



The New York Public Library
New York Public Library Archives

Guide to the

Alanson T. Briggs records

1901-1913 [bulk 1901-1910]

MssArc RG5 4934

Compiled by David Ferris and Robert Sink; machine-readable finding aid created by Daniella Romano.

Summary

Creator: New York Public Library. Board of Trustees. Agent for Carnegie Sites

Title: Alanson T. Briggs records

Date: 1901-1913 [bulk 1901-1910]

Abstract: Alanson T. Briggs (1871-1946) served as Agent for Carnegie Sites of The New York Public Library from 1901-1910. He assisted the Board of Trustees in selecting sites for branch libraries, appraised them in conjunction with the Board of Appraisors, and negotiated their purchase for the Carnegie program. During this period he also served as Agent for the Carnegie programs in Queens and Brooklyn.

Conditions Governing Access:

Access to the collection is restricted to qualified scholars and researchers through the Office of Special Collections, Room 316.

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Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Compiled by David Ferris and Robert Sink; machine-readable finding aid created by Daniella Romano.

Related Materials:

Creator History

Born in 1871 in Roselle, New Jersey, Alanson T. Briggs was the eldest son of Reverend Dr. Charles A. Briggs, theologian and professor of Hebrew at Union Theological Seminary. In 1892 Alanson graduated from Columbia College and. After graduating from Columbia Law School, he joined the firm of Olin, Rives and Montgomery. Through his connection with this firm and as private secretary to George L. Rives, one of the original trustees of the NYPL, Briggs became Clerk of The Library's Board of Trustees. Briggs was appointed Agent for Carnegie Sites after the City, in response to Andrew Carnegie's offer of \$5,200,000, agreed in 1901 to work with the NYPL in establishing branch libraries in Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx. As agent, Briggs acted as liaison between the City and The Library, in particular the Executive Committee (mainly Rives and Cadwalader) and the Circulation Committee (mainly Billings, Bostwick and later Anderson).

Briggs' main duties as Agent were to assist the Board in selecting sites for branches; to examine and, in conjunction with the Board of Appraisers appointed by the City, to appraise each site approved by the Board; to negotiate the purchase of sites; to report to both the City (the Comptroller and the Board of Estimate and Apportionment) and the Library on the progress of negotiations and construction; and to act as counsel for the Library in any issue connected with the Carnegie program. Briggs worked as Agent for some nine years, until the end of 1910, when the Board relieved him of his position. During this period he also served as Carnegie Agent for the Brooklyn Public Library (appointed February 9, 1903) and for the Queens Public Library (appointed early 1903). Briggs' work as Carnegie Agent in New York City attracted the attention of a group in Oregon, who approached him for help in presenting to Carnegie their request, ultimately successful, for a library for Salem, Oregon.

After leaving NYPL Briggs served as Secretary of the Court House Board and practiced law independently. Around 1931 he moved to California, where he died, in Hollywood, on January 31, 1946.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the Carnegie Agent span the years 1901 to 1913, with the bulk falling in the period 1901 to 1910. The collection consists of letter books and correspondence; typescript, handwritten and printed reports and memoranda; statistical tables and graphs; appraisals; blue prints; deeds; insurance policies; photographs; sketches; clippings; petitions; and invitations to the opening of most of the branch libraries.

While most of the collection pertains to the NYPL Carnegie branches, Briggs' records also contain material on other topics of interest. In addition to the folders containing general information on Carnegie sites in Brooklyn and Queens, there are printed, typescript and handwritten reports, tables and graphs, statistics, and the budgets relating to these two library systems, as well as to the NYPL. The collection also contains a transcript of New York State Library laws (Box 2); memoranda on the history of the New York, Brooklyn and Queens public libraries (Box 2); and material relating to a conflict between the libraries and the Bookbinders' Union (Box 1); to the sale of the Lenox Library building (Box 1); and to the Central Building on 42nd Street (Box 1). Of particular interest are photographs of the Carnegie sites under construction, contained in the Report of the Agent, 1 Apr. 1904 (Box 23 Folder 1).

Arrangement: The collection is organized into five series whose internal arrangement usually reflects the original order of the material. The five series are: I. NYPL General; II. Correspondence; III. Statistics and Budgets; IV. Sites; V. Reports and Charts Although loose correspondence has been rearranged and grouped by year, in general material within each folder has been left unarranged. The series of site

files has been arranged by site, but not consecutively. This reflects the order in which Briggs worked on the Carnegie sites and the priorities of the Library's branch program.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Blueprints
Charts
Photoprints

Subjects

Branch libraries -- New York (State) -- New York
Libraries -- New York (State) -- New York
Library buildings
Library sites
Public libraries -- New York (State) -- New York
Research libraries -- New York (State) -- New York

Names

New York Public Library. Board of Trustees. Agent for Carnegie Sites
Briggs, Alanson T., 1871-1946
Brooklyn Public Library
Lenox Library
New York Public Library
New York Public Library. Board of Trustees. Clerk
Queens Public Library

Container List

Series I. NYPL General 1901-1911 (2 boxes)

Files on various library matters, arranged alphabetically. This series contains typescript and handwritten memoranda; contracts; reports; letters; bills; clippings and printed material. Of particular interest is the material on New York Library laws, on the 42nd Street Building, and on the history and organization of the New York, Brooklyn and Queens public libraries.

- b. 1 f. 1 Carnegie Agent Bills 1903-1911
- b. 1 f. 2 Carnegie Agent Bills - Typewriting, Postage & Telephone 1905-1911
- b. 1 f. 3 Complaint by Brotherhood of Bookbinders, Local No. 77 1908-1909
- b. 1 f. 4 NYC Board of Estimate and Apportionment 1901-1912
- b. 1 f. 5 New York Public Library - Bryant Park Building (Central Building) 1909-1911
- b. 1 f. 6 New York Public Library - Central Building Contracts 1909-1910
- b. 1 f. 7 New York Public Library - Circulation Department 1906-1913
- b. 1 f. 8 New York Public Library - Exterior Equipment - Central Building Landscaping 1905-1908
- b. 1 f. 9 New York Public Library - Lenox Library Property 1889
- b. 1 f. 10 New York Public Library - Map - Reference and Circulation Branches in Manhattan & the Bronx Municipal Reference Library 1911-1914
- b. 1 f. 11 New York Public Library - Sales of Library Properties 1907-1909
- b. 2 f. 1 New York Public Library - School Libraries 1903
- b. 2 f. 2 New York Public Library - Taxes and Assessments 1906-1911
- b. 2 f. 3 NYPL, Queens and Brooklyn Libraries - General Memoranda n.d.
- b. 2 f. 4 New York State - Library Laws n.d.
- b. 2 f. 5 New York State - Legislature's Library Assessment Bills 1908-1910
- b. 2 f. 6 New York State - NYPL Branches Registered or Chartered 1906-1907

Series II. Correspondence 1901-1913 (5 boxes)

Incoming and outgoing correspondence, arranged chronologically. Also included are a folder of undated correspondence, notes and business cards, and a folder of correspondence pertaining to the Carnegie library in Salem, Oregon.

- b. 3 f. 1 Incoming 1901-1903
- b. 3 f. 2 Incoming 1904-1905
- b. 3 f. 3 Incoming 1906-1907
- b. 3 f. 4 Incoming 1908-1910
- b. 3 f. 5 Incoming 1911-1913
- b. 3 f. 6 Incoming - Undated Notes & Business Cards n.d.
- b. 3 f. 7 Incoming - Salem, Oregon. Carnegie Library n.d.
- b. 4 Outgoing letter book 1902 July 15-1903 Nov. 16
- b. 5 Outgoing letter book 1903 Nov. 13-1905 Apr. 20
- b. 6 Outgoing letter book 1905 Apr. 20-1906 Aug. 27
- b. 7 Outgoing letter book 1906 Sept. 1-1907 Sept. 27

Series III. Statistics and Budget 1902-1911 (4 boxes)

Arranged chronologically. These folders contain, in both preliminary notes and tables and in printed reports, statistics on the budget, expenses and circulation of the New York, Brooklyn and Queens public libraries. Of particular interest are the oversize charts and graphic charts.

- b. 8 f. 1 Statistics and budget 1902-1905
- b. 8 f. 2 Statistics and budget 1906
- b. 8 f. 3 Statistics and budget 1907
- b. 9 f. 1 Statistics and budget 1908
- b. 9 f. 2 Statistics and budget 1909
- b. 9 f. 3 Statistics and budget 1909
- b. 10 f. 1 Statistics and budget 1910
- b. 10 f. 2 Statistics and budget 1910
- b. 10 f. 3 Statistics and budget 1910
- b. 10 f. 4 Statistics and budget 1911
- b. 11 f. 1 Statistics and budget 1911
- b. 11 f. 2 Corporate Stock Budget 1903-1910
- b. 11 f. 3 Corporate Stock Budget 1911
- b. 11 f. 4 "Comparison of Expenditures, Circulation, Cost of Circulation Per Volume, Fines, Fines/1,000 of Circulation," 1905-1909 (Bound Volume.)

Series IV. Sites 1901-1913 (9 boxes)

Arranged by site, and chronologically. The first and largest part of this series is made up of files on each Carnegie site in Manhattan, Richmond and the Bronx. These contain correspondence, reports, memos, appraisals, petitions, sketches, blueprints, deeds, insurance policies and invitations to the opening of most of the branch libraries. There are also folders with material on Carnegie branches in Brooklyn and Queens.

- b. 12 f. 1 General Material and Memoranda 1901-1911
- b. 12 f. 2 General Printed Material 1901-1907
- b. 12 f. 3 General Printed Material 1909-1910
- b. 12 f. 4 Site #1. 222-24 E. 79th Street [Yorkville] n.d.
- b. 12 f. 5 Site #2. 31-33 East Broadway [Chatham Square] n.d.
- b. 12 f. 6 Site #3. 444 Amsterdam Avenue [St. Agnes] n.d.
- b. 12 f. 7 Site #4. 569 E. 140th Street, Bronx [Mott Haven] n.d.
- b. 13 f. 1 Site #5. 1866 Washington Street (Bronx) [Tremont] n.d.
- b. 13 f. 2 Site #6. 224-26 E. 125th Street [Harlem Branch] n.d.
- b. 13 f. 3 Site #7. 209-11 W. 23rd Street [Muhlenberg] n.d.
- b. 13 f. 4 Site #7. 209-11 W. 23rd Street [Muhlenberg] n.d.
- b. 13 f. 5 Site #8. 190-92 Amsterdam Avenue [Riverside] n.d.
- b. 13 f. 6 Site #9. 112-14 E. 96th Street [96th St.] n.d.
- b. 13 f. 7 Site #10. 103-03 W. 135th Street [135th St.] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 1 Site #11. 613 Rivington Street [Rivington] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 2 Site #12 St. George, S.I. [St. George] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 3 Site #12. St. George, S.I. [St. George] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 4 Site #12. St. George, S.I. [St. George] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 5 Site #13. 30-35 Streets, 8-10th Avenues [West 40th Street] n.d.

Series IV. Sites (cont.)

- b. 14 f. 6 Site #14. 331-33 E. 10th Street [Tompkins Square] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 7 Site #15. 222-26 E. 23rd Street [Epiphany] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 8 Site #16. 328 E. 67th Street [67th Street] n.d.
- b. 14 f. 9 Site #17. E. 51st Street n.d.
- b. 14 f. 10 Site #18. Courtlandt Avenue and 161st Street, Bronx [Melrose] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 1 Site #19. Port Richmond, S.I. [Port Richmond] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 2 Site #20. West New Brighton, S.I.
- b. 15 f. 3 Site #21. 83 Canal Street, S.I. [Stapleton] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 4 Site #22. Tottenville, S.I. [Tottenville] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 5 Site #24. 192-94 East Broadway. [Seward Park] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 6 Site #25. 121-27 E. 58th Street [58th Street] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 7 Site #26. 172 E. 110th Street [Aguilar] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 8 Site #27. 922 St. Nicholas. [Washington Heights] n.d.
- b. 15 f. 9 Site #28. 66-68 Leroy Street [Hudson Park] n.d.
- b. 16 f. 1 Site #29. 303-05 E. 36th Street [St. Gabriel] n.d.
- b. 16 f. 2 Site #29. E. 32nd Street [St. Gabriel] n.d.
- b. 16 f. 3 Site #30. 388-92 East Houston. [Hamilton Fish Park] n.d.
- b. 16 f. 4 Site #31. 742-44 10th Avenue [Columbus] n.d.
- b. 16 f. 5 Site #32. 201-03 W. 115th Street [115th Street] n.d.
- b. 16 f. 6 Site #33. 610 169th Street, Bronx [Morrisania] n.d.
- b. 16 f. 7 Site #33. 610 169th Street, Bronx [Morrisania] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 1 Site #34. 1465-66 Avenue A. [Webster] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 2 Site #35. 503-05 W. 145th Street [Hamilton Grange] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 3 Site #36. 78 W. 168th Street, Bronx [High Bridge] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 4 Site #37. 9-11 W. 124th Street [West Harlem] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 5 Site #38. W. 57th Street n.d.
- b. 17 f. 6 Site #40. 427-29 E. 87th Street n.d.
- b. 17 f. 7 Site #42. Prospect Avenue and 163rd Street, Bronx [Woodstock] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 8 Site #44. (Manhattan) n.d.
- b. 17 f. 9 Site #47. [Ottendorfer] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 10 Site #48. [Columbia University Branch] n.d.
- b. 17 f. 11 Site #49. Broadway near Dyckman Street (Manhattan) n.d.
- b. 18 f. 1 Site Memoranda - Moneys Received from Mr. Carnegie n.d.
- b. 18 f. 2 Site Memoranda - #1 Yorkville n.d.
- b. 18 f. 3 Site Memoranda - #2 Chatham Square n.d.
- b. 18 f. 4 Site Memoranda - #3 St. Agnes n.d.
- b. 18 f. 5 Site Memoranda - #4 Mott Haven n.d.
- b. 18 f. 6 Site Memoranda - #5 Tremont n.d.
- b. 18 f. 7 Site Memoranda - #6 125th Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 8 Site Memoranda - #7 Muhlenberg n.d.
- b. 18 f. 9 Site Memoranda - #8 Riverside n.d.

Series IV. Sites (cont.)

- b. 18 f. 10 Site Memoranda - #9 96th Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 11 Site Memoranda - #10 135th Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 12 Site Memoranda - #11 Rivington Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 13 Site Memoranda - #12 St. George n.d.
- b. 18 f. 14 Site Memoranda - #13 West 40th Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 15 Site Memoranda - #14 Tompkins Square n.d.
- b. 18 f. 16 Site Memoranda - #15 Epiphany n.d.
- b. 18 f. 17 Site Memoranda - #16 67th Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 18 Site Memoranda - #18 Melrose n.d.
- b. 18 f. 19 Site Memoranda - #19 Port Richmond n.d.
- b. 18 f. 20 Site Memoranda - #21 Stapleton n.d.
- b. 18 f. 21 Site Memoranda - #22 Tottenville n.d.
- b. 18 f. 22 Site Memoranda - #23 Kingsbridge n.d.
- b. 18 f. 23 Site Memoranda - #24 Seward Park n.d.
- b. 18 f. 24 Site Memoranda - #25 58th Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 25 Site Memoranda - #26 Aguilar n.d.
- b. 18 f. 26 Site Memoranda - #27 Washington Heights n.d.
- b. 18 f. 27 Site Memoranda - #28 Hudson Park n.d.
- b. 18 f. 28 Site Memoranda - #29 St. Gabriel's Park n.d.
- b. 18 f. 29 Site Memoranda - #30 Hamilton Fish n.d.
- b. 18 f. 30 Site Memoranda - #31 Columbus n.d.
- b. 18 f. 31 Site Memoranda - #32 115th Street n.d.
- b. 18 f. 32 Site Memoranda - #33 Morrisania n.d.
- b. 18 f. 33 Site Memoranda - #34 Webster n.d.
- b. 18 f. 34 Site Memoranda - #35 Hamilton Grange n.d.
- b. 18 f. 35 Site Memoranda - #36 Highbridge n.d.
- b. 18 f. 36 Site Memoranda - #37 Harlem n.d.
- b. 18 f. 37 Site Memoranda - #38 Fort Washington n.d.
- b. 18 f. 38 Site Memoranda - #42 Woodstock n.d.
- b. 18 f. 39 Site Memoranda - George Bruce n.d.
- b. 18 f. 40 Site Memoranda - Central Building - Kennedy Memorial n.d.
- b. 19 f. 1 Borough Sites - Bronx n.d.
- b. 19 f. 2 Borough Sites - Manhattan n.d.
- b. 19 f. 3 Borough Sites - Staten Island n.d.
- b. 19 f. 4 Borough Sites - Brooklyn n.d.
- b. 19 f. 5 Borough Sites - Queens n.d.
- b. 20 f. 1 Carnegie Branch Data - General Data; Amounts Furnished by Mr. Carnegie;
Cash Balances by Site; Monthly Balances; Reports; Individual Branches
(Sites #1-16, 18-19, 21-38, 42) 1901-1913 (Bound volume.)

Series V. Reports & Charts 1904-1911 (4 boxes and 1 oversize folder)

Arranged by format. This series comprises the reports of the Carnegie Agent to the NYPL, the NYC Mayor and Comptroller and three volumes of reports to NYPL. There are, in addition, a single folder of loose typescript reports covering the years 1901-1911; a manuscript volume containing photographs of the Carnegie sites; a typescript volume containing photographs of the Carnegie sites; a typescript report for 1907 and a printed report for 1909. Finally, there are charts and graphs portraying statistical data.

- b. 21 f. 1 Reports to the NYC Comptroller 1909
- b. 21 f. 2 Reports to the NYC Mayor 1901, 1905-1911
- b. 22 f. 1 Reports to NYPL on Sites 1903 Mar. 5-1907 Sept. 3 (Bound volume.)
- b. 22 f. 2 Reports to NYPL on Sites 1906 Nov. 15-1910 Dec. 31 (Bound volume.)
- b. 22 f. 3 Reports to NYPL on Sites 1907 Jan. 5-1909 Nov. 4 (Bound volume.)
- b. 23 f. 1 Report of the Agent - Acquisition of Sites for the Boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Richmond, Brooklyn and Queens 1904 Apr. 1 (Manuscript with photographs.)
- b. 23 f. 2 Report of the Agent - Acquisition of Sites for the Boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Richmond, Brooklyn and Queens 1905 Apr. 1 (Printed.)
- b. 23 f. 3 Report of the Agent - Acquisition of Sites for the Boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Richmond, Brooklyn and Queens 1907 Apr. 1 (Printed.)
- b. 23 f. 4 Report of the Agent - Acquisition of Sites for the Boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Richmond, Brooklyn and Queens 1909 Apr. 1 (Typescript.)
- b. 24 f. 1 "Total Cost to the City of New York of the Library System," 1906-1911 (One rolled set of tables.)
- b. 24 f. 2 "Increase in Population of Municipality Compared with Increase within the Area of the Present City Compared with Increase in the Boroughs by Decades Prior to Consolidation and by Year Since 1656" 1730-1910 (One rolled table and graphic chart.)
- b. 24 f. 3 "The Growth of Population; of Municipal Area, Budget, Tax Rate and Valuation; and of Population by Boroughs" 1700-1907 (One rolled chart.)
- b. 24 f. 4 "The Growth of Population and of Municipal Budget, Debt, Valuation and Tax Rate in Richmond, Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan" 1830-1910 (One rolled table and graphic chart.)
- Map case. "NYPL. Circulation Department. Statement of Annual and Semi-Annual Expenditures (Classified)" 1904-1910
- Map case. "NYPL. Circulation Department. Statement of Estimated Classified Expenditures (Estimated)" 1905-1910
- Map case. Total Expenditures for Construction and Maintenance of the Carnegie Branches of NYPL n.d.