

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Archives and Special Collections

James Hall, 1811-1898. Collection, 1843-1896

Accession #: MC 73

Quantity: 9 linear inches.

Access: Open

Biographical Note:

James Hall was born in Hingham Massachusetts in 1811. He graduated from Rensselaer in 1832 and earned a masters degree in 1833. He was a student of both Amos Eaton and Ebenezer Emmons and after graduating remained at Rensselaer as an instructor of chemistry and geology. In 1836 a multi-year survey was established to collect information on the geology and natural history of New York. Hall was eventually given responsibility for the Fourth District in Western New York. At the end of the survey in 1841 Hall was named the first state paleontologist. In 1843 he made his final report on the survey of the fourth geological district, published as *Geology of New York, Part IV* (1843) which became a classic in the field. Hall built a laboratory in Albany, New York to continue his research in stratigraphic geology and invertebrate paleontology. His laboratory became an important center of training for geologists and paleontologists. In 1850 Hall participated in a geological survey of northern Michigan and Wisconsin. He was appointed state geologist for Iowa (1855-1858) and Wisconsin (1857-1860). In 1866 he was made director of New York's Museum of Natural History in Albany. In 1893 he was appointed the State Geologist of New York.

Between 1847 and 1894 Hall published the 13 volume *Paleontology of New York*, his principal contribution in the field. Hall authored more than 30 other books and over 200 research papers. He was a founder of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1856), a charter member of the National Academy of Sciences (1863) and the first president of the Geological Society of America (1889). He served as the first president of the Rensselaer Association of Graduates, the forerunner of the Rensselaer Alumni Association. Hall died in Bethlehem, New Hampshire in 1898.

Content Note:

Items in the James Hall Collection include three letters from Hall to his secretary Jacob Van Deloo; correspondence and memoranda relating to the transfer of a fossil specimen collection

to Rensselaer; a notebook containing dictated notes by Hall on carboniferous limestones of Indiana and Illinois; a water color painting of Niagara Falls by Mrs. James Hall; copies of *A Catalogue of the Published Works of James Hall, LL.D. 1836-1882*; and reprint copies of several of Hall's research articles and reports.

For a collection of 97 titles from James Hall's personal library see: [Rensselaer Libraries Catalog](#).

Provenance

Note:

Items in the James Hall Collection were donated to the Rensselaer Libraries by Gerald and Sue Friedman (2009), the University of Chicago Library (2009) and Lloyd Swift (1982).

Box	Folder		Date
1	1	Correspondence to Jacob Van Deloo (Secretary)	1895,1896,n.d.
	2	Correspondence and memoranda re: transfer of fossil specimen collection to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	1890
	3	Notebook: dictated commentary on carboniferous limestones of Indiana and Illinois	1856
	4	Water color painting of Niagara Falls by Mrs. James Hall (Sarah Aikin Hall) 6.5"x9"	1840 ca.
	5	Drawing of boy, dog, and cattle (labeled "PL.3")	n. d.
	6	<i>A Catalogue of the Published Works of James Hall, LL.D. 1836-1882</i>	1884
	7	Research article and report reprints	1843-1860
	8	Research article and report reprints	1872-1879
	9	Research article and report reprints	1880-1891
2	1	Almanacs	1858-1882
	2	Autograph album with photographs, Albany, NY	March-April 1864