



Smithsonian

Institution Archives

Records, 1853-1962

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Records
Date:	1853-1962
Identifier:	Record Unit 233
Creator::	United States National Museum. Division of Marine Invertebrates
Extent:	33.22 cu. ft. (56 document boxes) (9 tall document boxes)
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 233, United States National Museum, Division of Marine Invertebrates, Records

Historical Note

The origins of the collection of marine invertebrates under the care of the Smithsonian Institution can be traced to the collections made by William Stimpson while serving as zoologist on the North Pacific Exploring Expedition, 1853-1856, and the specimens collected by the United States Exploring Expedition, which were transferred to the Smithsonian in 1858. Stimpson seems to have been, nominally at least, in charge of the Smithsonian marine invertebrate collections until 1865. By that date the Smithsonian collection of crustacea numbered more than 10,000 jars - the largest in the world at that time. Beginning in the 1870s, large collections of marine invertebrates came to the Smithsonian as a result of the various expeditions conducted by the U. S. Fish Commission. Many of these specimens were retained at Yale University by Addison Emery Verrill for study and identification and did not reach the United States National Museum until 1907.

As a result of a general reorganization of the United States National Museum, the Department of Marine Invertebrates was established in 1880. Under its care were all recent invertebrates, marine and aquatic (excepting mollusks and insects), including protozoans, sponges, coelenterates, echinoderms, ascidians, worms, bryozoans, and crustaceans. Richard Rathbun (1852-1918), a scientific assistant with the U. S. Fish Commission, was appointed honorary curator of Marine Invertebrates in 1880 and retained the title until 1914. In 1897, he was appointed assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and responsibility for the administration of the Division of Marine Invertebrates fell largely on the two assistant curators, James E. Benedict and Mary Jane Rathbun.

Prior to his appointment as assistant curator in 1890, James F. Benedict (1854-1930) had served as naturalist on the U. S. Fish Commission steamer *Albatross*. He continued his duties in the Division of Marine Invertebrates until 1909 when he accepted appointment as Chief of Exhibits in the Department of Biology, United States National Museum (USNM).

Mary Jane Rathbun (1860-1943), a sister of Richard Rathbun, was appointed copyist in the Department of Marine Invertebrates in 1886. She was promoted to aid in 1893 and assistant curator in 1894. After

her resignation in 1914, she was given the honorary title associate in zoology, and she remained in close association with the museum until her death in 1943.

In 1897 USNM was reorganized into three departments: Biology, Geology, and Anthropology, with Marine Invertebrates as a division of the Department of Biology. On October 16, 1914, the Division of Marine Invertebrates was merged with the Division of Mollusks into a single division under the former title. Richard Rathbun resigned as curator, and the position was assumed by Paul Bartsch. The collection of echinoderms was removed from the Division of Marine Invertebrates on April 1, 1919, and a separate Division of Echinoderms was created with Austin H. Clark as curator. Clark had served as assistant curator in the Division of Marine Invertebrates since 1909. On February 1, 1921 the collections of mollusks were removed from the Division of Marine Invertebrates, and the Division of Mollusks was reestablished with Paul Bartsch as curator. Waldo LaSalle Schmitt assumed the curatorship of the Division of Marine Invertebrates.

In 1947 another administrative reorganization took place in the USNM. As part of the reorganization, the Department of Biology was divided into Departments of Botany and Zoology, with Marine Invertebrates becoming a division of the Department of Zoology. In 1964 the Department of Zoology was divided into three departments: Vertebrate Zoology, Invertebrate Zoology, and Entomology, with Marine Invertebrates a division of the Department of Invertebrate Zoology. On July 1, 1965 the Division of Marine Invertebrates was abolished and three new divisions were formed - Crustacea, Echinoderms, and Worms - and were joined with the existing Division of Mollusks to form the Department of Invertebrate Zoology.

Descriptive Entry

This record unit includes correspondence of the division, 1861, 1877, 1881-1937; correspondence of assistant and associate curator Clarence R. Shoemaker, 1919-1958; monthly and annual reports, 1881-1936; invoices of specimens received and sent out, 1853-1921; catalogue of duplicate specimens, 1872-1881; and historical material and typescripts.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Invertebrate zoology
- Marine invertebrates
- Natural history museums

Types of Materials:

- Letterpress copybooks
- Manuscripts

Names:

- Benedict, James E. (James Everard), 1854-1940
- Chace, Fenner Albert
- Chicago Academy of Sciences
- Rathbun, Mary Jane, 1860-1943
- Rathbun, Richard, 1852-1918
- Schmitt, Waldo L. (Waldo Lasalle), 1887-1977
- Shoemaker, Clarence R.
- Stimpson, William, 1832-1872
- United States Exploring Expedition (1838-1842)

United States Fish Commission
United States National Museum. Division of Echinoderms
United States National Museum. Division of Mollusks
United States North Pacific Exploring Expedition (1853-1856)
Verrill, A. E. (Addison Emery), 1839-1926
Yale University

Container Listing

Series 1: OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, 1884-1945. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY.

Note: This series consists of bound letterpress books containing copies of outgoing correspondence and requisitions compiled by the Division of Marine Invertebrates (prior to 1898, the Department of Marine Invertebrates). Each volume is indexed alphabetically unless otherwise indicated in the folder listing. Prior to 1891, the letters were written by Richard Rathbun in his capacity as honorary curator of Marine Invertebrates. After that date, the job of correspondence fell primarily to the assistant curators, James E. Benedict and Mary Jane Rathbun. After the merger of the Divisions of Marine Invertebrates and Mollusks in 1914, the new curator, Paul Bartsch, signed most of the correspondence. Also included are letterpress books maintained separately by Mary Jane Rathbun concerning divisional matters, 1894-1902, and by Richard Rathbun mostly concerning his work with the U. S. Fish Commission, 1884-1887.

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Box 1 of 63	Volume 1 Outgoing correspondence, February 16, 1885 - January 18, 1890
Box 1 of 63	Volume 2 Outgoing correspondence, January 23, 1890 - January 27, 1892
Box 1 of 63	Volume 3 Outgoing correspondence, January 28, 1892 - January 23, 1894
Box 1 of 63	Volume 4 Outgoing correspondence, January 25, 1894 - March 16, 1895

Box 2

Box 2 of 63	Volume 5 Outgoing correspondence, March 16, 1895 - June 5, 1896
Box 2 of 63	Volume 6 Outgoing correspondence, June 6, 1896 - July 31, 1897
Box 2 of 63	Volume 7 Outgoing correspondence, August 1, 1897 - October 8, 1898
Box 2 of 63	Volume 8 Outgoing correspondence, October 8, 1898 - April 2, 1900

Box 3

Box 3 of 63	Volume 9 Outgoing correspondence, April 3, 1900 - October 16, 1901
Box 3 of 63	Volume 10 Outgoing correspondence, October 16, 1901 - February 9, 1903

Box 3 of 63	Volume 11 Outgoing correspondence, February 10, 1903 - November 18, 1904
Box 3 of 63	Volume 12 Outgoing correspondence, November 18, 1904 - February 28, 1907
Box 4	
Box 4 of 63	Volume 13 Outgoing correspondence, February 28, 1907 - January 7, 1909
Box 4 of 63	Volume 14 Outgoing correspondence, January 7, 1909 - March 3, 1910
Box 4 of 63	Volume 15 Outgoing correspondence, March 3, 1910 - March 29, 1910
Box 4 of 63	Volume 16 Outgoing correspondence, March 29, 1910 - February 21, 1912
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Box 5 of 63	Volume 17 Outgoing correspondence, February 23, 1912 - January 6, 1913
Box 5 of 63	Volume 18 Outgoing correspondence, January 6, 1913 - December 6, 1913
Box 5 of 63	Volume 19 Outgoing correspondence, December 6, 1913 - December 21, 1914
Box 5 of 63	Volume 20 Outgoing correspondence, December 22, 1914 - November 3, 1915
Box 6	
Box 6 of 63	Volume 21 Outgoing correspondence, November 3, 1915 - September 16, 1916
Box 6 of 63	Volume 22 Outgoing correspondence, September 16, 1916 - November 30, 1917
Box 6 of 63	Volume 23 Outgoing correspondence, December 3, 1917 - June 27, 1919
Box 7	
Box 7 of 63	Volume 24 Outgoing correspondence, June 26, 1919 - August 23, 1920
Box 7 of 63	Volume 25 Outgoing correspondence, August 26, 1920 - October 30, 1920

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Volume 26 Outgoing correspondence maintained separately by Mary Jane Rathbun concerning her work in the Division of Marine Invertebrates, 1894-1902. Also included is one letter of Richard Rathbun dated June 13, 1889, concerning Fish Commission work and one letter of James E. Benedict dated February 7, 1891 (page 494). Volume is not indexed.

Box 7 of 63

Volume 27 Outgoing correspondence of Richard Rathbun, 1884-1887, mostly concerning Fish Commission matters.

Box 8

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Folder 1 Outgoing correspondence, c.1885-1945, dealing mostly with specimen determinations by the staff of the Division responding to correspondents in the United States and abroad. Staff members represented include Waldo L. Schmitt, Mary Jane Rathbun, Leonhard Stejneger, and Clarence R. Shoemaker. (Accession 06-198)

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Series 2: INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE, 1861, 1877, 1881-1902. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

Note: This series consists of incoming correspondence compiled by the Division of Marine Invertebrates (prior to 1898, the Department of Marine Invertebrates). Outgoing correspondence for this period can be found in series 1. Most of the correspondence is from naturalists, collectors, and museum officials and concerns the identification, exchange, and distribution of specimens; collecting work; museum publications; and museum administration. There also exists a small quantity of material from suppliers and contractors conducting business with the division. The correspondence is almost exclusively directed to Richard Rathbun prior to 1891. After that date, the majority of the letters are directed to the assistant curators, James E. Benedict and Mary Jane Rathbun. A small amount of material addressed to Secretary Spencer F. Baird (1879-1887) and Assistant Secretary George Brown Goode (1880-1896), was referred to the division for response. The correspondence is indexed alphabetically in a bound volume (box 8, folder 2).

Box 8

Box 8 of 63 Folder 2 Index to incoming correspondence, 1861, 1877, 1881-1902

Box 8 of 63 Folder 3 Abbott - Atwater

Box 8 of 63 Folder 4 Baird - Baskers

Box 8 of 63 Folder 5 Beachler - Benjamin

Box 8 of 63 Folder 6 Bibbins - Burns

Box 8 of 63 Folder 7 Bush, Katharine Jeannette, 1892-1900

Box 8 of 63 Folder 8 Call - Clarke

Box 8 of 63 Folder 9 Cockerell - Craw

Box 8 of 63 Folder 10 Dale - Dorflinger and Sons

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Box 12 of 63 Folder 7 Walcott, Charles D., 1885-1898

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Series 3: INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE, 1903-1920. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

Note: This series consists of incoming correspondence much the same as that found in series 2. Although the outgoing correspondence for this period was maintained in letterpress books (see series 1), a small amount is found in this series. Until 1914, the majority of correspondence is directed to assistant curators Benedict and Rathbun as before. After 1914, the correspondence is addressed primarily to the new curator Paul Bartsch, with smaller amounts to Waldo LaSalle Schmitt, who was appointed assistant curator in 1915, and Mary Jane Rathbun in her capacity as associate in zoology.

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Series 4: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (INCOMING AND OUTGOING), 1921-1937, 1939, 1961-1962. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

Note: This series consists of both incoming and outgoing correspondence carried out by the Division of Marine Invertebrates. The material is much the same as that found in series 1, 2, and 3, mostly concerning the collections under the care of the Division of Marine Invertebrates. The majority of correspondence is directed to Waldo LaSalle Schmitt, who was appointed curator of Marine Invertebrates in 1921, with smaller amounts to assistant curator Clarence R. Shoemaker and Mary Jane Rathbun in her capacity as associate in Zoology.

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Series 5: CLARENCE R. SHOEMAKER CORRESPONDENCE, 1919-1958. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

Note: Clarence R. Shoemaker's (1874-1958) association with the Smithsonian Institution began in the early 1900s when he was appointed clerk in the Smithsonian's International Exchange Service. Having developed an interest in natural history at an early age, particularly the study of spiders, he was appointed scientific aide in the Division of Marine Invertebrates, USNM. He was promoted to assistant curator in 1921 and associate curator in 1942. Retiring in 1944, Shoemaker was given the honorary title of associate in zoology. Shoemaker's primary zoological interest was the study of amphipod crustaceans. This series consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence and is both professional and personal in nature. Most of the material concerns Shoemaker's study of amphipod crustaceans, the identification of specimens, and the exchange of publications. Lesser amounts concern the publication of monographs and Shoemaker's activities in scientific societies. Of special interest is correspondence with Ekie W. Sexton containing reports on German air attacks on England during World War II.

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Series 6: MONTHLY AND ANNUAL REPORTS, 1881-1936. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY.

Note: This series consists of monthly and annual reports prepared by the curator of the Division of Marine Invertebrates (prior to 1898, the Department of Marine Invertebrates).

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Box 50 of 63	Monthly Reports, 1882-1883, 1885, 1890-1901
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Series 7: INVOICES OF SPECIMENS RECEIVED, 1853-1914.

Note: This series consists of bound volumes containing invoices of specimens received by the Division of Marine Invertebrates. Each volume is indexed alphabetically.

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Box 55 of 63	Volume 2 Invoice of Specimens Received, 1887-1894
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Series 8: INVOICES OF SPECIMENS SENT OUT, 1878-1921.

Note: This series consists of bound volumes containing invoices of specimens distributed by the Division of Marine Invertebrates. The first three volumes (boxes 59-60) are indexed in two ledgers found in box 58. This system was discontinued 15 January 1904, and after that date the volumes are renumbered using Roman numerals and indexed individually (except volume VIII). Volume VI, which was used exclusively for mollusks sent out by the Division of Marine Invertebrates, is missing from this series, having been transferred to the new Division of Mollusks, which was reorganized in 1921.

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Box 62 of 63	Volume VIII Invoice of Specimens Sent Out, July 24, 1919 - February 10, 1921

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Series 9: CATALOGUE OF DUPLICATE SPECIMENS, 1872-1881.

Note: This series consists of a bound volume containing a record of duplicate specimens of marine invertebrates in the collections of USNM. Most of the records predate the official organization of the Department of Marine Invertebrates in 1880.

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Folder 1 Catalogue of Duplicate Specimens, 1872-1881.

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Series 10: HISTORICAL MATERIAL AND TYPESCRIPT, 1906 and 1932.

Note: This series consists of a historical sketch of the Division of Marine Invertebrates by Richard Rathbun, 1906, and a typescript with handwritten corrections of "The Marine and Fresh-Water Sponges of California," by Max Walker de Laubenfels.

Box 63

Box 63 of 63	Folder 2 Historical sketch of the Division of Marine Invertebrates by Richard Rathbun, 1906
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Box 63 of 63	Folder 3 Typescript, with handwritten corrections of "The Marine and Fresh-Water Sponges of California," by Max Walker de Laubenfels. (Proceedings of the USNM, Vol. 81, No. 2927, 1932).
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