



New York State Archives

**Files relating to the Commissioner's Museum Inquiry
Committee and proposed State Museum building A3164**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	These files include records from departmental inquiries into the operation of the State Museum. Various reports, correspondence, photographs and background notes provide detailed information on the museum's functions and needs. Also included are planning documents, including plot and floor plans for a proposed new museum building in Albany (1930-1934). Photographs show birds, plants, mosses, and insects studied by State Museum staff; downtown Albany, State Education Building, State Capitol, and Alfred E. Smith State Office Building.
Creator:	New York (State). Division of Science and State Museum
Title:	Files relating to the Commissioner's Museum Inquiry Committee and proposed State Museum building
Quantity:	1 cubic feet
Quantity:	(including ca. 15 maps plans, and sketches.)
Inclusive Date:	1928-1944
Bulk Date:	(bulk 1930-1934)
Series:	A3164

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Arrangement

Arranged by subject: museum inquiry and museum building.

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Scope and Content Note

The series consists of several reports and some correspondence relating to departmental inquiries into the administration of the New York State Museum over several years, and also preliminary planning documents for a proposed new museum building in Albany. The most

recent of these reports was instigated by the retirement of the director of the State Museum, Charles C. Adams.

The earlier committee reports, outlining the museum's longstanding functions and needs, were apparently used to aid the planning process that would necessarily accompany the hiring of a new director. In a similar way, information in the reports would be pertinent to planning a request for a new museum facility.

The primary inquiry was conducted by a committee appointed in 1931 by the Commissioner of Education. Included are reports by the museum director, Charles C. Adams, and the committee. The series also contains three committee members' files subsequently turned over to the museum, records of committee interviews with museum staff members, and written statements prepared by staff members in response to a set of questions posed by the committee. These records provide detailed information on the administration and internal functioning of the museum, especially relating to disputes and difficulties between the director and staff.

In addition, the series contains correspondence, reports, photographs, preliminary location maps and plans, and film negatives relating to a proposed new State Museum building in Albany (1930-1934). The records outline proposals for a new facility that was designed to incorporate the museum, a George Washington memorial, and a World War I memorial into one structure. Chapter 826 of the Laws of 1930 appointed a temporary state commission to study and select a site for a World War I memorial and to prepare preliminary plans and estimates (cost not to exceed one million dollars exclusive of site and property damages).

The committee's report to the legislature, included in the records and dated February 1931, recommended a site along State Street across from Capitol Park, which would allow for expansion in stages. Sketches prepared by the commission's architect included a memorial to George Washington, an appropriate building for the state museum, and space for official records of state departments. Preliminary plans show the general outlines of the building and its proposed location near the Capitol. Photographs show the location and general layout plans for the building. Models for the project include the Art Institute of Chicago and the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial in New York City.

The records relating to museum administration include: a report dated April 1943 on the New York State Museum by a committee appointed on January 27, 1943 by Associate Commissioner J. Hillis Miller (for Commissioner Stoddard) anticipating the selection of a new director upon the imminent retirement of Charles C. Adams and including a fact finding study of the functions, administration, organization, and financial support of the museum going back to 1915; notebooks of members of a 1931 museum inquiry committee that was set up by Commissioner Graves to survey various phases of museum activities (notebooks of Harlan H. Horner, Lloyd L. Cheney, and Alfred D. Simpson, who replaced Herman J. Magee); and a special report by Charles C. Adams, museum director, dated April 3, 1931 on the status and needs of the museum, including a copy of a paper to the museum council dated December 2, 1929 and a progress report on a proposed comprehensive survey made for the council dated December 22, 1930.

The notebooks of committee members are particularly detailed. They include: statements of museum functions and examples of cooperation of the museum with other institutions; preliminary reports of a proposed survey of museum activities by Adams; records of interviews with museum staff; announcements and circulars illustrating cooperative sessions in which the museum participated; individual staff reports giving professional resumes, information on salaries, job descriptions and responsibilities, details on office/lab space, equipment, supplies and travel expenses, cooperative relationships and outside work activities, and staff suggestions for administrative changes that would improve working conditions; and photographs included as illustrations by staff (dated 1928).

Records relating to the proposed (never built) new museum building in Albany include: a memorandum dated March 28, 1930 on a proposed new building for the state museum prepared at the request of Governor Roosevelt by museum director Charles Adams and state historian A.C. Flick; copies of photographs of floor plans and elevations ordered by Charles Adams showing a new building at the Art Institute of Chicago, along with a copy of the program for architectural competition for selection of a design for an addition to the institute; photographs (dated ca. 1931) of the New York State Education Building, the upper floors of which housed the State Museum; architect's drawings of the type of building proposed by a legislative commission as the site of a new museum building as part of the development of Capitol Park;

proposals for state memorials (upon the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington, and in tribute to New Yorkers who died in World War I) in conjunction with construction of a new museum building; copies of a map of the vicinity of the state capitol showing location of the state education building and adjacent streets, buildings, and parks; sketches for placement of the proposed Washington and war memorials, done in both pencil and ink copies and dated May 28, 1931; photographs of location plans, plot plans, and elevations of the proposed "Roosevelt Memorial State Museum" dated January 22, 1924; and a complimentary copy of the published description of the "Theodore Roosevelt Memorial" dedicated in New York City on January 19, 1936.

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Related Information

Related Material

Series A0026, Records relating to the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Washington, contain related records.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of the material.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Originally accessioned as parts of boxes 2 and 5 in old series number 503, accession number -309.

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Access Terms

- Plans (orthographic projections)
- Maps (documents)
- New York (State)
- Administering museums
- Photographs
- Museums
- Photonegatives
- Reports
- Photoprints
- Albany (N.Y.)
- Natural history museums
- University of the State of New York
- New York (State). Education Department