



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Augustus Fendler Papers,  
1854, 1874, 1900 and undated

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Augustus Fendler Papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 7446
<b>Date:</b>	1854, 1874, 1900 and undated
<b>Extent:</b>	0.25 cu. ft. (1 half document box)
<b>Creator::</b>	Fendler, Augustus, 1813-1883
<b>Language:</b>	Language of Materials: English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7446, Augustus Fendler Papers

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## Historical Note

Augustus Fendler (1813-1883), a natural history collector, was born in Prussia and spent one year at the technical school in Berlin. In 1836 he emigrated to Baltimore, and for the next eight years found irregular employment in trades in Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis, and New Orleans. He tried homesteading in Texas in 1839, and lived as a hermit on a Missouri River island in the winter of 1841-1842. A trip to Prussia in 1844 and a visit to Ernst Meyer, Professor of Botany at the University at Konigsberg, awakened him to the commercial possibilities of collecting botanical specimens. At first collecting in the Mississippi River valley, Fendler collaborated with botanist George Engelmann of St. Louis in identifying specimens. At the outbreak of the Mexican War, through the help of Asa Gray, he was provided with free transportation with United States troops to Santa Fe, where he collected during the years 1846-1847. Gray's descriptions of these plants are classics in the field, and the Smithsonian purchased a set of his specimens. In 1849 Fendler attempted an unsuccessful expedition to the Great American Basin. Later collecting trips were to Panama, Arkansas, and Venezuela, where he lived for five years in the late 1850s. While in Venezuela, Fendler amassed a great collection of flora and became a meteorological correspondent of the Smithsonian. His travels continued in his later life as well, including Missouri, Prussia, Delaware (where he wrote *The Mechanism of the Universe*), and Trinidad, where he continued his botanical collecting until his death.

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## Introduction

This finding aid was digitized with funds generously provided by the Smithsonian Institution Women's Committee.

## Descriptive Entry

These papers were deposited with the Smithsonian along with manuscripts on botany, which form part of Record Unit 1010014. The present material consists chiefly of two possibly related series. One is the manuscript for his 1874 privately printed book, *The Mechanism of the Universe*, which was an attempt to find a coherent scheme to all motive powers in the universe, from physics to physiology. Included in this record unit are illustrations and an analytical table of contents that were not printed. The second series consists of notes, arranged by subject, on various aspects of natural science, including meteorology, climatology, geography, zoology, botany, and horticulture. These materials may have been intended to form the basis of a book, perhaps a companion to Fendler's *Mechanism*, as none of these topics are dealt with there. This record unit also includes a covering memorandum to the manuscript, dated June 16, 1900, from Randolph Iltyd Geare, Chief of Correspondence and Documents, to Richard Rathbun, Assistant Secretary; a letter from Fendler to Engelmann, April 22, 1854, written from Venezuela; and botanical illustrations.

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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:

- Botany
- Geography
- Horticulture
- Meteorology
- Natural history
- Physics
- Zoology

Types of Materials:

- Manuscripts
- Scientific illustrations

Names:

- Engelmann, George, 1809-1884
- Fendler, Augustus, 1813-1883
- Geare, Randolph Iltyd, 1854-
- Gray, Asa, 1810-1888
- Meyer, Ernst
- Rathbun, Richard, 1852-1918

## Container Listing

### Box 1

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 1 Correspondence - Fendler to George Engelmann, April 22, 1854               |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 2 Manuscript - <i>The Mechanism of the Universe</i>                          |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 3 <i>The Mechanism of the Universe</i> - Prospectus and Botanical Notes      |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 4 <i>The Mechanism of the Universe</i> - Illustrations                       |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 5 Commonplaces - Meteorological, Geophysical, Astronomical and Topographical |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 6 Commonplaces - Zoological, Botanical and Horticultural                     |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 7 Botanical Illustrations  |