

**Geophysical Laboratory Financial Records, 1905-[1961]  
(Bulk 1905-1919)**



**Carnegie Institution of Washington  
Geophysical Laboratory Archives  
Washington, DC**

Finding aid written by:  
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**Introduction**

*Abstract:* This collection contains early financial records of the Geophysical Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. It consists of orders, invoices, and associated correspondence; equipment and personnel lists; and records of receipts and disbursements. The bulk of the records predate 1920.

*Extent:* 14.5 linear feet: 10 records center cartons, 1 oversized records center carton, 1 map file drawer.

*Acquisition:* The records have been in the possession of the Geophysical Laboratory since their creation.

*Access Restrictions:* There are no access restrictions.

*Copyright:* Copyright is held by the Geophysical Laboratory, Carnegie Institution of Washington. For permission to reproduce or publish please contact the archivist.

*Preferred Citation:* Geophysical Laboratory Financial Records, Geophysical Laboratory, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.

*Processing:* Processed by Shaun Hardy, Ann Mulfort, and Jennifer Snyder, July-September 2005. The fiscal records of the Geophysical Laboratory prior to ca. 1962 were found boxed in 33 large cartons, with no accompanying documentation. The condition of the records was generally poor, with many folders so brittle that they broke apart when handled. Three complete A-Z sequences of vendor files (paid invoices) were pieced together, overlapping in time span – the earliest dating to the founding of the Laboratory in 1905. Fragments of other sequences were also identified. It was decided to select only a portion of these files for retention in the archives. The following selection criteria were applied:

- (1) All records prior to 1920 were retained. (Rationale: these records document the first complete decade of the Laboratory's operation, and also WWI research.)
- (2) Records of special research projects (volcanology expeditions, high pressure, optical glass) were retained, regardless of date.
- (3) Substantive records of individuals associated with the Laboratory (staff scientists, support staff, temporary workers, research associates) were retained, regardless of date, particularly if documenting expenses incurred while doing field work.
- (4) Records of companies or other institutions were retained post-1920 only if of particular historical significance to the work of the Laboratory.

All retained material was consolidated into a single alphabetical sequence, but files were only rough-sorted by initial letter (i.e., all files beginning with “A”, “B”, “C”, etc., are grouped together, but have not been alphabetized beyond that.) Extensive refolding will be necessary for long-term preservation, as the existing folders were simply transferred into acid-free records center cartons.

This collection was processed through the generous support of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

### **Historical Note**

Since its inception in 1905, the Geophysical Laboratory has been one of the world's leading centers of experimental petrology and the application of physical-chemical methods to the study of the Earth and planets. High-pressure research has been a hallmark of the Laboratory's work.

The Geophysical Laboratory Financial Records provide insight into the establishment and initial research programs of the Laboratory, by documenting the expenses incurred in operating the facility and conducting field and laboratory studies.

### **Scope and Content**

This collection consists of the financial records of the Geophysical Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. The bulk of the records date from the establishment of the Laboratory in 1905 through 1919. Record types included orders, invoices, and associated correspondence; equipment and personnel lists; and ledgers of receipts and disbursements. The collection represents an essentially complete financial record of the Laboratory's first decade of operation; it also documents selective projects and investigations in subsequent years, in particular defense-related research and development undertaken during both World Wars.

### **Arrangement**

This collection is arranged in three series:

Series 1: Alphabetical Files, 1905-ca. 1961

Series 2: World War II Contract Files, 1942-1945

Series 3: Ledgers, 1905-1956

### **Series 1: Alphabetical Files, 1905-ca. 1961**

Files in this series consist primarily of orders, invoices, and associated correspondence, filed by vendor name. There are also files with “topical” headings (e.g., deep sea sampling, optical glass, high pressure) that document expenses connected with specific research projects. Records of expenses incurred by staff members on field expeditions – in particular, the Laboratory's early volcanological studies – are filed under the individuals' names. In many cases, these are the only extant records of the logistics of such field work, such as equipment lists. A file for “R. L. Polk Co.” contains complete lists of Laboratory employees (including support staff, who are often difficult to identify from other sources) for several years. Payment records for contractors, temporary workers, and research associates are also included. Files for some individuals are more of the nature of scientific correspondence than financial transactions and should be consulted as an adjunct to the Laboratory's “General Files.” Files concerning instruments and apparatus sometimes include blueprints and technical drawings.

The files are complete only for the period 1905-1919. Records after 1920 were retained only if judged to be of particular significance or offering historical insight.

**Series 2: World War II Contract Files, 1942-1945**

During WWII the Laboratory conducted research on gun barrels under contract with Division 1 of the National Defense Research Committee. The files in this series consist of inventory and accounting records for supplies, equipment, and personnel connected with these investigations.

**Series 3: Ledgers, 1905-1956**

This series consists of twelve numbered ledgers of receipts and disbursements spanning 1905 to 1956, and "Ledger Budget No. 2" covering the period 1930-1947.

**Folder Listing**

	<u>Box</u>
<b>Series 1: Alphabetical Files, 1905-ca. 1961</b>	
Files A-B	1
Files B-D	2
Files D-F	3
Files F-H	4
Files I-L	5
Files M-P	6
Files P-S	7
Files S-T	8
Files U-Y	9
Files Z	10
<b>Series 2: World War II Contract Files, 1942-1945</b>	
Files	10
<b>Series 3: Ledgers, 1905-1956</b>	
Receipts and Disbursements ledgers, Nos. 1-11, 1905-1953	11
Receipts and Disbursements ledger, No. 12, 1953-1956	Map Drawer 18
Ledger Budget, No. 2, 1930-1947	Map Drawer 18

**Subject Terms**

Topics:                    Laboratories -- Finance  
                              Scientific apparatus and instruments -- Finance  
                              Scientific expeditions -- Finance

Corporate Names:      Carnegie Institution of Washington. Geophysical Laboratory.

Forms:                   Administrative records  
                              Correspondence  
                              Financial records  
                              Inventories

**Bibliography**

Yoder, H. S., Jr., *Centennial History of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, Vol. III: The Geophysical Laboratory*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

**Related Collection**

Geophysical Laboratory General Files, 1900-Present, Geophysical Laboratory, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington D.C.