Edward Lee Plumb Papers

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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff
Collection Summary
Title: Edward Lee Plumb Papers
Span Dates: 1825-1903
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1857-1875)
ID No.: MSS36418
Creator: Plumb, Edward Lee
Extent: 3,600 items; 20 containers; 5.6 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English and Spanish.
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Diplomat and secretary of the United States legation in Mexico. Correspondence, journals, clippings, and other papers relating primarily to Plumb’s negotiations relating to the Mexican railway system.

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
Banks, Nathaniel Prentiss, 1816-1894--Correspondence.
Campbell, Lewis D. (Lewis Davis), 1811-1882--Correspondence.
Chew, Robert S.--Correspondence.
Chilton, R. S.--Correspondence.
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852--Correspondence.
Conkling, Edgar, 1812-1881--Correspondence.
Cox, Thomas C., public official--Correspondence.
Cushing, Caleb, 1800-1879--Correspondence.
Dana, Charles A. (Charles Anderson), 1819-1897--Correspondence.
Díaz, Porfirio, 1830-1915.
Fessenden, William Pitt, 1806-1869--Correspondence.
Fish, Hamilton, 1808-1893--Correspondence.
Gerald, Baron von, -1879--Correspondence.
Grant, Robert--Correspondence.
Hoadley, David, 1806-1873--Correspondence.
Hunter, William, 1774-1849--Correspondence.
Juárez, Benito, 1806-1872--Correspondence.
Lerdo de Tejada, Sebastián, 1823-1889--Correspondence.
Murillo Toro, Manuel, 1816-1880--Correspondence.
Plumb, Edward Lee, 1827-1912.
Romero, Matías, 1837-1898--Correspondence.
Seward, William Henry, 1801-1872.
Sumner, Charles, 1811-1874--Correspondence.
Thomson, J. Edgar (John Edgar), 1808-1874--Correspondence.
Wyke, C. Lennox, Sir--Correspondence.

Organizations
Mexican International Railroad.

Subjects
Canals--Mexico--Tehuantepec, Isthmus of
Communication and traffic--Mexico.
Communication and traffic--West (U.S.)
Cotton manufacture--Mexico.
Cotton manufacture--West (U.S.)
Diplomatic and consular service, American--Mexico.
Insurgency--Mexico.
Mexican War, 1846-1848.
Railroads--Mexico--Tehuantepec, Isthmus of
Railroads--Mexico.
Railroads--West (U.S.)
Voyages and travels.

Places
Horn, Cape (Chile)--Description and travel.
Mexico--Foreign relations--1861-1867.
Mexico--Foreign relations--1867-1910.
Mexico--Foreign relations--United States.
Mexico--Politics and government--1861-1867.
Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)--Description and travel.
San Francisco (Calif.)--Description and travel.
South America--Description and travel.
Southern States--History--1865-1877.
United States--Foreign relations--Mexico.

Occupations
Diplomats.

Administrative Information

Provenance
The papers of Edward Lee Plumb, diplomat and secretary of the United States legation in Mexico, were given to the

Processing History
The papers of Edward Lee Plumb were arranged and described in 1966 and 1975. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Additional Guides
The Plumb Papers are described in Handbook of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.: Government

Transfers
Two maps of the Southern Pacific Railroad have been transferred to the Library's Geography and Map Division where they
are identified as part of the Edward Lee Plumb Papers.

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

Access and Restrictions
The papers of Edward Lee Plumb 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, Edward Lee Plumb
Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Biographical Note

Date      Event
1827, July 17  Born, Gowanda, N. Y.
circa 1845-1850  Received a business education and was apprenticed to Hartford, Conn., mercantile house
1849        Went to California
1854        Explored Mexico, met General Juan Alvarez, and obtained prospecting concession
1855        Instrumental in helping found Mexican Pacific Coal and Iron Mining and Land Co.
1856-1857   On surveying expedition across Central Mexico and returned to New York
1861-1865   Translator and interpreter with American legation, Mexico City, Mexico; also held other positions in Mexico and Washington, D.C.
1866        Secretary of American legation to Mexico
1867-1868   Charge d'affaires, Mexico
1869        Consul general, Havana, Cuba.
1871-1881   Promoted railroads in Mexico and the U.S. for International and Great Northern Railroad
1881-1889   Vice president, Mexican International Railroad
1912, Apr. 16  Died

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Edward Lee Plumb (1827-1912) span the years 1825-1903, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1857-1875. The collection consists of correspondence, dispatches, journals, reports, board minutes and financial records, printed matter, and other papers and documents in English and Spanish. The collection is organized by type of material, with the bound correspondence that comprises the largest part of the papers arranged chronologically.

The papers reflect mainly on Plumb’s official negotiations with the Mexican government on behalf of the United States and American investors in the Mexican railway system. Included are copies of official reports and dispatches to William Henry Seward, secretary of state, on diplomatic and political affairs in Mexico, and letters to William Hunter, Charles Dana, R. S. Chilton, Robert S. Chew, Thomas C. Cox, and Edgar Conkling. Other material consists of an official publication by the Mexican government on forced loans in Mexico, 1838-1839; letters from Havana to Hamilton Fish on Cuban affairs; an account of a voyage from New York to Rio de Janeiro and then San Francisco by way of Cape Horn, in 1849; and miscellaneous printed matter relating to steam communications, railroads, and cotton manufacturing in the American West and Mexico. Papers from the Mexican War period include copies of letters of Henry Clay.

Letters of Robert Grant and Sir C. Lennox Wyke in 1861 concern the rupture of relations between England, France, and Mexico, while later correspondence, 1876-1877, to Hamilton Fish, reflects on conditions and events in Mexico and the policy to be adopted by the United States toward Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915) and other insurrectionists in Mexico. Other topics after 1860 include the affairs of the Mexican International Railroad and a proposed Tehuantepec canal and railway. A series of letters by Plumb to Charles Sumner from New Orleans in 1867 describes his impressions of attitudes in the South during the period.
Other correspondents in the collection include Nathaniel Prentiss Banks, Lewis, D. Campbell, Caleb Cushing, William Pitt Fessenden, Baron von Geralt, David Hoadley, Benito Juárez, Matías Romero, J. Edgar Thomson, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, and Manuel Murillo Toro. Among the printed items are copies of *Diario Oficial*, 1868, and *El Sinapismo*, 1877.

**Arrangement of the Papers**

This collection is arranged by type of material, with the bound correspondence that comprises the largest part of the papers arranged chronologically.
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