United States National Herbarium from 1872 to 1893. They include incoming and occasional outgoing correspondence, mostly to Vasey, but sometimes to Jeremiah M. Rusk, secretary of Agriculture; Edwin Willits, assistant secretary of Agriculture; Frederick Watts and George B. Loring, commissioners of the Department of Agriculture; and C. A. Cammon, assistant commissioner of the Department. All correspondence was referred to Vasey for response; and he either answered it himself or referred it to one of the assistant botanists, Joseph Nelson Rose, Frederick Vernon Coville, or Lyster Hoxie Dewey. Correspondents include leading United States and foreign botanists; colleagues; directors and curators of United States and foreign herbaria; custodians of botanical nurseries; naturalists; plant collectors; dealers in patent medicines; feed companies; seed growers; ranchers; farmers; geological surveys of the United States and Canada; Department of Agriculture staff members and administrative officers; Smithsonian Institution administrators; newspaper publishers and editors; scientific societies; the United States Experimental Grass and Forage Station at Garden City, Kansas; and in particular, botanists from the agricultural and mining colleges and their agricultural experiment stations.

Records concern requests for botanical specimens and seeds; determination, identification, and description of plants, grasses, and seeds; requests for plants to protect embankments; purchase of specimens; transfer of specimens to the National Herbarium; exchange of plant collections; lists of specimens in herbaria; information on plant collection methods; collecting in the field; botanical experiments; publishing taxonomies and other articles on botanical collections; requests for Department of Agriculture publications on American grasses; requests for Smithsonian publications; requests by Vasey for botanical publications; Smithsonian requests for material regarding the National Herbarium for its annual report; requests for jobs with the Department of Agriculture; staff salary increases and transfers of staff members; activities of colleagues and their collections; personal matters; and drafts of manuscripts.

Also included are outgoing letterpress correspondence from Vasey, administrative officers of the Department of Agriculture, and assistant botanists regarding the above subjects.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Botanists
- Botany

Types of Materials:

- Letterpress copybooks
- Manuscripts

Names:

- Cammon, C. A.
- Columbia College (New York, N.Y.)
- Coville, Frederick V. (Frederick Vernon), 1867-1937
- Dewey, Lyster H. (Lyster Hoxie), 1865-1944
- Henry, Joseph, 1797-1878
- Loring, George Bailey, 1817-1891
- Parry, Charles Christopher, 1823-1890
- Rose, J. N. (Joseph Nelson), 1862-1928
- Rusk, Jeremiah McLain, 1830-1893

Torrey, John, 1796-1873
United States Experimental Grass and Forage Station (Garden City, Kansas)
United States National Herbarium
United States. Department of Agriculture
Vasey, George
Ward, Lester Frank, 1841-1913
Watts, Frederick
Willits, Mr. (Edwin), 1830-1896

Container Listing

Series 1: INCOMING AND OCCASIONAL OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, 1870-1893. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY AND CHRONOLOGICALLY.

Box 1

Box 1 of 21	Folder 1 Ab - An
Box 1 of 21	Folder 2 Abell, A. S. and Company
Box 1 of 21	Folder 3 Allen, John A.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 4 Allen, Timothy Field, 1881-1892
Box 1 of 21	Folder 5 Allen, William T., 1885-1891
Box 1 of 21	Folder 6 Alwood, William B., 1886-1892
Box 1 of 21	Folder 7 Alworth, Albert E., 1889-1892
Box 1 of 21	Folder 8 Anderson, C. L.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 9 Anderson, F. W.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 10 Anislie, George, 1873-1876
Box 1 of 21	Folder 11 Ao - Ay. Includes correspondence from Wilbur Olin Atwater and under Coe Finch Austin, a Joseph Henry letter, January 6, 1876, regarding transmission of Austin's collections "Musci Appalachian: or specimens of mosses collected mostly in the eastern part of North America."
Box 1 of 21	Folder 12 Armstrong, C. W., 1891-1892
Box 1 of 21	Folder 13 Arthur, Joseph Charles, 1886-1893. Contains a letter, June 1, 1892, concerning botanists in the Washington, D.C., area, and his views regarding the consideration of an international congress to discuss the problems and progress of botany.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 14 Atkins, George T.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 15 Atkinson, George Francis, 1888-1891
Box 1 of 21	Folder 16 Autran, Eugene, 1889-1892

Box 1 of 21	Folder 17 Averill, Horace, 1874-1878
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Box 1 of 21	Folder 19 Babcock, Henry H.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 20 Bailey, Liberty Hyde, 1885-1893
Box 1 of 21	Folder 21 Bailey, Prentice
Box 1 of 21	Folder 22 Bailey, William Whitman
Box 1 of 21	Folder 23 Bain, S. M.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 24 Baird, Spencer F., 1873-1886. Correspondence regarding identification and examination of specimens, exchange of plants with foreign herbariums, and a question on plants to use for the protection of embankments.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 25 Barloue, J. G.
Box 1 of 21	Folder 26 Barnes, Charles Reid, 1886-1893
Box 1 of 21	Folder 27 Bartholomew, Elam
Box 1 of 21	Folder 28 Batalin, A.
Box 2	
Box 2 of 21	Folder 1 Bates, George L.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 2 Bates, J. M.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 3 Battle, Herbert Bemerton, 1888-1892. Includes reports of grass experiments in 1891 in cooperation with the USDA by F. E. Emery and Gerald McCarthy.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 4 Be
Box 2 of 21	Folder 5 Beal, William James, 1883-1893
Box 2 of 21	Folder 6 Beardslee, Henry C.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 7 Bebb, Michael Schuck, 1874-1892
Box 2 of 21	Folder 8 Bell, R. M.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 9 Benedict, G. H., 1887-1889. Correspondence regarding proofs and plates for publications published at the Government Printing Office.

Box 2 of 21	Folder 10 Bentley, H. L.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 11 Bessey, Charles Edwin, 1881-1893. Includes correspondence on explorations and collections of Per Axel Rydberg in the Black Hills.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 12 Bi - Bo
Box 2 of 21	Folder 13 Bishop, James N.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 14 Blanchard, J. A. (Mrs.)
Box 2 of 21	Folder 15 Blankinship, Joseph W.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 16 Bloomfield, Ira J.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 17 Bodin, J. E.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 18 Bolander, Henry Nichols, 1886-1892
Box 2 of 21	Folder 19 Boott, William
Box 2 of 21	Folder 20 Boyd, J. H. H.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 21 Boynton, Frank E.
Box 2 of 21	Folder 22 Br- Bz
Box 2 of 21	Folder 23 Brandegee, Katherine
Box 3	
Box 3 of 21	Folder 1 Brandegee, S. (possibly Townshend Stilh)
Box 3 of 21	Folder 2 Bray, Maria H.
Box 3 of 21	Folder 3 Brendel, Frederick
Box 3 of 21	Folder 4 Bretton, Henry B.
Box 3 of 21	Folder 5 Brewer, William H., 1872-1885
Box 3 of 21	Folder 6 Britton, Elizabeth Gertrude, 1889-1893
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Box 3 of 21	Folder 9 Brooks, H. C., 1889-1892

Box 3 of 21	Folder 10 Brown, Addison, 1879-1883
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Box 4 of 21	Folder 2 Clotten, Francis E., 1890-1891. Includes information on the British Colonial Government cultivations and European and Canadian collecting.
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Box 4 of 21	Folder 4 Cochrane, H. A.
Box 4 of 21	Folder 5 Cockerell, Theodore D. A., 1888-1892
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Box 4 of 21	Folder 7 Coleman, N.
Box 4 of 21	Folder 8 Collier, Peter
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Box 4 of 21	Folder 10 Colson, J. M.
Box 4 of 21	Folder 11 Commons, Albert
Box 4 of 21	Folder 12 Conant, Woodbury P.
Box 4 of 21	Folder 13 Cook, Orator Fuller, 1891
Box 4 of 21	Folder 14 Cooley, Grace E.
Box 4 of 21	Folder 15 Copineau, Charles (in French)
Box 4 of 21	Folder 16 Coulson, John
Box 4 of 21	Folder 17 Coulter, John Merle, 1875-1893
Box 4 of 21	Folder 18 Coville, Frederick Vernon, 1887-1892. Includes personal feelings and his official treatment during his expedition to Death Valley; also Clinton Hart Merriam's replies to his actions; and journal type material in his correspondence regarding the Death Valley expedition.
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Box 4 of 21	Folder 20 Crandall, Charles S., 1890-1893
Box 4 of 21	Folder 21 Crawford, E. W.
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Box 5 of 21	Folder 4 Davenport, George E.
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Box 5 of 21	Folder 13 Dickinson, Albert Seed Company
Box 5 of 21	Folder 14 Dodge, Charles K.
Box 5 of 21	Folder 15 Dodge, Charles Richard
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Box 5 of 21	Folder 27 Egeling, Gustavus
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Box 5 of 21	Folder 32 Engelmann, George J., 1872-1883
Box 5 of 21	Folder 33 Eskridge, B. B.
Box 5 of 21	Folder 34 Evans, Walter H., 1890-1892
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Box 5 of 21	Folder 38 Faxon, Edwin
Box 5 of 21	Folder 39 Fernald, Merritt Lyndon, 1890-1893
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Box 6 of 21	Folder 2 Forbes, Stephen Alfred, 1872-1880
Box 6 of 21	Folder 3 Foster, Luther, 1887, 1892-1893

Box 6 of 21	Folder 4 Franchesi, Emanuele Francesco, 1892-1893
Box 6 of 21	Folder 5 Frear, William
Box 6 of 21	Folder 6 French, George Hazen, 1874-1892
Box 6 of 21	Folder 7 Funston, Frederick, 1891-1893. Includes correspondence concerning Funston's collecting activities in the Yakutat Bay area of Alaska, April 11 - October 13, 1892.
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Box 6 of 21	Folder 10 Gardner, J.
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Box 6 of 21	Folder 12 Gattinger, August
Box 6 of 21	Folder 13 Geare, Randolph Iltyd, 1890-1891
Box 6 of 21	Folder 14 George, T. C.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 15 Georgeson, C. C.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 16 Gerard, W. R.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 17 Gibbes, Lewis R.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 18 Gibbs, Norman
Box 6 of 21	Folder 19 Gillman, Henry
Box 6 of 21	Folder 20 Goff, Emmett Stull
Box 6 of 21	Folder 21 Gold, T. S.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 22 Goode, George Brown, 1875-1892. Correspondence regarding the transfer of specimens to the National Herbarium as gifts; examination and report of specimens; request for Annual Report material on the Herbarium.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 23 Grant, J. M.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 24 Gray, Asa, 1872-1887. Correspondence concerning the John Torrey material transferred to the USDA.

Box 6 of 21	Folder 25 Greely, Adolphus Washington, 1885-1890. Correspondence concerning the loan of meteorological instruments to agricultural experiment stations by the War Department, Signal Office.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 26 Green, H. A.
Box 6 of 21	Folder 27 Greene, Edward L., 1880-1892
Box 6 of 21	Folder 28 Griffith, J. H.
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Box 6 of 21	Folder 30 Gulley, Frank A., 1889-1893
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Box 7 of 21	Folder 2 Hackel, Eduard, 1882-1891
Box 7 of 21	Folder 3 Hadley, Hiram, 1889-1892
Box 7 of 21	Folder 4 Hale, Edwin M.
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Box 7 of 21	Folder 6 Hallowell, Susan M.
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Box 7 of 21	Folder 20 Hays, Willet Martin, 1886-1890
Box 7 of 21	Folder 21 Heller, Amos Arthur, 1891-1893
Box 7 of 21	Folder 22 Henderson, Louis Forniquet, 1891-1893
Box 7 of 21	Folder 23 Henderson, Peter and Company, 1887-1893
Box 7 of 21	Folder 24 Henderson, W. D.
Box 7 of 21	Folder 25 Henry, Joseph, 1873-1876. Correspondence regarding the transfer of specimens to the USDA.
Box 7 of 21	Folder 26 Henshaw, H. W.
Box 7 of 21	Folder 27 Heo - Hz. Includes correspondence from Romyn Hitchcock, Walter J. Hoffman, Theodore Holm.
Box 7 of 21	Folder 28 Hessler, Robert
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Box 8 of 21	Folder 2 Higley, William K.
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Box 8 of 21	Folder 4 Hill, Ellsworth Jerome
Box 8 of 21	Folder 5 Hill, George William
Box 8 of 21	Folder 6 Hillman, Fred H., 1890-1892
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Box 8 of 21	Folder 11 Holmes, Jesse H.
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Box 8 of 21	Folder 20 Ingraham, Rollin H.
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Box 8 of 21	Folder 24 Jenkins, Edward Hopkins, 1886-1890
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Box 9 of 21	Folder 1 Kearney, Thomas Henry, 1892
Box 9 of 21	Folder 2 Keck, K. von (a good portion is in German), 1872-1892
Box 9 of 21	Folder 3 Keffer, Charles A.
Box 9 of 21	Folder 4 Kellerman, William Ashbrook, 1879-1883
Box 9 of 21	Folder 5 Kelley, O. H.
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Box 10 of 21	Folder 17 Mears, Ellis
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Box 10 of 21	Folder 19 Mell, Patrick H., 1884-1889
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Box 10 of 21	Folder 28 Morrell, H. K.
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Box 10 of 21	Folder 31 Murdock, M. A.
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Box 10 of 21	Folder 34 Nash, George V., 1891-1893

Box 10 of 21 Folder 35 Nash, M. L. (Mrs.)

Box 11

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Box 11 of 21 Folder 2 Nealley, Greenleaf C., 1882-1888

Box 11 of 21 Folder 3 Nealley, Greenleaf C., 1889-1893

Box 11 of 21 Folder 4 Nehrling, Henry

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Box 11 of 21 Folder 6 Newman, C. Lewis

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Box 11 of 21 Folder 8 Oberwetter, P. H.

Box 11 of 21 Folder 9 Oertel, C.

Box 11 of 21 Folder 10 Olcott, James B., 1889-1892

Box 11 of 21 Folder 11 Olney, Stephen Thayer, 1872-1875

Box 11 of 21 Folder 12 Onderdonk, G.

Box 11 of 21 Folder 13 Orcutt, Charles Russell, 1881-1892

Box 11 of 21 Folder 14 Orcutt, Charles Russell. Contains Orcutt's manuscript, "Flora of Southern California," circa 1890.

Box 12

Box 12 of 21 Folder 1 Osborn, Henry Leslie

Box 12 of 21 Folder 2 Oyster, J. H.

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Box 12 of 21 Folder 4 Page, John R.

Box 12 of 21 Folder 5 Pammel, Louis H.

Box 12 of 21 Folder 6 Papineau, E. A.

Box 12 of 21 Folder 7 Parish, Samuel B.

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Box 12 of 21	Folder 29 Porter, Thomas Conrad, 1873-1892
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Box 12 of 21	Folder 32 Prentiss, Albert N.
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Box 13 of 21	Folder 6 Redding, R. J.
Box 13 of 21	Folder 7 Redfield, John H.
Box 13 of 21	Folder 8 Regel, Eduard A.
Box 13 of 21	Folder 9 Reinsch, Paul Frederich, 1872-1873
Box 13 of 21	Folder 10 Reverchon, Julien
Box 13 of 21	Folder 11 Richardson, E.
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Series 2: OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, BOUND, 1886-1893. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY AND INDEXED.

Note: This material consists of eight volumes of letterpress books, January 1886 - March 1893. The books contain mostly correspondence from George Vasey. Volume one contains a good portion of correspondence from Norman J. Coleman, commissioner, United States Department of Agriculture, and Frederick Vernon Coville, assistant botanist. Other volumes also contain correspondence from assistant botanists and Jeremiah M. Rush, secretary of agriculture, most of which was written when Vasey was away from his desk. Also, because of date sequence, there appear to be gaps in the volumes. Materials correspond with the incoming correspondence.

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Series 3: ASSISTANT BOTANISTS' OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, BOUND, 1891-1893. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY AND INDEXED.

Note: This material consists of two volumes of letterpress books of Frederick Vernon Coville and Joseph Nelson Rose, assistant botanists, outgoing correspondence, March 1891 - March 1893.

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