



*New York State Archives*

**New York State Engineer and Surveyor Correspondence  
Files B0226**

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## Overview of the Records

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<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	This series contains incoming and outgoing correspondence directed to or generated by the State Engineer and Surveyor's office. The records mainly relate to the construction, maintenance, operation, and administration of the New York State Canal System, particularly the construction of the Barge Canal and the second enlargement of the Erie and lesser canals and feeders.
<b>Creator:</b>	New York (State). State Engineer and Surveyor
<b>Title:</b>	Correspondence files
<b>Quantity:</b>	128.6 cubic feet
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1700-1921
<b>Bulk Date:</b>	1888-1921
<b>Series:</b>	B0226

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## Arrangement

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B0226-83: By type of correspondence

B0226-85: None

B0226-05: Rough chronological

B0226-08: Rough chronological

B0226-10: None

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## Scope and Content Note

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The bulk of this series consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence directed to or generated by the State Engineer and Surveyor's office. The series deals with a variety of subjects related to the construction, maintenance, operation and administration of the New York State canal system. Main topics represented in the correspondence include the construction, maintenance, and operation of the Barge Canal and the second enlargement of the Erie and lesser canals and feeders.

Besides correspondence, this series has a number of different types of records which include, but are not limited to, employment applications; appointments; promotions; transfers; claims brought against the state by individuals or companies which incurred damages to their property during or after canal construction projects; land appropriations by the state; estimates; property surveys; documents relating to abandonment of canal lands previously owned by the state; orders of equipment; documentation of construction methods; and proposals of projects to be built on state canal lands. This series also includes maps, tracings, plans, and blueprints; photographs; reports; work force accounts; meteorological information; inspector's reports; newspaper, journal, and magazine clippings; legal opinions; orders; original and duplicate contracts; and copies of resolutions.

Regular correspondents include private citizens; the Special Deputy State Engineer; Deputy State Engineer; division, assistant, and resident engineers; personnel within the offices of the state comptroller, governor, and attorney general; members of the Canal Board; the Advisory Board of Consulting Engineers; private construction companies and law firms; the Superintendent of Public Works; counsel to the Governor; State Civil Service Commission; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and the New York State Department of Labor.

Accretion B0226-83: The correspondence files for this accretion are arranged into four subseries, related to the type of correspondence.

Subseries 1: Bound Outgoing Correspondence. This subseries deals mainly with the Barge Canal and consists of 17 cubic feet of volumes dating from 1903-1920. The volumes were created by the State Engineer and Surveyor and the Deputy State Engineer. They contain copies of letters typed on Japanese silk fiber tissue paper. The bulk of the correspondence is of a routine, administrative nature. Topics of interest include Barge Canal construction costs; land claims pursued by the state; damage claims filed against the state; progress of work on Barge Canal contracts; opinions on proposed structures to be built on state canal lands by private companies; and canal contract alterations and revisions. The volumes are arranged in chronological order with each document within arranged numerically by a number stamped in the upper right-hand corner. This number corresponds to index cards in Series 10482, Card index to correspondence of the State Engineer and Surveyor.

Subseries 2: Numerically Arranged Incoming Correspondence. This subseries consists of 60 cubic feet of unbound records dating between 1901 and 1921 in which there are significant gaps. The files are comprised mainly of incoming correspondence directed to either the

State Engineer and Surveyor or his deputy. There is a small amount of duplicate outgoing correspondence which is usually attached to incoming correspondence. Also included in the files are resolutions and minutes of meetings of the Advisory Board of Consulting Engineers; statements of accounts; receipts; maps, plans, blueprints and tracings; examinations of contractor's bills; contracts and agreements; special reports; and property descriptions.

The bulk of the correspondence was generated by the various assistant, resident, and division engineers within the department; private citizens; attorneys; the Special Deputy State Engineer; the Superintendent of Public Works; and private construction firms. These records cover similar topics to the bound outgoing correspondence, pertaining mainly to the construction, administration, and maintenance of the Barge Canal. The files are arranged numerically by an assigned number stamped on the upper right-hand corner of each piece of incoming correspondence. This number corresponds to index cards in Series 10482, Card index to correspondence of the State Engineer and Surveyor.

Subseries 3: Incoming Correspondence Arranged Chronologically by year and therein Alphabetically. This subseries contains similar types of records as the previous subseries; the major difference is that the bulk of the records date between 1888 and 1905. Since the construction of the Barge Canal was not started until April 1904 this subseries mainly deals with the enlargement, maintenance, and administration of the Erie and lesser canals.

Topics discussed in this subseries include the implementation of new construction devices and techniques on canal projects; repairs of breaks and damage to canals; claims filed against the state; navigational problems on canals; malfunctioning of lift bridges; tide water heights; designs of bridges spanning canals; proposed canal legislation; contract agreements and revisions; proposed locations of structures on canals; and supervision of canal contracts.

Like subseries 2, the bulk of this subseries was generated by various assistant, division, and resident engineers employed by the state. In addition, there is a significant amount of correspondence from private construction firms seeking to contract for projects or presently engaged in some aspect of canal construction. These files are arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by last name of correspondent; strict chronological arrangement has been lost in places.

Subseries 4: Incoming Land Correspondence. Incoming land correspondence consists of incoming letters directed to the State Engineer and Surveyor, who was also a member of the Board of Commissioners of the Land Office. This position required the State Engineer and Surveyor to examine all papers and maps pertaining to applications for land under water, unappropriated state land, mineral lands, and lands to be sold for taxes which were in arrears. The correspondence, which commences in 1890, was mostly generated by attorneys; private citizens; civil engineers; surveyors; city supervisors; and the offices of the other commissioners of the Land Office.

Accretion B0226-85: This accretion consists of 4 letter books containing copies of correspondence from the Office of the State Engineer and Surveyor. The main topics documented in these volumes include the purchase and sale of land; surveys and maps; and land boundary disputes. Officials of the Office State Engineer and Surveyor represented in

this accretion include B.S. Van Rensselaer; William J. McAlpine; Sylvanus H. Sweet; Horatio Seymour; Silas Seymour; R.L. Fox; Martin Schenck; and Campbell W. Adams.

Accretions B0226-05 and B0226-08: These accretions consist of unbound correspondence, addressed to the Office of the State Engineer and Surveyor, mainly dealing with the sale of land and boundary disputes.

Accretion B0226-10: This accretion contains a variety of different types of materials related to the Office of the State Engineer and Surveyor as well as its predecessor agency, the Office of the Surveyor General. Records in this accretion date from approximately 1700 to 1908. Types of records represented in this accretion include level books for a state road survey; abstracts of patents and other land transaction records; indexes to maps, field books, and sales books; sales books; warrants; correspondence; certificates of resale; receipted vouchers; reports; contracts; bills; maps; and applications for pay increases.

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## Related Information

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### Related Material

10482Series 10482, Card Index to Correspondence Files of the New York State Engineer and Surveyor, indexes subseries 1 and 2 of B0226-83.

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## Other Finding Aids

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### Available at Repository

B0226-83: A card file index is available for subseries 1 and 2. This index is roughly organized chronologically, then alphabetically by recipient, sender or subject. The orange-colored index cards in this series act as an index to subseries 1, Bound Outgoing Correspondence while the white cards index subseries 2, Numerically Arranged Incoming Correspondence. For a more detailed description of the card index see Series 10482, Card index to correspondence of the State Engineer and Surveyor.

B0226-08: Lists of missing/present containers with new/old numbers available.

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## Use of Records

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### Access Restrictions

B0226-08, B0226-10: These accretions are pending conservation treatment and/or reformatting due to heavy water/mold damage, and are therefore restricted.

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## Administrative Information

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### Processing Information

B0226-08: This accretion was originally transferred to the State Archives as part of accretion B0226-83, but was withdrawn from the series for treatment of heavy mold and water damage and was never formally accessioned. Several other boxes that were also withdrawn at that time are still missing or unidentified as of August 2008.

B0226-05: These records were originally transferred to the State Archives by the Department of Transportation's Division of Waterways Maintenance on March 29, 1983. Somehow they became estrayed from the bulk of the series (B0226-83). They were located and identified as a result of a project by State Archives staff in 2005 to integrate or describe estrayed or unidentified records.

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## Access Terms

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- Canals--Administration
- Canals--Contracts and specifications--New York (State)
- Canals--Planning
- Contracting canal construction
- Canals--New York (State)
- Correspondence
- Canals--Maintenance and repair
- Planning canals
- New York (State). Surveyor General
- New York (State). State Engineer and Surveyor