

David D. Porter Family Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1997

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm79036574>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms000015>

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Revised by Margaret McAleer

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Collection Summary

Title: David D. Porter Family Papers

Span Dates: 1799-1899

ID No.: MSS36574

Creator: Porter, David D. (David Dixon), 1813-1891

Extent: 7,000 items

Extent: 33 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 10 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm79036574>

Summary: Naval officer. Correspondence, journals, logbooks, orders, reports, memoranda, family papers, drafts of articles, memoirs, poems, short stories, and other literary writings, sketches, photographs, and printed matter documenting David D. Porter's naval career. Includes material on his years as a midshipman, his service in the Mexican War, trips to the Mediterranean to secure camels for use by the United States Army, Civil War service, superintendency of the United States Naval Academy, mission to Santo Domingo concerning the lease of Samaná Bay in the Dominican Republic, and his career as an advisor to the Navy Department (1870-1891) and chairman of the United States Navy Board of Inspection and Survey (1877-1891).

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Boutelle, Charles A. (Charles Addison), 1839-1901--Correspondence.

Farragut, David Glasgow, 1801-1870--Correspondence.

Fox, Gustavus Vasa, 1821-1883--Correspondence.

Hamilton, Paul, 1762-1816--Correspondence.

Heap, Gwinn Harris--Correspondence.

Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851--Correspondence.

Porter family.

Porter, David D. (David Dixon), 1813-1891.

Porter, David, 1780-1843. David Porter papers.

Porter, Evelina Anderson, 1790-1871--Correspondence.

Robeson, George M. (George Maxwell), 1829-1897--Correspondence.

Rodgers, John, 1812-1882--Correspondence.

Sherman, William T. (William Tecumseh), 1820-1891--Correspondence.

Shields, Thomas, -1827--Correspondence.

Southard, Samuel L. (Samuel Lewis), 1787-1842--Correspondence.

Welles, Gideon, 1802-1878--Correspondence.

Wolcott, Oliver, 1760-1833--Correspondence.

Organizations

Enterprize (Schooner : 1799-1811)

Essex (Frigate)

Mexico. Armada.

United States Naval Academy.

United States. Army--History--19th century.

United States. Navy Department.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--Puerto Rico.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--West Indies.

United States. Navy--History--19th century.

United States. Navy. Board of Inspection and Survey.

Subjects

Camels.
Diplomatic and consular service, American--Algeria.
Diplomatic and consular service, American--Turkey.
Mexican War, 1846-1848--Naval operations, American.
Pirates--Caribbean Area.

Places

Algeria--Foreign relations--United States.
Dominican Republic--Foreign relations--United States.
Fajardo (P.R.)--History.
Mediterranean Region--Description and travel.
Samaná Bay (Dominican Republic)
Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)--History.
Turkey--Foreign relations--United States.
United States--Foreign relations--Algeria.
United States--Foreign relations--Dominican Republic.
United States--Foreign relations--Turkey.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations.

Occupations

Naval officers.

Provenance

The family papers of David Dixon Porter (1813-1891), naval officer and author, were purchased by the Library of Congress from various sources between 1901 and 1934. Other material was given by the New York Public Library in 1903 and by Mrs. Oscar H. Rogers in 1934.

Processing History

The papers of the David Dixon Porter family were arranged and described in 1963. This register was revised in 1997.

Transfers

Some maps have been transferred to the Library's Geography and Map Division where they are identified as part of these papers.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of the David D. Porter family is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, David D. Porter Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Notes

David Porter

| Date | Event |
|--------------|--|
| 1780, Feb. 1 | Born, Boston, Mass. |
| 1798 | Appointed midshipman, United States Navy Duty, Constellation (frigate) |
| 1799 | Duty, Experiment (schooner) |
| 1801 | Duty, Enterprize (schooner) |
| 1803 | Duty, Philadelphia (ship) |
| 1803-1805 | Prisoner of war, Tripoli |
| 1808 | Married Evelina Anderson |
| 1808-1810 | Commandant, naval station, New Orleans, La. |
| 1811-1814 | Commanded Essex (frigate) |
| 1812 | Promoted to captain |
| 1815 | Published <i>Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean</i> (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep. 2 vols. in 1) |
| 1815-1823 | Commissioner, United States Navy Board |
| 1823-1825 | Commander-in-chief, West Indian squadron |
| 1825 | Published <i>An Exposition of the Facts and Circumstances Which Justified the Expedition to Foxardo</i> (Washington: Davis and Force. 107 pp.) |
| 1826 | Resigned, United States Navy |
| 1826-1829 | Commander-in-chief, Mexican navy |
| 1830 | Appointed consul general, Algiers, Algeria |
| 1831 | Appointed chargé d'affaires, Turkey |
| 1835 | Published <i>Constantinople and Its Environs</i> (New York: Harper and Brothers. 2 vols.) |
| 1839 | Appointed United States minister, Turkey |
| 1843, Mar. 3 | Died, Pera, Turkey |

David D. Porter

| Date | Event |
|--------------|---|
| 1813, June 8 | Born, Chester, Pa. |
| 1827 | Appointed midshipman, Mexican navy |
| 1829 | Appointed midshipman, United States Navy |
| 1839 | Married George Ann Patterson |
| 1842 | Duty, Congress (frigate) |
| 1847 | Duty, Spitfire (side-wheel steamer) |
| 1849 | Commanded Panama (mail steamer) |
| 1850-1853 | Commanded Georgia (mail steamer) |
| 1855 | Commanded Supply (storeship) |
| 1857-1860 | Duty, navy yard, Portsmouth, N.H. |
| 1861 | Commanded Powhatan (side-wheel steamer) |
| 1863 | Commanded Mississippi squadron Promoted to rear admiral |
| 1864 | Commanded North Atlantic blockading squadron |
| 1865-1869 | Superintendent, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. |
| 1866 | Promoted to vice admiral |
| 1866-1867 | Diplomatic mission, Santo Domingo |
| 1870 | Promoted to admiral |
| 1875 | Published <i>Memoir of Commodore David Porter</i> (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell. 427 pp.) |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 1877-1891 | Chairman, United States Navy Board of Inspection and Survey |
| 1885 | Published <i>The Adventures of Harry Marline</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 378 pp.) Published <i>Allan Dare and Robert le Diable</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 357 pp.) Published <i>Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 357 pp.) |
| 1886 | Published <i>The Naval History of the Civil War</i> (New York: Sherman Publishing Co. 843 pp.) |
| 1889 | Published <i>Arthur Merton</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 328 pp.) |
| 1891, Feb. 13 | Died, Washington, D.C. |

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the David Dixon Porter family span the years 1799-1899. The collection documents the naval careers of Porter and his father, David Porter, which combined encompassed most of the nineteenth century. The papers contain correspondence, letterbooks, journals, logbooks, orders, reports, photographs and sketches, maps, financial records, and printed matter. They are arranged in four series: [Family Papers](#), [David Porter Papers](#), [David D. Porter Papers](#), and [Oversize](#).

The [Family Papers](#) series, the bulk of which is mounted in bound volumes, includes the papers of David D. Porter; his father, David Porter; and his mother, Evelina Anderson Porter. Correspondence and related material dating from 1799 to 1843 largely pertain to David Porter, including his command of the *Enterprize* (schooner) from 1805 to 1806, the *Essex* (frigate) during the War of 1812, and the West Indian squadron employed in suppressing piracy in the Caribbean between 1823 and 1825. Porter's numerous letters to Samuel Hambleton between 1808 and 1824 provide a particularly detailed chronicle of his activities during that period. Events relating to Porter's seizure of the town of Fajardo, Puerto Rico, in 1825, as well as his subsequent court martial, his resignation from the American navy, and his command of Mexico's navy are discussed in his correspondence between 1825 and 1829. Letters to his wife and children recount his diplomatic service in Algeria and Turkey from 1830 to 1843.

The [David Porter Papers](#) series consists of letterbooks, a logbook from the *Enterprize*, and unbound correspondence documenting Porter's naval service, especially his early career and the Fajardo incident. A letter from Porter to Oliver Wolcott in 1798 and several letters dated 1824 concerning the West Indian squadron were transferred from the Manuscript Division's Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection. Prominent correspondents in this series and in the [Family Papers](#) include Paul Hamilton, Joel Roberts Poinsett, John Rodgers (1773-1838), Thomas Shields, and Samuel L. Southard. Further information on Porter's command of the Mexican navy is available in transcribed documents in the miscellany subgrouping in the [David D. Porter Papers](#) series.

The bulk of the collection pertains to [David D. Porter](#). Correspondence and related material includes Porter's letters to his mother recounting his apprentice and journeyman years in the navy. Later correspondence provides information on his service during the Mexican and Civil wars and on his chairmanship of the United States Navy Board of Inspection and Survey. A group of correspondence, photographs, and sketches identified as memorials includes letters written by Porter to Gwinn Harris Heap between 1856 and 1863 which provide detailed and often humorous accounts of his activities during that period. Photographs and watercolor sketches of steamships and several photographs of Porter are also included among the memorials. The [Family Papers](#) series contains many of Porter's writings, including a large number of poems and short stories.

Porter's Civil War service is documented through correspondence, reports, writings, financial records, photographs, and sketches and bound journals and letterbooks located in the [David D. Porter Papers](#) series. Letters to Porter provide information on many aspects of the Union's naval strategy, while Porter's own account of the war is contained in a journal compiled shortly after the war as well as in his unpublished memoir, reports, and other writings. Correspondence, reports, and miscellaneous writings from the 1870s and 1880s while Porter served as an advisor to the secretary of the navy and chairman of the United States Navy Board of Inspection and Survey record his thoughts on the need for naval reform. Prominent correspondents include Charles A. Boutelle, David Glasgow Farragut, Gustavus Vasa Fox, George M. Robeson, William T. Sherman, and Gideon Welles.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in four series:

- Family Papers, 1799-1899
- David Porter Papers, 1798-1839
- David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897
- Oversize, 1810-1891

Description of Series

| Container | Series |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 1-14 | <p><u>Family Papers, 1799-1899</u></p> <p>Correspondence, reports, memoranda, orders, maps, writings, photographs, sketches, and printed matter chiefly pertaining to David Porter; his wife, Evelina Anderson Porter; and their son, David D. Porter.</p> <p>Organized in three groupings: correspondence and related material, writings, and memorials. Correspondence and memorials are arranged chronologically; writings are sorted alphabetically.</p> |
| BOX 15-16 | <p><u>David Porter Papers, 1798-1839</u></p> <p>Correspondence, letterbooks, and a ship's logbook supplementing material relating to David Porter in the <i>Family Papers</i> series.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.</p> |
| BOX 17-33 | <p><u>David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897</u></p> <p>Correspondence, letterbooks, journals, reports, speeches and writings, financial records, certificates, patents, scrapbook, photographs and sketches, newspaper clippings, and other printed matter augmenting material pertaining to David D. Porter in the <i>Family Papers</i> series.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by type of material.</p> |
| BOX OV 1 | <p><u>Oversize, 1810-1891</u></p> <p>Oversize material consisting of correspondence, certificates, an engraving, sketches, and patents.</p> <p>Organized and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.</p> |

Container List

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 1-14 | Family Papers, 1799-1899 Correspondence, reports, memoranda, orders, maps, writings, photographs, sketches, and printed matter chiefly pertaining to David Porter; his wife, Evelina Anderson Porter; and their son, David D. Porter. Organized in three groupings: correspondence and related material, writings, and memorials. Correspondence and memorials are arranged chronologically; writings are sorted alphabetically. |
| BOX 1 | Correspondence and related material 1799-1810 |
| BOX 2 | 1810-1823 |
| BOX 3 | 1823-1826 |
| BOX 4 | 1826-1829 |
| BOX 5 | 1829-1842 |
| BOX 6 | 1842-1864 |
| BOX 7 | 1864-1888 |
| BOX 8 | 1890-1899, undated |
| BOX 9 | Writings <i>See also Containers 32-33, Fiction</i> A-C |
| BOX 10 | D-E |
| BOX 11 | F-O |
| BOX 12 | P-R |
| BOX 13 | S-W |
| BOX 14 | Memorials, 1814-1866 <i>See also Oversize</i> |
| BOX 15-16 | David Porter Papers, 1798-1839 Correspondence, letterbooks, and a ship's logbook supplementing material relating to David Porter in the <i>Family Papers</i> series. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein. |
| BOX 15 | General correspondence and related material, 1798-1830 <i>See also Oversize</i> |
| BOX 16 | Letterbooks 1805-1808, correspondence and orders 1807-1808, general correspondence 1838-1839, correspondence re pension claim Logbook, <i>Enterprise</i> (schooner), 1805-1806 |
| BOX 17-33 | David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897 Correspondence, letterbooks, journals, reports, speeches and writings, financial records, certificates, patents, scrapbook, photographs and sketches, newspaper clippings, and other printed matter augmenting material pertaining to David D. Porter in the <i>Family Papers</i> series. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. |

David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|--|
| BOX 17 | General correspondence 1852-1863 |
| BOX 18 | 1864-1873 |
| BOX 19 | 1874-1884 |
| BOX 20 | 1885-1897, undated |
| BOX 21 | Journals 1846 |
| BOX 22 | 1860-1865 |
| BOX 23 | Letterbooks, 1869-1880 Miscellany Appointments, 1852-1874 Certificates, 1847, 1891 <i>See Oversize</i> |
| BOX 24 | Financial records and legal documents |
| BOX 25 | George Washington centennial celebrations Naval documents, 1847-1868, undated <i>See also Container 33, Naval and military topics</i> Newspaper clippings Patents and stocks <i>See also Oversize</i> Photographs and sketches <i>See also Oversize</i> |
| BOX 26 | Printed matter Scrapbook Transcripts concerning David Porter's command of the Mexican navy and land grant claims, 1823-1879 |
| BOX 27 | Reports 1846-1877 |
| BOX 28 | 1878-1888, undated Speeches and writings Articles, undated |
| BOX 29 | Books |
| | Memoir |
| | (16 folders) |
| BOX 30 | (15 folders) |
| BOX 31 | (14 folders) |
| BOX 32 | (6 folders) |
| | <i>The Naval History of the Civil War</i> |
| | Fiction <i>See also Containers 9-13, Writings</i> |
| | (9 folders) |
| BOX 33 | (2 folders) |
| | Miscellaneous "An Ancient City," undated Biographical, 1884, undated Cuba, undated "Grammar of the <i>Iliad</i> ," 1875 Naval and military topics, 1852-1889, undated <i>See also Container 25, Naval documents</i> (4 folders) Unidentified, 1875, undated |

David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897

Container

Contents

Speeches, 1870

BOX OV 1

Oversize, 1810-1891

Oversize material consisting of correspondence, certificates, an engraving, sketches, and patents.

Organized and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

BOX OV 1

Family Papers

Memorials, 1863-1866 (*Container 14*)

David Porter Papers

General correspondence and related material, 1810 (*Container 15*)

David D. Porter Papers

Certificates, 1847, 1891 (Container 23)

Patents and stocks, 1881, undated (*Container 25*)

Photographs and sketches, undated (*Container 25*)