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## Suggestions to Correspondents

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## NEBRASKA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

VOLUME 7, PART 2.

## SUGGESTIONS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BY ERWIN HINCKLEY BARBOUR.

The office of the State Geological Survey is a busy one, and we urge correspondents to continue their consideration, keeping in mind that each is but one of many who are writing, and that it is not always possible for this office to render prompt answers.

The exactions of class work, field work, and the examination of specimens often necessitates delay. Samples and correspondence accumulate during the writer's absence on frequent necessary trips in the State. He is engaged in active field work during all vacations; accordingly all letters must for the time stand unanswered.

For all these delays, we bespeak for the future the friendly consideration which has been given in the past. It must be remembered that those who are in extreme haste can get immediate attention by sending their samples and a check or bank draft to mining experts and commercial geologists in any of our large cities. Ordinarily the determinations can be made here for clients without cost, providing they can grant us a little necessary time.

Again let correspondents be plainly reminded that the State Geologist of Nebraska carries the exacting and ever-increasing burdens of this office without compensation of any kind whatever.

## MAILING SAMPLES.

In order to forestall inconvenience and the embarrassment of possible penalties for correspondents, we quote some instructions found in the United States Postal Laws governing the mailing of samples and specimens. It should be borne in mind that all packages which are sealed are rated as first class matter, and are paid for at the rate of letter postage. Ordinary packages, tied but not sealed, are counted fourth class and go at a much cheaper rate than first class, providing they contain no correspondence.

## "PERMISSIBLE ADDITIONS TO FOURTH CLASS MATTER"

According to Section 483 governing fourth class matter, it is stated that a person sending one or more samples in an unsealed package is entitled to put upon the respective samples "any marks, numbers, names, or letters for the purpose of description, \* \* \* and any printed matter not in the nature of a personal correspondence".

Section 484. "Matter of the second, third, or fourth class containing any writing or printing in addition to the original matter, other than as authorized

in the preceding section, shall not be admitted to the mails, nor delivered except upon payment of postage for matter of said class, deducting therefrom any amount which may have been prepaid by stamps affixed, unless by the direction of the Postmaster General such postage shall be remitted, and any person who shall knowingly conceal or enclose any matter of a higher class in that of a lower class and deposit, or cause the same to be deposited, for conveyance by mail, at a less rate than would be charged for both such higher and lower class matter, shall for every such offense be liable to a penalty of \$10.00 and not more than \$100.00."

Section 494. "Intoxicating liquors (ardent, vinous, spiritous, or malt), poisons, explosives, or inflammable articles, live or dead (but not stuffed) animals, insects and reptiles (except as prescribed in Section 496), guano, or any articles exhaling a bad odor must not under any circumstances be admitted to the mail."

The above rules reduced to very simple terms may be stated as follows:

Wrap the material in such a way that it cannot damage other mail matter, tie securely, but do not seal, (for packages must admit of examination), address to destination in the usual way, write your own name and address in the upper left hand corner, attach the necessary stamps, and mail. Do not enclose your letter in the package with the sample, but mail it in a separate envelope. If more than one sample is sent in a package, it is well to mark the samples a, b, c, or 1, 2, 3, as preferred. The observance of these simple rules will certainly save this office great inconvenience and will also save our clients delay and consequent displeasure.

Apparently it is through thoughtlessness or lack of knowledge rather than through any willful intention to defraud the mail, that people enclose letters in packages containing samples. Despite right intentions, however, it is wrong to enclose such letters; besides it is illegal.

It has frequently happened that letters accompanying samples in this illegal way have been so folded in the boxes or so folded around them that in unpacking they were lost sight of. The samples were laid away awaiting instructions, which supposedly would follow, thus greatly delaying an answer. In one instance a letter, tinted like the box in which the sample was sent, was neatly folded so as to exactly fit the box, and was consequently mistaken for a part of the lining. This box and the sample it enclosed, which happened to be one of some consequence, were laid aside awaiting a letter for seven years before the communication concealed in the top of the lid was discovered. Had the sender of this package put his name and address in the customary place, on the upper left hand corner of the envelope, this office would not have been embarrassed, and he would have been duly notified of the nature of his sample.

It frequently happens that a number of exactly similar samples, such as native pumice, are received from various parts of the state in a single mail, and it is sometimes impossible, in spite of our best efforts, to tell "who sent which package". Not infrequently it has caused more trouble to straighten out such tangles as this than to examine and report at length upon the samples. Yet all this unnecessary waste of time could have been saved by writing the sender's name and address on the upper left hand corner of the package. The work of the State Survey has increased to such an extent that it is no longer possible for us to attempt to straighten out these irregularities for our clients, and in the future it seems likely that we will be compelled to discard all samples which are not correctly marked so that we can distinguish them without long labor and study.

#### REGISTERED MAIL.

Samples of value to the sender should be sent by registered mail. It occasionally happens that people find pearls in muscle shells, which they wish to have examined, and which are sometimes of considerable worth. All such material should be sent by registered mail. Of late quite a number of garnets have been found in sand in southeastern Nebraska, some of these have been sent to lapidaries and cut, making gems of value to the owners at least. Quite a number of semi-gem stones, such as Quartz, Agate Moss Agate, Carnelian, Odontolite, etc., have been cut. These are subsequently sent to this office for examination and it is to be recommended in all such cases that the package be properly registered before it is forwarded. Matter too large to go by mail should be sent by prepaid express or freight. Where specimens of any kind are sent as donations to the State Museum, they may be sent collect.

#### ANALYSES.

Correspondents can usually be saved the expenses incident to exact chemical analyses. Ordinarily they are unnecessary. All exact analyses are made in the Department of Chemistry, but determination of sufficient exactness to meet ordinary demands can be made in this office without cost to citizens. The Department of Chemistry is established by law to teach the youths of the State the science of Chemistry, so that in later life they can apply it to the benefit of our various state industries, and no provision whatever is made for

analyses of samples for people at large. The University has found that to make the free chemical analyses which are called for would cost six to eight thousand dollars more per year than is granted to that department.

The time of each instructor in chemistry is completely consumed in class work. When an analysis is made, he is compelled to employ some advanced student to make it at odd hours during the day and night. Sometimes such an advanced assistant will spend several days making an analysis. When a man with a plow spends several days at work in the field, he charges for the service rendered, and in all conscience the man who spends as many days at the hard work of making exact chemical analyses should be paid also. The one is work just as much as the other. The analyses made at the University are given to the citizens at cost. Oftentimes analyses which would otherwise cost clients twenty to thirty dollars are rendered for five or six.

The Nebraska Geological Survey has been many times called upon to have analyses made "as soon as possible", "an important transaction is at stake", "present bill for the analysis and we will honor it with payment". We still hold several such unredeemed promises. Responding to such requests, the writer engaged the chemists, promised them their pay, and, being morally responsible, made his promises good out of his own pocket. Recently a councilman of a neighboring city wrote of threatened danger to the people from polluted water, begged that a water analysis be made in haste, and stated that the bill would be honored. It seemed in good faith, but when the analysis was presented and with it a bill, the City Council repudiated it. This sort of thing has happened often, and the writer believes that under the circumstances correspondents can take no exception when they are requested to write directly to the Department of Chemistry whenever they need exact chemical analysis and assays.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA,

Lincoln, March, 1912.