George P. Merrill Collection,
*circa* 1800-1930 and undated

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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title: George P. Merrill Collection
Identifier: Record Unit 7177
Date: circa 1800-1930 and undated
Extent: 11.79 cu. ft. (21 document boxes) (3 12x17 boxes)
Creator: Merrill, George P. (Georger Perkins), 1854-1929
Language: English

Administrative Information

Prefered Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7177, George P. Merrill Collection

Historical Note

George P. Merrill (1854-1929) graduated from the University of Maine in 1879 with a B.S. degree in chemistry and then accepted a teaching position at Wesleyan University. There he became acquainted with George Brown Goode, who helped curate Wesleyan's museum collections in addition to administering the United States National Museum (USNM). Later, Merrill earned his M.S., 1883, and Ph.D., 1889, degrees from the University of Maine. In 1917 he received an honorary Sc.D. degree from The George Washington University where he was professor of Mineralogy and Geology from 1893 to 1916.

In the winter of 1880-1881 Merrill was appointed aide at the United States Bureau of Fisheries. In July 1881 he transferred to the USNM where he was employed as an aide in the Department of Mineralogy. The following year he was promoted to assistant in the Department's Section of Building Stones. Subsequently, he held positions as acting curator, Department of Lithology and Physical Geology, 1883-1885; curator, Department of Lithology and Physical Geology, 1886-1890; curator, Department of Geology, 1890-1916; curator, Division of Physical and Chemical Geology (Systematics and Applied), 1898-1929; and head curator, Department of Geology, 1917-1929.

Merrill pioneered in the study of using stone for building purposes and in the study of the process of rock weathering. Later, he applied petrology to the study of meteorites.

In addition to his scientific work, Merrill was a historian of North American geology. In connection with his two works on the history of American geology, "Contributions to the History of American Geology" (Report of the United States National Museum for 1904, pp. 189-733) and The First One Hundred Years of American Geology (1924), Merrill assembled a collection of photographs and correspondence, with many of the photographs and portraits appearing in this collection.
Descriptive Entry

Series 1 includes photographs, portraits, and correspondence collected by Merrill for the above publications. Series 2 through 5 include photographs of groups, particularly of the United States Geological and Geographical Surveys of the Territories (Hayden Surveys); and photographs of geological formations and of buildings in the Washington, D.C. area. Series 6 includes Merrill's professional correspondence as curator at the USNM concerning the exchange and identification of gems and meteorites, expositions and exhibits, and the administration of the USNM and its Department of Geology and Department of Lithology and Physical Geology.

The following lists index correspondence found in the authors' folders in Series 1 and received by James Hall, Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden, and George P. Merrill. Other correspondence in Series 1 is indexed by both author and recipient in the Archives' computer index. Merrill's professional correspondence in Series 6 is indexed by author.


Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
Geologists
Geology
Natural history
Scientific expeditions

Types of Materials:
Black-and-white negatives
Black-and-white photographs
Color photographs
Manuscripts
Picture postcards

Names:
Hall, James, 1811-1898
Hayden, F. V. (Ferdinand Vandeveer), 1829-1887
Merrill, George P. (Georger Perkins), 1854-1929
United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, 1871-1877
United States National Museum. Department of Geology