



# *New York State Archives*

**New York State Division of Science and State Museum  
State Museum Director's, State Geologist's, and State  
Paleontologist's Correspondence Files B0561**

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## Table of Contents

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Overview of the Records .....	3
Arrangement .....	3
Scope and Contents .....	4
Related Information .....	5
Other Finding Aids .....	6
Use of Records .....	6
Administrative Information .....	6
Access Terms .....	7

## Overview of the Records

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<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	This series contains correspondence files of the Director of the State Museum, State Geologist, and State Paleontologist with such entities as scientists within and without New York State, museums and institutions of science or higher learning, the Board of Regents, private citizens, the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), and Museum staff. Until 1925, the Director also held the position of State Geologist. Until 1894 and from 1904 to 1925, he also served as State Paleontologist.
<b>Creator:</b>	New York (State). Division of Science and State Museum
<b>Title:</b>	State Museum Director's, State Geologist's, and State Paleontologist's correspondence files
<b>Quantity:</b>	60.75 cubic feet
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1828-1944
<b>Series:</b>	B0561

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Arrangement

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B0561-78: Bulk of the series is chronological by date written. At the end of the series are files arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent, then chronologically by date written; files of undated and miscellaneous date correspondence; lists of State Museum specimens; and files of correspondence arranged by subject.

B0561-78A: Chronological by time period (span of years, one year, or six months), then alphabetical by author. There are occasional files arranged by subject or author for some spans of years.

B0561-01: Chronological.

B0561-09: Arranged roughly by correspondent.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Scope and Content Note

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B0561-78: This series contains incoming correspondence and drafts or copies of outgoing correspondence, and occasional clippings, financial statements, and transcripts of selected letters prepared by James Hall's biographer. The majority of this correspondence is between James Hall and other geologists and paleontologists. The series contains materials spanning Hall's entire career including his years as a student and later faculty member at the Rensselaer School (later Rensselaer Institute), member of the New York State Geological and Natural History Survey (1836-1842), State Geologist of Iowa (1855-1858), State Geologist of Wisconsin (1857-1860), New York State Geologist (1837-1898), State Paleontologist (1843-1898), and the State Museum Director (1866-1894). Included is correspondence between Hall and some of the most prominent scientists of the period, such as Louis Agassiz, Albert S. Bickmore, James D. Dana, Joseph Henry, Alpheus Hyatt, Lewis Henry Morgan, John Wesley Powell, and Benjamin Silliman, Jr. Occasional letters are written in French. Beginning about 1885, an increasingly greater proportion of the correspondence was directed to and answered by other State Museum officials, particularly John C. Smock, Frederick J. H. Merrill, and John M. Clarke.

Some of the specific subjects of the correspondence are: acquisition and disposition of Hall's personal and the State Museum's fossil collections; identification of fossils received by the Museum; exchange or loan of fossils, including type specimens, for scientific study; field work by Museum staff and other scientists (e.g. stratigraphic mapping and specimen collecting); preparation, illustration, and publication of the Paleontology of New York; preparation of the Geologic Map of New York (1894); appropriation and allocation of funds for the continuation of Hall's work; New York State's exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition (1893); and preparation of State Museum exhibits.

B0561-78A: This accretion consists of correspondence and memoranda sent and received by the State Museum Director. Until 1894 and from 1904 to 1925 the Director also held the positions of State Geologist and State Paleontologist; from 1898 to 1904 the Director held the position of State Geologist. Also included in the series is correspondence of the Assistant Director of the Museum, 1885-1894, and a small quantity of James Hall's correspondence, 1858-1869. The position of Director was occupied by James Hall (1870-1894), Frederick J. H. Merrill (1894-1904), John M. Clarke (1904-1925), Jacob Van Deloo (Acting Director 1926), Charles C. Adams (1926-1943), and Robert D. Glasgow (Acting Director, 1943-1944).

The correspondence in the series is between the Director or Assistant Director and scientists within and without New York State, particularly geologists; private collectors; museum suppliers; other museums and institutions of science or higher learning; members of the Board of Regents; private citizens; and Museum staff. In addition to documenting the administration of the State Museum, the correspondence from the years 1858-1894 and 1898-1925 contain information on the Director's activities in his capacities as State Geologist and State Paleontologist.

Subjects of this correspondence include, but are not limited to: acquisition and management of Museum collections; preparation of the Museum Bulletin and geologic maps; distribution

of Museum publications; preparation of exhibits for national and international expositions (e.g.: World Columbian Exposition of 1893, Pan American Exposition of 1901, and Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904); field investigations, especially geological and archaeological, sponsored by the Museum; questions from private citizens regarding geologic formations or specimens answered by the Director in his capacity as State Geologist (see above); discussion of interpretations of geologic evidence; Legislation affecting the Museum; compilation of inventories of museums in the United States; production of road metal (crushed stone) in New York; opening of the Museum in the Education Building; proposed Roosevelt Memorial; and National Research Council.

B0561-01: This accretion consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence, memoranda, reports, newspaper clippings, fiscal and other administrative records documenting the cooperative relationship between the State Museum, under the direction of Charles C. Adams, and the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.). During its existence, the Works Progress Administration provided the State Museum with the support of technical, clerical, and maintenance personnel far in excess of that attainable under the museum's own budget. W.P.A. workers participated in a vast array of projects including: preparation of catalogs and indexes; inventory of museum publications; translation of foreign language publications; organization and care of historic collections; binding of books and periodicals; collection of ground water data; ecological survey of Monroe County; and architectural survey of Shaker and other historic buildings in the state.

B0561-01: W.P.A. workers also assisted in the design and preparation of State Museum exhibits for the 1940 World's Fair, as well as in the maintenance and improvement of the museum's own exhibit facilities. In addition, the Federal Art Project of the W.P.A. in New York City provided the State Museum with numerous loans of exhibit pieces.

B0561-09: This small accretion consists of incoming correspondence and some copies or drafts of Hall's replies. Notable correspondents include Ferdinand V. Hayden, Fielding B. Meek, and Israel Slade.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Related Information

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### Related Material

B1815Series B1815, Index to State Geologist's correspondence files, 1828-1911, indexes this series in part. Series A4208, Incoming correspondence of the Assistant State Paleontologist, State Paleontologist, State Geologist, and State Museum Director

A0260, State Museum Director's, State Geologist's and State Paleontologist's Incoming Correspondence Relating to Research on the Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec

and B0575, State Paleontologist's Correspondence File

and Series B0571, State geologist's and assistant state geologist's correspondence files, are related series.

Series B0579, State Museum Director's, State Geologist's, and State Paleontologist's Correspondence, Drafts of Publications, and Photographs, and series 11843, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence and Subject Files, contain additional Museum correspondence.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Other Finding Aids

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### Available at Repository

Container lists, except for B0561-09 and B0561-13, are available at the repository.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Use of Records

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### Access Restrictions

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

### Items Online

[State Museum Director's, State Geologist's, and State Paleontologist's correspondence files, 1828-1944](#)

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## Administrative Information

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### Custodial History

After James Hall's death, his records were in the custody of George P. Merrill, U.S. National Museum. It is unclear when they were returned to the State of New York.

## Processing Information

B0561-78: Accessioned from State Library as old collection #128, accession number -90. The last folder, 1893-1897, was accessioned as part of old collection #234, accession number -280.

B0561-78A: Accessioned as old collection #406, accession number -280.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Access Terms

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- Geological surveys
- Paleontology--New York (State)
- New York (State)
- Researching
- Photographs
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Museums
- United States--Economic policy, 1933-1945
- Natural history museums
- Architecture--United States
- Supervising
- New Deal, 1933-1939--New York (State)
- Geology--New York (State)
- Collecting
- Geology--Research
- Entomology
- Silliman, Benjamin, 1816-1885.
- Agassiz, Louis, 1807-1873.
- Smock, John Conover, 1842-1926.
- Clarke, John Mason, 1857-1925
- Powell, John Wesley, 1834-1902.
- New York (State). Education Department
- New York State Museum
- Merrill, Frederick J. H. (Frederick James Hamilton), 1861-1916.
- Hall, James, 1811-1898
- Meek, F. B. (Fielding Bradford), 1817-1876.
- Bickmore, Albert S. (Albert Smith), 1839-1914.
- Henry, Joseph, 1797-1878.
- Hayden, F. V. (Ferdinand Vandever), 1829-1887.
- New York State Museum of Natural History
- New York (State). Geological and Natural History Survey
- Morgan, Lewis Henry, 1818-1881.

- **University of the State of New York**
- **State Cabinet of Natural History (N.Y.)**
- **Clarke, Noah T.**
- **Dana, James Dwight, 1813-1895.**
- **Hyatt, Alpheus, 1838-1902.**