

**Finding aid for the Thomas W. Porter
archaeological, architectural and geological graphics
Collection 042**

Finding aid prepared by Richard H. Harms

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

April 30, 2015

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
August 1989
111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49503
616-988-5400
localhis@grpl.org

Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>Biographical/Historical note</u>	4
<u>Scope and Contents note</u>	5
<u>Administrative Information</u>	5
<u>Related Materials</u>	5
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u>	6
<u>Collection Inventory</u>	7
<u>Series I. Michigan finds, attributed to Prehistoric Hopewell/Adena cultures, 1873-1898, n.d.</u>	7
<u>Series II. Non-Michigan Archaeological artifacts</u>	18
<u>Series III. Geological Sketches, 1889-1893, n.d.</u>	31
<u>Series IV. Building Sketches and Photographs</u>	37

Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Title	Thomas W. Porter Archaeological, Architectural and Geological graphics
Date [inclusive]	1873-1900, no date
Extent	3.0 Linear feet Four boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Thomas W. Porter (1827 - 1911) collected, sold and traded archaeological artifacts from West Michigan during the last third of the nineteenth century. Often working with Wright L. Coffinberry and others from the Kent Scientific Institute, he used his skill as a sketcher to draw facsimiles of Native American and other artifacts. The collection includes maps and illustrations of the Indian burial mounds in Grand Rapids and the items recovered from them, including the "Big Find" in the Converse Mound Group. Also included are sketches of early Grand Rapids building and scenes and other archaeological and geological sketches.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

Thomas W. Porter (24 March 1827 - 24 May 1911) left his native London, England, where he had learned the trade of setting stained glass, in 1846. At the invitation of Henry R. Williams, first mayor of Grand Rapids, Porter came to the area during the late fall of 1850 to find land. He returned to New York state and purchased land warrants (for lands near Lowell and Carson City) from War of 1812 veterans. He moved to the area permanently during the winter of 1853-54, arriving in January 1854.

He worked as a painter, wall paper hanger and contractor throughout his life in Grand Rapids. Early he contracted to paint the various steamboats that plied the Grand River. Later he did contract painting for the Detroit & Milwaukee railroad. He also operated a retail paint and wall paper shop in downtown Grand Rapids.

Porter was a member of the first volunteer fire department in Grand Rapids. He collected coins, stamps and especially archaeological artifacts. Porter combined his professional talent with his archaeological avocation to draw facsimiles of artifacts and site maps.

Porter, along with numerous other local residents, collected, sold and traded archaeological artifacts discovered in West Michigan during the last third of the nineteenth century. Often working as part of expeditions from the Kent Scientific Institute, later Grand Rapids Public Museum/Public Museum of Grand Rapids, Porter was present at the opening of many archaeological sites. Using his skill as a sketcher, he drew facsimiles of some of the uncovered artifacts, of the mounds from which they were recovered, and maps locating these mounds. This collection contains some of these drawings, particularly those from the "Big Find" in the Converse Mound Group in May 30, 1885.

The Converse Mounds, located along the west side of the Grand River from present-day Bridge Street to south of Fulton Street, was the larger of the two mound groups in the Grand Rapids area. Its location in the path of Grand Rapids' growth marked the mound groups early demise. As early as the 1850s the tops of the mounds were leveled with many artifacts removed and skeletal remains reburied. In 1885 while laying a utility line to the Phoenix Furniture plant, workmen excavated the sub-surface artifacts from these mounds.

Concerning the Hopewell/Adena material: the Kent County and area mounds explored by Wright L. Coffinberry, were roughly dated by him in 1875 to a culture at least 250 to 300 years earlier. This dating was based upon the estimated age of the trees often found growing over these mounds. However, as Coffinberry noted, these mound builders could have lived much earlier. It is also known that the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes, living in this area of the country in the 19th century, often desired to bury their remains in or near these more ancient mounds.

Porter also prepared sketches for artifacts collected from Arizona by Grand Rapids physician Louis Barth and sketches of archaeological artifacts from around the world. He sketched early Grand Rapids buildings and scenes as he remembered them upon his arrival.

Scope and Contents note

Illustrated in this collection are projectile points, tools, ornaments, pots, and other objects. Porter sketched the Indian burial mounds from which these objects were recovered and drew maps locating these mounds, including the "Big Find" in the Converse Mound Group, located on the west side of the Grand River, in May 30, 1885.

Porter's work includes some 355 items, primarily graphite drawings on various papers, but also some lists of items. Of these, about 130 are for archaeological items known or believed found in Michigan.

Among Porters sketches are also shown items collected in Arizona by Grand Rapids physician Louis Barth. Additionally, Porter sketched from archaeological catalogs or museum collections, including the Peabody Museum, and the local Kent Scientific Institute.

A few sketches of early Grand Rapids buildings and scenes, as he remembered them upon his arrival, are also recorded here by Porter. Finally, a large number of geological sketches, some from Kent County, Michigan, but many from Livingston Co., New York, document topography and rock.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department August 1989

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Unknown donor, old collection P1:A9 (at least in part)

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Collection 054-43-06 Grand Rapids Public Library Photo Collection. St. Andrews Church. Photo of a T.W. Porter sketch of St. Andrews Church, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1849. (Note: Porter's original sketch

is not found here with his other drawings of Grand Rapids buildings. The sources of this image & the location of the original sketch are not known.)

Collectopm 061, Wright L. Coffinberry & Coffinberry Family Papers

Archaeological Atlas of Michigan / W.B. Hinsdale. M912.H59

“Archaeology” p.14-19. In: History of the City of Grand Rapids / Albert Baxter, 1891.

“Monuments to a Past Culture” p. 2-3. In: A Grand Rapids Sampler / Gordon L. Olson, 1992.

Also included with the “Big Find” sketches is a clipping further explaining the find: “That Archaeological Find” Grand Rapids Eagle, May 31, 1885.

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

Personal Name(s)

- Porter, Thomas W, 1827-1911

Subject(s)

- Indians of North America -- Michigan -- Kent County
- Mounds -- Michigan -- Kent County

Series I. Michigan finds, attributed to Prehistoric Hopewell/Adena culture...

Collection Inventory

Series I. Michigan finds, attributed to Prehistoric Hopewell/Adena cultures, 1873-1898, n.d.

Subseries A. Converse Mounds Group, west side of Grand River, Grand Rapids

	Box	Folder
Reference Articles, 1-3.(Includes item .1, original clipping)	2	1
Orientation drawings by Porter		
	Box	Folder
.3 Location of the Mound Builders Village	1	1
.24 Nos. 1-5 Mounds	1	1
Items found before the "Big Find", pre-May 1885:Dated:		
	Box	Folder
.44 Oversized. Pestle found 1867 in Grand River	1	2
.20-.23 [Mound 9] sketches Aug. 2, 1876 finds	2	2
.35 Feb. 1878, various	2	3

Attributed:

.29-.30 Oct. 1879 Coffinbury Fulton to Butterworth finds	2	3
.26 Mar. 1880 Kitchen Mount	2	3
.27 1880 Front St. find	2	3
.31 June 4, 1883, No. 5	2	3
.19 Apr. 18, 1885 pipe stem find	2	3

Attributed:

	Box	Folder
.25 Fulton St., n.d.	2	3
.28 Watson ST., btw. Fulton and Butterworth, n.d.	2	3

The Big Find, May 30, 1885

	Box	Folder
.2 Diagram, as the surface looked in 1850	1	3
.4 Site maps, 1885 vs 1853	2	4
.5-.7 Artifacts	2	4
.8-.9 Artifacts	1	3

Converse Mound Group, after the "Big Find", post May 1885:

.10-.16 Artifacts	2	4
.17-.18 Artifacts	1	3
Converse Mound Group, after the "Big Find", post May 1885:		
Dated:		
	Box	Folder
.32 Mar. 18, 1890, Arrowhead	2	5
.33-34 Apr. 17, 1890, vase fragments	2	5
Attributed:		
	Box	Folder
.40n.d. Pipe	2	5
Subseries B. Grand Rapids finds and/or Pulcher ownership		
Pulcher items, annotated as his or drawn on his letterhead		
	Box	Folder
.39 Pulcher ownership attribution	2	6
.43 Drawing date Apr. 11, 1884	2	6

Attributed

.45 Drawing date Sept. 3, 1884, found at Wright (Waite)	2	6
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.50 Drawing date Sept. 3, 1884, found at Wright	2	6
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Attributed

	Box	Folder
.55 Oversized. Pulcher ownership, including items found in Alpine Twp./ Kent Co./Mich., Barry Co./Mich. and in Ohio.	3	1

.73 Sand Creek	2	6
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Coffinberry items

	Box	Folder
.36 Obsidian arrow head or volcanic glass	2	7

.37 2 stones	2	7
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.38 Axe. Oversized	3	2
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0.42	2	7
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Porter items

	Box	Folder
.47 Ax, found on S. Prospect St.	2	7

Subseries C. Kent County Finds

Subseries C. Kent County Finds		
Porter items		
	Box	Folder
.41 Spear head, Lowell Farm + a Coffinbury item	2	8
.46 Skinner	2	8
.54 Ceremonial Axe, found in Graton Twp. + others	2	8
.57 Found in town of Graton, Mar. 3, 1885	2	8
Coffinberry		
	Box	Folder
.51 Found at Norton Mound near Grandville	2	9
.148 Found at Norton Mound near Grandville; includes also another image, bead with Ohio, Coffinbury/Le Metayer de Guichainville association.	2	9
.52 Rocking knife. Found at the Workhouse.	2	9
Other		
	Box	Folder

Subseries D. Other Michigan Counties.

.48 Pestle	2	10
.49 Pipe, found by Dr. McNalb, given to Coffinbury	2	10
.53 Axe or skinner, found on Barrett farm, Gratton Twp.	2	10
0.56	2	10
.59 Ceremonial Axe? Found near Ada by A? Plum, left to Coffinbury.	2	10
.60 Totem, found in Courtland	2	10
.61 Combination axe, found in Walker by James White	2	10
Subseries D. Other Michigan Counties.		
Ottawa County		
--Spoonville Mounds, 1876-1877, 1880, 1883, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.63	2	11
0.64	2	11
0.65	2	11

--Tallmadge (Both housed in oversized)

0.66	2	11
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0.67	2	11
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0.68	2	11
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0.69	2	11
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0.7	2	11
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0.71	2	11
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--Tallmadge (Both housed in oversized)

	Box	Folder
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0.72	3	3
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.74 Oversized	3	3
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--Ferrysburg Mounds, 1877, 1880, n.d.

	Box	Folder
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0.75	2	12
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0.76	2	12
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0.77	2	12
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Alleghan County artifacts; 1883, n.d.

.78 Oversized	3	4
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0.79	2	12
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Alleghan County artifacts; 1883, n.d.

	Box	Folder
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0.8	2	13
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0.81	2	13
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Barry County

	Box	Folder
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.91 Oversized, folded	1	4
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Calhoun County**--- Battle Creek, 1885**

	Box	Folder
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0.135	2	15
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Chippewa County

---Stone Mound, [Mackinaw? Island and Marquette] 1896-1897.

---Stone Mound, [Mackinaw? Island and Marquette] 1896-1897.		
	Box	Folder
.138 James Travis association	2	16
0.139	2	16
0.14	2	16
Attributed:		
	Box	Folder
0.136	2	16
0.137	2	16
Clinton County		
	Box	Folder
0.95	2	15
Genesee County, 1882.		
	Box	Folder
.142 Gaines, Mr. Terry	2	17

Gratiot County artifacts; 1882, 1888-90, n.d.

Gratiot County artifacts; 1882, 1888-90, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.82	2	14
0.83	2	14
0.84	2	14
0.85	2	14
.87 Oversized	1	5
0.88	1	5
.89 Oversized	1	5
.90 Overzied	1	5
0.108	1	5
See also .252 Michigan Miscellaneous Geological McNaughton find.	1	5
See also .86 in Ionia Co.	1	5
Ionia County; 1885, 1886, 1889, n.d.		
	Box	Folder

Montcalm County

0.86	2	18
.92 Oversized. Fisk Creek.	3	5
0.93	2	18
0.94	2	18
0.96	2	18
0.97	2	18
Montcalm County		
	Box	Folder
0.99	2	19
0.1	2	19
0.101	2	19
0.102	2	19
0.103	2	19
.104 Oversized	1	6

Newaygo County, 1882.**Newaygo County, 1882.****Box** **Folder**

.143 Found by Dr. McNabb, Fremont Twp., another item on same sheet includes reference to article in Grand Rapids Eagle Aug. 2, 1882.

2

15

Oakland County, 1882.**---Waterford****Box** **Folder**

.141 presented by Mr. Terry, Gaines Station, Genessee Co.

2

17

.144 bought of Mr. Terry, Gaines Station.

2

17

Series II. Non-Michigan Archaeological artifacts**Scope and Contents note**

Including other cultures, as well as possible non-Michigan Prehistoric HOPEWELL/ADENA cultures, and including items copied from publications or other museum.

Subseries A. Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and others**---near Muscatim? On the Mississippi, between Iowa and Illinois****Box** **Folder**

---Gladwell Mound, Franklin Co., Ind.

.106 Oversized	1	7
.134 Oversized. Various, including "Out of a Spoonbill cat fish taken in the Mississippi River"	1	7

---Gladwell Mound, Franklin Co., Ind.

	Box	Folder
0.145. See also Smithsonian Report 1882	4	1

---From Warren K. Moorehead's Work, No.1, including Mich./Arizona/Iowa images

	Box	Folder
0.146	4	1

---Shelby, Ohio

	Box	Folder
0.147	4	1

---Medina, Ohio find

	Box	Folder
0.149	4	1

0.183 Ohio, Coffinbury/Le Metayer de Guichainville

4 1

Attributed? These items found in this folder 2/2000

.184 Ohio	4	1
See also .148 Coffinbury Norton Mound item, with a second image associated Le Metayer ...	4	1
.341 Pennsylvania/Ohio Arrows	4	1
.345 Columbus, Pa.	4	1
.347 Columbus, Pa.	4	1
Attributed? These items found in this folder 2/2000		
	Box	Folder
.150 Fragment	4	1
0.151	4	1
Subseries B. Miscellaneous Archaeology		
--Mr. Van Alstine purchases		
	Box	Folder
0.105	4	2
0.114	4	2

--Jim Travis stationery

--Jim Travis stationery		
	Box	Folder
0.11	4	2
--Norfolk Downs, Mass. + clipping		
	Box	Folder
342	4	2
--William Cullen Bryant ref. + Charles C. Abbott ref.		
	Box	Folder
0.348	4	2
---...from Mounds in the North ... [probably Michigan]		
	Box	Folder
0.308	4	2
--Other		
	Box	Folder
.116 Oversized, Arrows of Mr. Pritchards	1	8
0.115	1	8

Subseries C. Report to the Peabody Museum, 1893.

0.113	1	8
0.111	1	8
0.112	1	8
.109 Oversized, axx was given by Mr. Wetherly to Mr. Pruser? The Jeweler, sold to Chicago gentleman	1	8

0.107 Oversized. Radius of various vessels	1	8
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Subseries C. Report to the Peabody Museum, 1893.

	Box	Folder
.117 + William Cullen Bryant reference	3	6
.118 Sheet 1	3	6
.119 Sheet 2, with reference to Tinkam Collection	3	6
.120 manuscript	3	6

Subseries D. Arizona artifacts; 1883, 1884, 1888, 1889, 1897, n.d. Bath or Bark, Pulcher, Pritcher,

.121 Pulcher Collection		
	Box	Folder

Subseries E. Smithsonian Reports

0.122	4	3
0.123	4	3
0.124	4	3
0.125	4	3
0.126 Oversized	1	9
0.127	4	3
.128 Oversized	1	9
.129 Oversized	1	9
.130 Oversized	1	9
.131 Oversized	1	9
.132 Oversized	1	9
.133 Oversized	1	9

Subseries E. Smithsonian Reports

---1865

---1865		
	Box	Folder
0.165	4	4
0.166	4	4
0.167	4	4
---1882		
	Box	Folder
0.164	4	5
.168 Oversized	3	7
0.169	4	5
0.17	4	5
0.171	4	5
0.172	4	5
0.173	4	5
.174 Gilwell's Mound	4	5

F. Coin rubbings (18th and 19th centuries), n.d.

F. Coin rubbings (18th and 19th centuries), n.d.		
	Box	Folder
.185-.197	4	6
G. Egyptian symbols, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.198	4	7
0.2	4	7
0.201	4	7
H. European artifacts (Britain/France)		
	Box	Folder
.178 Coffinbury and Le Metayer de Guichainville?	4	8
.202 Dublin, Ireland	3	8
0.203	4	8
.204 Coffinbury and Le Metayer de Guichainville?	4	8
0.234	4	8

I.Grecian artifacts, n.d.

I.Grecian artifacts, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.205	4	9
0.206	4	9
0.207	4	9
0.208	4	9
0.209	4	9
J. Normandy, Gaulish Roman, Samian		
Scope and Contents note		
Several or all items are from an exchange of items between Coffinbury and Le Metayer de Guichainville?		
	Box	Folder
0.175	4	10
0.176	4	10
0.177	4	10
0.18	4	10

K. Roman, Samian and Etruscan artifacts, 1882, 1883, 1885, n.d.

0.181	4	10
0.182	4	10
0.199	4	10
K. Roman, Samian and Etruscan artifacts, 1882, 1883, 1885, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
.237 Oversized	3	9
0.238	4	11
0.239	4	11
0.24	4	11
0.241	4	11
0.242	4	11
.243 Coin	4	11
L. South American		
	Box	Folder
.245 Cusco. Oversized	3	10

M. Central American

.349 Cusco. Oversized	3	10
0.216 Oversized	3	10
0.179	4	12
.244 Oversized. Brought by Lieut. Gibon and presented to Mr. Hartman of Grand Rapids	3	10
0.246	4	12
0.247	4	12
M. Central American		
---Honduras artifacts, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.21 Oversized	3	11
.211 Oversized	3	11
0.212	4	13
0.213	4	13
0.214	4	13

N.Japanese artifacts, n.d.

0.215	4	13
0.217	4	13
N.Japanese artifacts, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.218	4	14
0.219	4	14
0.22	4	14
0.221	4	14
0.222	4	14
0.223	4	14
O. Livingston County, NY artifacts		
Scope and Contents note		
Including Gilmore Farm finds, and including general area topography sketches. Note: some sheets also including geological sketches.		
	Box	Folder
0.98	4	15

O. Livingston County, NY artifacts

0.224	4	15
0.225	4	15
0.226	4	15
0.227	4	15
0.228	4	15
0.229	4	15
.230 [oversized]	3	12
0.231	4	15
0.232	4	15
0.233	4	15
0.235	4	15
0.236	4	15
.343 Robert Canum's Farm	4	15
.344 Canawagus Mount	4	15

Series III. Geological Sketches, 1889-1893, n.d.

0.346 Gilmore Farm	4	15
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Series III. Geological Sketches, 1889-1893, n.d.**A. Livingston County, N.Y.****---Oversized**

	Box	Folder
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0.306	3	13
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---McVain's Farm/Quarry. Note: Other McVain drawings on other sheets in the Livingston Co. section.

	Box	Folder
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0.251	4	16
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0.254	4	16
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0.255	4	16
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0.256	4	16
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0.261	4	16
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0.284	4	16
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---Brice's Mill

0.285	4	16
0.288	4	16
0.304	4	16
---Brice's Mill		
	Box	Folder
0.283	4	17
0.287	4	17
0.301	4	17
0.302	4	17
0.303	4	17
---Various, including above		
	Box	Folder
0.248	4	18
0.25	4	18
0.257	4	18

B. Out of the late F. Holcom Col., now owned by Dr. Kirkland, Gratiot?, Gr...

0.259	4	18
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0.26	4	18
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0.29	4	18
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0.294	4	18
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0.297	4	18
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0.3	4	18
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B. Out of the late F. Holcom Col., now owned by Dr. Kirkland, Gratiot?, Grand Rapids

	Box	Folder
0.282	4	19

0.291	4	19
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0.292	4	19
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0.293	4	19
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C. Oversized Kent Co. Geological

	Box	Folder
0.267	1	10

D. Michigan. Geological and Miscellaneous

0.268	1	10
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D. Michigan. Geological and Miscellaneous

	Box	Folder
0.252	4	20

0.263	4	20
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0.286	4	20
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E. Papers 1-6

	Box	Folder
.258 Paper 4	4	21

.262 Paper 3	4	21
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.269 Paper 1	4	21
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.281 Paper 6	4	21
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.298 Paper 2	4	21
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.295 Paper 5 Livingston Co., N.Y. ID	4	21
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F. Miscellaneous and unidentified

F. Miscellaneous and unidentified		
	Box	Folder
0.249	4	22
0.253	4	22
0.264	4	22
0.265	4	22
0.272	4	22
0.274	4	22
0.275	4	22
0.278	4	22
0.279	4	22
0.28	4	22
0.289	4	22
0.299	4	22

G. Ohio and Pennsylvania drawings

0.305	4	22
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0.271 Oversized. Egg, Dinornis Aepiornis, New Zealand.	3	14
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G. Ohio and Pennsylvania drawings**Scope and Contents note**

Including reference to Oxford Coal Mine in Scranton, Pa., Sacket and Wiggins Collection, James Travis [or Travers], Wonderland Museum and Biggest Show on Earth.

	Box	Folder
0.266	4	23
0.27	4	23
0.273	4	23
0.276	4	23
0.277	4	23
0.296	4	23
.307 Oversized	3	15

H. Coal illustrations.

Series IV. Building Sketches and Photographs.**Scope and Contents note**

These items have Porter's numbers

1,1,2,2,3,4,4½,4¾,5,5½,6,6½,7,8,9,10,10½,,11,11½,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,21½,22,23 + 1

Published illustration of Australain Tree Fern House

	Box	Folder
0.325	4	24
.309 to .340	4	24
0.356	4	24
Series IV. Building Sketches and Photographs.		
A. Grand Rapids buildings, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.152	2	18
0.153	2	18
0.154	2	18
0.155	2	18
0.156	2	18

B. Photographs, n.d.

0.157	2	18
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0.158	2	18
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0.159	2	18
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0.16	2	18
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0.161	2	18
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0.162	2	18
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0.163	2	18
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B. Photographs, n.d.**Porter, Thomas W., n.d.**

	Box	Folder
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0.352	2	19
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0.353	2	19
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0.354	2	19
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0.355	2	19
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Porter houses, n.d.

Porter houses, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
0.35	2	19
0.351	2	19