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James Steele Williams Papers, *circa* 1918-1960 and undated

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., *osiaref@si.edu*
Title:	James Steele Williams Papers
Date:	*circa* 1918-1960 and undated
Identifier:	Record Unit 7328
Creator::	Williams, James Steele, 1896-1957
Extent:	5 cu. ft. (1 record storage box) (8 document boxes)
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Prefered Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7328, James Steele Williams Papers

Historical Note

James Steele Williams (1896-1957) was an authority on Carboniferous and Permian paleontology and stratigraphy. He was educated at the University of Missouri where he received the B.A. degree in 1921, the M.A. in 1922, and the Ph. D. in 1924. Williams was appointed Instructor of Geology at the University of Missouri in 1921. He continued his academic career until 1930, eventually achieving the position of Associate Professor. In addition to his faculty post, Williams held appointment as Geologist on the staff of the Missouri Bureau of Geology and Mines. In 1930 he joined the United States Geological Survey's (USGS), Section of Paleontology as assistant, and eventually successor, to George Herbert Girty -- a leading specialist on late Paleozoic marine fauna. Williams remained with the USGS for the remainder of his career, and at the time of his death he had risen to the position of Principal Geologist.

After joining the USGS, Williams' paleontological studies were concentrated on the Carboniferous invertebrate fauna of the mid-western United States. His interests later shifted to the Carboniferous and Permian invertebrates of the western United States (primarily the Rocky Mountain states) and Alaska. During several summers from 1930 to 1953, Williams collected fossils with USGS field parties detailed to the West. During World War II, Williams was placed in charge of the USGS investigation of domestic fluorspar resources.

Williams was active within the geological profession and held membership in many organizations - several of which he served in elected or appointed capacities. In 1937 he was a United States delegate to the Seventeenth International Geological Congress in Russia. He traveled to Heerlen, Netherlands, in 1951, as USGS representative at the Third Congress of Carboniferous Stratigraphy and Geology.

For additional biographical information on Williams, see "Memorial to James Steele Williams (1896-1957)," by W. P. Woodring. *Proceedings Volume of the Geological Society of America Annual Report for 1957*, pp. 171-174, May 1958.

Introduction

The 1879 act establishing the United States Geological Survey (USGS) declares, "And all collections of rocks, minerals, soil, and fossils, and objects of natural history, archaeology, and ethnology, made by the Coast and Interior Survey, the Geological Survey, or by any other parties for the Government of the United States, when no longer needed for investigations in progress, shall be deposited in the National Museum." Many of the paleontologists affiliated with the USGS Paleontology and Stratigraphy Branch have been stationed at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) to study and care for the national collections. This close working relationship between the USGS and the NMNH has resulted in the Smithsonian Archives acquiring records and special collections documenting paleontological work of the Survey and its scientists.

Descriptive Entry

The papers of James Steele Williams provide documentation of his professional career from the early 1920s until his death in 1957. The papers document his research on Carboniferous and Permian invertebrates; work on various United States Geological Survey (USGS) projects, especially the World War II era investigations of domestic fluorspar resources; field work in the western United States; and professional activities. Materials documenting Williams' teaching career at the University of Missouri and his work for the Missouri Bureau of Geology and Mines are also present. The majority of the collection consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence found in two series. The first consists of letters exchanged between Williams and paleontologists in the United States. The correspondence concerns all aspects of Williams' professional work, and is particularly valuable in documenting day-to-day activities of the USGS Section of Paleontology. The second series of letters documents professional relations between Williams and foreign paleontologists. This correspondence provides extensive information on Williams' participation at the Seventeenth International Geological Congress in Russia, 1937, and at the Third Congress of Carboniferous Stratigraphy and Geology at Heerlen, Netherlands, 1951.

The papers also include notebooks, mostly from Williams' student days; undated photographs of Williams; classroom materials used by Williams in courses taught at the University of Missouri; and a bibliography of Missouri Geology maintained by Williams.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Geologists
Geology
Paleontologists
Paleontology
Paleontology -- Carboniferous
Paleontology -- Permian

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographs
Manuscripts

Names:

Congress of Carboniferous Stratigraphy and Geology
Geological Survey (U.S.)

Girty, George Herbert, 1869-1939
International Geological Congress
Missouri. Bureau of Geology and Mines
University of Missouri
Williams, James Steele, 1896-1957

Container Listing

Series 1: DOMESTIC CORRESPONDENCE, 1921-1960, AND UNDATED. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

Note: This series consists of correspondence exchanged between Williams and paleontological colleagues in the United States. Most of the letters were written after Williams joined the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1930. Letters documenting his careers at the University of Missouri and the Missouri Bureau of Geology and Mines are found in small amounts. The correspondence documents most aspects of Williams' career from 1930 to his death in 1957. Particularly well represented is his research on Carboniferous and Permian invertebrates; his fluorspar investigations for the USGS in the 1940s; professional activities, especially his work for the Committee on Pennsylvanian Stratigraphy of the National Research Council (see under Carl O. Dunbar and Raymond C. Moore); his field work in the western United States (see especially under John B. Reeside, Jr.); and activities of the USGS Section of Paleontology (see especially under Reeside, George H. Girty, Mackenzie Gordon, Jr., Wilbert H. Hass).

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Series 2: FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE, 1929-1956, AND UNDATED. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

Note: This series consists of correspondence exchanged between Williams and paleontological associates in foreign countries. The letters primarily concern research on Carboniferous and Permian paleontology and stratigraphy. Also included is correspondence documenting Williams' attendance at the Seventeenth International Geological Congress in Russia, 1937 (see under I. I. Gorskey and Boris K. Licharev), and the Third Congress of Carboniferous Stratigraphy and Geology, Heerlen, Netherlands, in 1951 (see under Helen M. Muir-Wood and Cyril J. Stubblefield).

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Series 3: NOTEBOOKS, CIRCA 1918-1926, AND UNDATED.

Note: This series consists of two notebooks maintained by Williams during his student days at the University of Missouri, and a notebook mostly containing information on preparing for field trips.

	Box 7
Box 7 of 9	Folder 16 Notebook, circa 1918-1924. Mostly contains Williams' reading and class notes from his college days at the University of Missouri.
Box 7 of 9	Folder 17 Notebook, circa 1918-1924. Contains Williams' review of "Life of the Geological Past," by G. T. Aldrich.
Box 7 of 9	Folder 18 Notebook, circa 1926. Contains miscellaneous entries, mostly on preparations for field trips. Also includes a letter to Williams from his father, May 21, 1926, concerning how to set up a camp.

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Series 4: PHOTOGRAPHS, UNDATED.

Note: This series contains unidentified and undated photographs of Williams.

Box 7

Box 7 of 9	Folder 19 Photographs, undated. Includes photographs of Williams on a field trip and with an unidentified man and children.

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Series 5: TEACHING MATERIALS, CIRCA 1921-1930, AND UNDATED.

Note: This series consists of various classroom materials used by Williams during his teaching career at the University of Missouri. Included are course outlines, examinations, laboratory exercises, visual aids, and course notes.

	Box 8
Box 8 of 9	Folders 1-3 Introduction to Paleontology. Course outlines, course notes, laboratory exercises, examinations, visual aids, and related materials.
Box 8 of 9	Folders 4-5 Advanced Paleontology. Course outlines, course notes, laboratory exercises, examinations, visual aids, and related materials.
	Box 9
Box 9 of 9	3x5 card file of course notes. (Two 3x5 boxes)

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Series 6: BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MISSOURI GEOLOGY, CIRCA 1918-1930.

Note: This series consists of a bibliography, maintained by Williams on 3x5 cards, of published sources relating to the geology and paleontology of Missouri. The bibliography was created during his concurrent careers at the University of Missouri and the Missouri Bureau of Geology and Mines.

	Box 9
Box 9 of 9	Bibliography of Missouri Geology, circa 1918-1930. (Two 4x6 boxes)

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