

John L. Ridgway Biographical Sketch

John L. Ridgway was an artist and author who was active in the field of scientific illustration during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He held prominent positions at leading institutions of scientific inquiry, including chief illustrator, United States Geological Survey and scientific illustrator and artist, Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C. and California Institute of Technology.

John L. Ridgway's talent and knowledge of natural history subjects also drew the attention of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. The Ridgway scrapbook contains images of mastodons, sabre-toothed tigers and other prehistoric mammals the artist created for these institutions.

John L. Ridgway is especially well-known for his illustrations of avian species. These works have been reproduced in numerous scholarly publications. The high quality of his bird illustrations was also recognized by the Singer Manufacturing Company which reproduced a selection of these as a set of trade cards titled the "American Songbirds". The John L. Ridgway scrapbook contains proof sheets of the "American Songbirds" series, as well as bird, reptile, and mammal illustrations, images of geologic formations and ethnographic subjects.

In addition to being a prolific illustrator, John L. Ridgway authored articles and a comprehensive treatise on scientific illustration. The visual materials of the Ridgway scrapbook closely parallel the text of *Scientific Illustration*, a practical manual in book form first published in 1938 by Stanford University Press and by Oxford University, London. A manuscript draft of Ridgway's text for this book is included in the Ridgway manuscript collection.

The John L. Ridgway scrapbook contains materials that represent some of the most important developments in the artist's career. Assembled by Ridgway, the scrapbook is part of a larger collection which includes watercolors, drawings and written material by John L. Ridgway and numerous written materials and several artworks by his brother, Robert Ridgway, who was an important American ornithologist.