

William John Sinclair Archives

VPAR.000302



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2015

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History
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CALL NUMBER: VPAR.000302

CREATOR: Sinclair, William John, 01/01/1877-01/01/1935

TITLE: William John Sinclair Archives

DATES: 1902-1929

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 10 linear feet

LANGUAGE: In English.

SUMMARY: The archives of William John Sinclair, accumulated during his career at Princeton.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ypm.vpar.000302>

Administrative Information

Cite As

William John Sinclair Archives, Vertebrate Paleontology, Yale Peabody Museum

Biographical Sketch

William John Sinclair (b. 1877, d. 1935) was a student of John C. Merriam at the University of California at Berkeley, Sinclair received both his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in 1904. That same year he went to Princeton as a Fellow. His subsequent appointments included Instructor in Geology in 1905, Assistant Professor in 1916, Associate Professor in 1923, and Professor in 1930. Before going to Princeton, he had authored several papers on a variety of subjects, including: descriptions of *Protapirus robustus*, a fossil tapir, and *Mylagaulodon angulatus*, a fossil rodent, both from Oregon; reports on the exploration of Potter Creek Cave in California; and the description of a new species of *Styemys* from the Sierra Nevada of California.

Sinclair began leading expeditions in 1911 and continued to do so for several years. The focus of his collecting centered on 3 areas: the Bighorn Basin of Wyoming, the White River Badlands of South Dakota, and the Miocene and Pliocene beds of the Snake Creek region of Nebraska. He also continued to work on the mammalian cave faunas of California and the fossil faunas of the John Day River Basin of Oregon.

His 1906 paper, "Volcanic Ash in the Bridger Basin of Wyoming," was the first to use microscopic studies to reveal the presence of volcanic ash in the sediments of the Bridger Basin. That Sinclair emphasized the interdependence of stratigraphy and paleontology can be seen in the detailed stratigraphic information that accompanied many of his taxonomic descriptions. He authored the marsupial and typothere portions

of the Reports of the Princeton University Expedition to Patagonia, and with M.S. Farr co-authored the report on birds.

According to Glenn L. Jepsen, Sinclair's student and successor, Scott spent most of his time on his own research, leaving the museum's development and the training of graduate students in Sinclair's capable hands. It was Sinclair who instituted and secured funding for Princeton's William Berryman Scott Fund for research in vertebrate paleontology. He willed his own estate to the university to establish the Sinclair Professorship of Vertebrate Paleontology so that Princeton's tradition of research and teaching in that discipline would continue.

Description of the Material

The archives of William John Sinclair include field notes related to the Princeton collection.

Collection Contents

Series I: Field Notes

American Museum of Natural History Expeditions.
000307

Miscellaneous.
000309

Princeton Expeditions.
000308

Panoramic photographs of the South Dakota Badlands by W.J. Sinclair developed in 1925
002777

Photo of South Dakota Badlands-Turtle Oreodon layer taken by William J. Sinclair
002778

William J. Sinclair plates.
002786

Series II: Research Materials

Notes.
000305

Photographs.
000306

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Corporate Bodies

Princeton University
Yale Peabody Museum
Yale University