Collection Summary
Title: Robert Wilson Shufeldt Papers
Span Dates: 1836-1910
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1860-1880)
ID No.: MSS52688
Creator: Shufeldt, Robert Wilson, 1822-1895
Extent: 15,000 items ; 37 containers ; 15 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Naval officer, explorer, and diplomat. Correspondence, journals, diaries, notebooks, logbooks, subject files, newspaper clippings, and printed matter relating to Shufeldt’s career in the navy and as an explorer and diplomat.

Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Atkinson, Edward, 1827-1905--Correspondence.
Bache, A. D. (Alexander Dallas), 1806-1867--Correspondence.
Bancroft, George, 1800-1891--Correspondence.
Bell, Henry Haywood, 1808-1868--Correspondence.
Boggs, Charles Stuart, 1811-1888--Correspondence.
Bradford, William, 1823-1892--Correspondence.
Butler, Benjamin F. (Benjamin Franklin), 1795-1858--Correspondence.
Carpenter, Cyrus Clay, 1829-1898--Correspondence.
Dahlgren, John Adolphus Bernard, 1809-1870--Correspondence.
Du Pont, Samuel Francis, 1803-1865--Correspondence.
Farragut, David Glasgow, 1801-1870--Correspondence.
Fish, Hamilton, 1808-1893--Correspondence.
Hargous, P. A. (Peter A.)--Correspondence.
Henshaw, David, 1791-1852--Correspondence.
Hopkins, Alfred--Correspondence.
Jenkins, Thornton A. (Thornton Alexander), 1811-1893--Correspondence.
Kennedy, John Pendleton, 1795-1870--Correspondence.
Kondō, Masuki--Correspondence.
Li, Hongzhang, 1823-1901--Correspondence.
Mackenzie, Alexander Slidell, 1803-1848--Correspondence.
Mason, J. M. (James Murray), 1798-1871--Correspondence.
Perry, Matthew Calbraith, 1794-1858--Correspondence.
Porter, David D. (David Dixon), 1813-1891--Correspondence.
Seward, William Henry, 1801-1872--Correspondence.
Shufeldt family--Correspondence.
Shufeldt, Robert Wilson, 1822-1895.
Smith, Truman, 1791-1884--Correspondence.
Stevens, Benjamin Franklin, 1833-1902--Correspondence.
Walker, John Grimes, 1835-1907--Correspondence.
Welles, Gideon, 1802-1878--Correspondence.

Organizations
Ticonderoga (Sloop of war)
Subjects
Diplomatic and consular service, American--Cuba.
Voyages around the world.

Places
Africa--Discovery and exploration.
Africa--Foreign relations--United States.
Asia--Foreign relations--United States.
Cuba--Foreign relations--United States.
Mexico--Discovery and exploration.
Tehuantepec, Isthmus of (Mexico)--Surveys.
United States--Foreign relations--1861-1865.
United States--Foreign relations--19th century.
United States--Foreign relations--Africa.
United States--Foreign relations--Asia.
United States--Foreign relations--Cuba.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations.

Occupations
Diplomats.
Explorers.
Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance
The papers of Robert Wilson Shufeldt, naval officer, explorer, and diplomat, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1949, 1952, and 1954, and converted to a gift in 1998.

Processing History
The papers of Robert Wilson Shufeldt were arranged and described in 1968. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Additional Guides
In 1969 the Library published Robert Wilson Shufeldt, a Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress.

Copyright Status
The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Robert Wilson Shufeldt is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions
The papers of Robert Wilson Shufeldt are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Robert Wilson Shufeldt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
## Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1822, Feb. 21</td>
<td>Born, Red Hook, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Appointed midshipman in the U.S. Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-1840</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>United States</em>, Home Squadron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1841</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Potomac</em>, Brazil Squadron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841-1842</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Marion</em>, Brazil Squadron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842-1843</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Bainbridge</em>, Home Squadron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843-1844</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Potomac</em>, Home Squadron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844-1845</td>
<td>Duty at the Naval School, Philadelphia, Pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Promoted to passed midshipman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845-1846</td>
<td>Coast survey duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>United States</em>, Africa Squadron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846-1848</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Marion</em>, Africa and Mediterranean Squadrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Married Sarah Hutchins Abercrombie (died 1871)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Morris</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1851</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Atlantic</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Duty in USS <em>Georgia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851-1854</td>
<td>On leave from the navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>Commissioned lieutenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resigned from the navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854-1856</td>
<td>Chief officer, Collins Steamship Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856-1861</td>
<td>Commanded commercial ships and helped survey the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-1863</td>
<td>Consul general, Havana, Cuba 1862 Served on a mission to Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Commissioned commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commanded USS <em>Conemaugh</em>, South Atlantic Blockade Squadron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863-1865</td>
<td>Commanded USS <em>Proteus</em>, East Gulf Squadron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1865-1866 Commanded USS *Hartford*, East India Squadron
1866-1868 Commanded USS *Wachusett*, East India-Asiatic Squadron
1868 Ordnance duty, New York Navy Yard
1868-1869 Commanded New York Naval Rendezvous
1869-1870 Commanded USS *Minantonomoh*
1870 Promoted to captain
Ordnance duty, Portsmouth Navy Yard
1870-1871 Commanded Tehuantepec (Mexico) Survey Expedition
1871-1872 Commanded USS *Wabash*, European Squadron
1872-1873 Commanded USS *Plymouth*, European Squadron
1873-1875 Executive officer, New York Navy Yard
1875-1878 Chief of the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting
1878-1880 Commanded USS *Ticonderoga* on a world cruise sponsored by the Department of the Navy and Department of State
1881 Naval attaché, Peking, China
1882-1884 President, Naval Advisory Board
1883-1884 Superintendent, Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.
1884 Promoted to rear admiral
Retired from the navy
1889 Declined post of U.S. minister to China
1895, Nov. 6 Died, Washington, D.C.

**Scope and Content Note**

The papers of Robert W. Shufeldt (1822-1895) span the years 1836-1910, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1860-1880. Shufeldt’s forty-five year naval career was interrupted by a nine-year period in the merchant marine service and in surveying for a proposed isthmian canal route. The correspondence for his broken-service years, however, includes many papers of interest on naval affairs.

The Shufeldt collection consists primarily of correspondence, letterbooks, and subject files, supplemented by diaries, notebooks, journals, logbooks, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and a small file of material concerning explorations in Africa by Shufeldt’s youngest son, Mason. The topics of interest are the nineteenth-century navy, its growth and development; Civil War naval and diplomatic activities; foreign relations in the 1870s and 1880s, especially with Africa and Asia; and the Tehuantepec, Mexico, surveying expeditions. The collection is organized into nine series: **Diaries**.
Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals; Letterbooks, Letterpress Books, and Letter Index Books; Official Correspondence; General Correspondence; Subject File; Newspaper Clippings; Printed Matter; Miscellany; and Mason A. Shufeldt File.

Shufeldt resigned his commission in the navy in 1854 and entered the merchant marine to command the Quaker City. Later, he became interested in the construction of a canal across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico and in 1860 led an expedition through that region. In 1861, Shufeldt was appointed consul general to serve in Cuba. Correspondents for the years 1839-1861 include A. D. Bach, George Bancroft, Charles Stuart Boggs, Benjamin F. Butler, John Adolphus Dahlgren, Samuel Ffrancis Du Pont, David Glasgow Farragut, John Pendleton Kennedy, James Murray Mason, Matthew Calbraith Perry, David D. Porter, and Gideon Welles.

Shufeldt returned to active duty in the navy in 1863 with the rank of commander. During the Civil War, he served both ashore and afloat. After the Civil War, Shufeldt served at sea in the Far East and in 1868 he returned to the United States and was assigned ordnance duty ashore in New York.

In 1870, Shufeldt was promoted to the rank of captain and was assigned special duty in command of a survey expedition to Tehuantepec, Mexico. After the exploration, Shufeldt recommended that this territory be considered as a likely site for a transisthmus canal.

In 1878, Shufeldt was given command of the Ticonderoga that was to sail on a round-the-world cruise. The documentation for the cruise fills about one-third of the containers in this collection. After returning to the United States in 1881, he was reassigned to Peking, China, as the naval attaché.

Shufeldt was appointed president of the Naval Advisory Board, for which he served two years before retiring in 1884. It was during this last tour of duty that he helped formulate the plans for a new navy incorporating the technological advance from sail to steam propulsion and from wood to iron and steel hulls.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in nine series:

- Diaries, Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals, 1865-1880
- Official Correspondence, 1839-1889
- General Correspondence, 1838-1900
- Subject File, 1861-1883
- Newspaper Clippings, 1859-1899
- Printed Matter, 1849-1910
- Miscellany, 1836-1893
- Mason A. Shufeldt File, 1883-1893
Description of Series

**Container**  
**Series**

**BOX 1-2**  
**Diaries, Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals, 1865-1880**  
Diaries, notebooks, log abstracts, logbooks, navigational data, journals, and other writings.  
Arranged chronologically.

**BOX 3-4**  
**Letterbooks, Letterpress Books, and Letter Index Books, 1864-1880**  
Copies of correspondence and reports sent by Shufeldt as commander of various ships.  
A few of the volumes are indexed.

**BOX 5-10**  
**Official Correspondence, 1839-1889**  
Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent.  
Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning Shufeldt’s years in Cuba, the Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the world cruise in the Ticonderoga is in the Subject File.

**BOX 11-17**  
**General Correspondence, 1838-1900**  
Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent, mostly of a personal and family nature, but some material relating to Shufeldt’s activities in Cuba, Mexico, and elsewhere.  
Arranged chronologically.

**BOX 18-29**  
**Subject File, 1861-1883**  
Correspondence, reports, memoranda, manuscripts, maps, printed matter, newspaper clippings, drafts of writings, bills and receipts, and miscellaneous items pertaining to Cuba, the Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the Ticonderoga world cruise.  
Material concerning Cuba and Tehuantepec Survey Expedition is chronologically arranged and files concerning the Ticonderoga are arranged according to the area covered by the cruise.

**BOX 30-31**  
**Newspaper Clippings, 1859-1899**  
Clippings chiefly concerned with naval incidents.  
Arranged alphabetically by topic.

**BOX 32-33**  
**Printed Matter, 1849-1910**  
Articles, pamphlets, speeches, general orders, and other writings.  
Arranged chronologically.

**BOX 34-35**  
**Miscellany, 1836-1893**  
An account book, calling cards and invitations, notes and fragments, inventories, quartermaster reports, ship descriptions, officer register, ship specifications and blueprints, admiralty board arguments, bills, receipts, inventories, copies of treaties, certificates and awards, poetry, songs, and essays.  
Arranged by topic.

**BOX 36-37**  
**Mason A. Shufeldt File, 1883-1893**  
Correspondence, reports, writings, and miscellaneous material. This file is mostly concerned with Mason A. Shufeldt’s explorations of Africa.  
Arranged by topic and therein chronologically.
## Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-2</td>
<td><strong>Diaries, Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals, 1865-1880</strong>&lt;br&gt;Diaries, notebooks, log abstracts, logbooks, navigational data, journals, and other writings. &lt;br&gt;Arranged chronologically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Diary of <em>Hartford</em>, 1865, Aug.-Dec.</td>
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<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Notebook, <em>Wachusett</em>, 1866-1867</td>
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<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Logbook, <em>Wachusett</em></td>
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<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>1866, Sept.-1867, Mar.</td>
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<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>1867</td>
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<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Mar.-June</td>
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<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>June-Nov.</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>1867, Nov.-1868, Jan.</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>Journal, <em>Mayflower</em> and <em>Kansas</em>, 1870, Nov.-1871, May</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>Diary</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>1875</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>Journal of F. A. Miller, <em>Ticonderoga</em></td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>1878, Dec.-1879, Aug.</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>1879, Aug.-Dec.</td>
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<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>1879, Dec.-1880, May</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 3-4</td>
<td><strong>Letterbooks, Letterpress Books, and Letter Index Books, 1864-1880</strong>&lt;br&gt;Copies of correspondence and reports sent by Shufeldt as commander of various ships.&lt;br&gt;A few of the volumes are indexed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>Letterbook</td>
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<td>BOX 3</td>
<td><em>Proteus</em>, 1864-1865</td>
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<td>BOX 3</td>
<td><em>Wachusett</em>, 1866-1868</td>
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<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>Letterbook</td>
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<td>BOX 3</td>
<td><em>Mayflower</em>, 1871, Mar.-Aug.</td>
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<td>BOX 4</td>
<td>Letterpress book, <em>Ticonderoga</em></td>
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<td>BOX 4</td>
<td>1878, Dec.-1880, Nov.</td>
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<td>BOX 4</td>
<td>1879, Jan.-July</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 5-10</td>
<td><strong>Official Correspondence, 1839-1889</strong>&lt;br&gt;Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent.</td>
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</table>
Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning Shufeldt’s years in Cuba, the
Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the world cruise in the Ticonderoga is in the Subject
File.

BOX 5  1839-1862
BOX 6  1863-1865
BOX 7  1866
BOX 8  1867
BOX 9  1868-1872
BOX 10 1873-1889

BOX 11-17  General Correspondence, 1838-1900
Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent, mostly of a personal and family nature, but
some material relating to Shufeldt’s activities in Cuba, Mexico, and elsewhere.
Arranged chronologically.

BOX 11  1838-1861
BOX 12  1862-1867
BOX 13  1868-1870
BOX 14  1870-1871
BOX 15  1872-1875
BOX 16  1876-1884
BOX 17  1887-1900, undated

BOX 18-29  Subject File, 1861-1883
Correspondence, reports, memoranda, manuscripts, maps, printed matter, newspaper clippings,
drafts of writings, bills and receipts, and miscellaneous items pertaining to Cuba, the
Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the Ticonderoga world cruise.
Material concerning Cuba and Tehuantepec Survey Expedition is chronologically arranged and
files concerning the Ticonderoga are arranged according to the area covered by the cruise.

BOX 18  Cuba, 1861-1863, undated
BOX 18  Correspondence
BOX 18  1861, May-1862, Jan.
BOX 19  1862, Feb.-1863, Apr., undated
BOX 19  Bills, receipts, and inventories
BOX 19  Miscellany
BOX 20  Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, Mexico, 1861-1873
BOX 20  Correspondence
BOX 21  Bills, receipts, and inventories
BOX 21  Maps
BOX 21  Miscellany
BOX 21  Newspaper clippings
BOX 21  Printed matter
BOX 22  World cruise, Ticonderoga, 1879-1883, undated
BOX 22  West Africa
BOX 22  Angola
BOX 22  South Africa
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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<td>BOX 22</td>
<td>Congo</td>
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<td>Dahomey</td>
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<td>BOX 22</td>
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<td>BOX 22</td>
<td>Zanzibar</td>
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<td>Madagascar</td>
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<td>BOX 25</td>
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<td>BOX 25</td>
<td>Maps</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Chapters 1-14</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>Chapters 15-19</td>
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<td>Collected material for the manuscript</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>BOX 28</td>
<td>Korea</td>
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<td>BOX 29</td>
<td>Miscellany</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 30-31</td>
<td><strong>Newspaper Clippings, 1859-1899</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clippings chiefly concerned with naval incidents.</td>
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<td>Arranged alphabetically by topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 30</td>
<td>China</td>
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<td>Gherardi, Bancroft-Walker, John, controversy</td>
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<td>BOX 30</td>
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<td>St. Helena</td>
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<td>BOX 31</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>BOX 31</td>
<td>U.S. Navy</td>
</tr>
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<td>BOX 31</td>
<td><em>Quaker City</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Printed Matter, 1849-1910**
Articles, pamphlets, speeches, general orders, and other writings.
Arranged chronologically.

**Box 32**
1849-1910, undated

**Box 33**
*Minantonomoh*, 1869-1870

**Miscellany, 1836-1893**
An account book, calling cards and invitations, notes and fragments, inventories, quartermaster reports, ship descriptions, officer register, ship specifications and blueprints, admiralty board arguments, bills, receipts, inventories, copies of treaties, certificates and awards, poetry, songs, and essays.
Arranged by topic.

**Box 34**
Account book, 1876-1877

**Box 34**
Calling cards and invitations, 1870-1882, undated

**Box 34**
Notes and fragments, mostly undated

**Box 34**
Poetry notes and fragments, mostly undated

**Box 34**
Inventories, quartermaster reports, and ship descriptions, 1863-1870, undated

**Box 34**
Officer registers and related material, 1864-1870, undated

**Box 34**
Ship specifications and blueprints, including material by and about John Ericsson, 1864-1881, undated

**Box 34**
Admiralty board arguments, undated

**Box 35**
Bills, receipts, and inventories, 1862-1893, undated

**Box 35**
Copies and treaties between the United States and foreign countries, 1836-1880

**Box 35**
Certificates, awards, and passports, 1853-1861

**Box 35**
Poems, songs, and essays written aboard *Proteus* and *Hartford*, 1864-1868

**Mason A. Shufeldt File, 1883-1893**
Correspondence, reports, writings, and miscellaneous material. This file is mostly concerned with Mason A. Shufeldt’s explorations of Africa.
Arranged by topic and therein chronologically.

**Box 36**
General correspondence

**Box 36**
Madagascar expedition

**Box 36**
Bills and receipts

**Box 36**
Correspondence

**Box 36**
Maps

**Box 36**
Newspaper clippings

**Box 36**
Photographs

**Box 37**
Printed matter

**Box 37**
Reports

**Box 37**
Writings

**Box 37**
Columbian World Exposition, Chicago, Ill.

**Box 37**
Miscellany