

Matthew Fontaine Maury Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



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

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm79031682>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms001026>

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2001
Revised 2023 September

Collection Summary

Title: Matthew Fontaine Maury Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1825-1960

Bulk Dates: 1830-1880

ID No.: MSS31682

Creator: Maury, Matthew Fontaine, 1806-1873

Extent: 14,650 items

Extent: 64 containers plus 2 oversize

Extent: 17.5 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm79031682>

Summary: Naval officer and oceanographer. Correspondence, letterbooks, diaries, journals, speeches, articles, and other writings, notebooks, electrical experiment book, charts, and printed material relating chiefly to Maury's naval career, scientific activities and interests, service as a Confederate agent in England, and work as an immigration official for Southern expatriates in Mexico, and to the Maury (Morey) family.

Online Content: The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury are available on the Library of Congress website at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/collmss.ms000110>. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the online edition.

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

Blackford, William M., 1801-1864--Correspondence.

Coblentz, Catherine Cate, 1897-1951. Matthew Fontaine Maury biography. 1953.

Corbin, Nannie, 1837-1900--Correspondence.

Corbin, Wellford, 1835-1897--Correspondence.

Hasbrouck, William C., 1800-1870--Correspondence.

Holmes, Nathaniel J., approximately 1821- --Correspondence.

Jansen, Marin H. (Marin Henry), 1817-1893--Correspondence.

Maury family--Correspondence.

Maury family.

Maury, Ann, 1803-1876--Correspondence.

Maury, Ann, 1811-1901--Correspondence.

Maury, Matthew Fontaine, 1806-1873.

Maury, Matthew Fontaine, Jr., 1849-1886--Correspondence.

Maury, Richard L. (Richard Lancelot), 1840-1907--Correspondence.

Maury, Rutson, 1805-1882--Correspondence.

Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, 1832-1867--Correspondence.

Minor, Franklin, 1812-1867--Correspondence.

Otey, James Hervey, 1800-1863--Correspondence.

Smith, C. Alphonso (Charles Alphonso), 1864-1924. C. Alphonso Smith papers. 1864-1927.

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890--Correspondence.

Tremlett, F. W. (Francis William), 1821-1913--Correspondence.

Werth, Mary, 1844-1928--Correspondence.

Withers, Eliza, 1846-1881--Correspondence.

Organizations

Confederate States of America. Navy--Officers.

United States Naval Observatory.

United States. Depot of Charts and Instruments.

United States. Navy--Officers.

Subjects

American Confederate voluntary exiles--Mexico.
Diplomatic and consular service, Confederate--Great Britain.
Meteorology.
Mines and mineral resources.
Oceanography.
Physical geography--Virginia.
Science--History--19th century.
Torpedoes.

Places

Confederate States of America--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
Confederate States of America--History, Naval.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--Confederate States of America.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Refugees.

Titles

Matthew Fontaine Maury Papers at the Library of Congress

Occupations

Naval officers, Confederate.
Naval officers.
Oceanographers.

Acquisition Information

The papers and medals of Matthew Fontaine Maury, naval officer and oceanographer, were given to the United States by Maury's daughter, Mary Maury Werth, and other Maury descendants in 1912 in a presentation to President William Howard Taft. The medals were placed in the Smithsonian Institution and the papers in the Library of Congress later that year. The Library acquired additional Maury papers through gifts from the Maury family and others and by purchase, 1913-1996.

Processing History

The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury were first arranged and described by Manuscript Division staff in 1962. Additional material was incorporated into the collection by Manuscript Division staff in 1978 and by Karen Linn Femia in 1997.

Transfers

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 Matthew Fontaine Maury is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury 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.

Online Content

The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury are available on the Library of Congress website at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/collmss.ms000110>. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the online edition.

Preferred Citation

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

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1806, Jan. 14	Born near Fredericksburg, Va.; raised in Tennessee
1818	Entered Harpeth Academy, near Franklin, Tenn.
1825-1834	Obtained midshipman's warrant, U.S. Navy and made three extended voyages
1834	Married Ann Hull Herndon; resided in Fredericksburg, Va.
1836	Promoted to lieutenant Published <i>A New Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Navigation</i> (Philadelphia: Key and Biddle. 174 pp.)
1839	Permanently lamed in stagecoach accident and thenceforth not assigned to sea duty
1842-1844	Superintendent of the Navy Department's Depot of Charts and Instruments
1844-1861	Superintendent of the Naval Observatory and Hydrographical Office
1847	Issued first <i>Wind and Current Charts</i> (U.S. Hydrographical Office) showing best "tracks" for sailing ships in the North Atlantic
1853	U.S. representative at international maritime congress, Brussels, Belgium
1855	Published <i>The Physical Geography of the Sea</i> (New York: Harper & Bros. 274 pp.), the first modern oceanographic textbook Placed on inactive duty by the U.S. Navy
1858	Restored to active duty by presidential order; promoted to commander retroactive to 1855
1861, Apr. 20	Resigned from U.S. Navy and accepted commission as commander in Confederate Navy
1862	Special agent of the Confederate government to England
1865-1866	Imperial commissioner of immigration to the Emperor of Mexico
1866-1868	Resided in England
1868	Published <i>First Lessons in Geography</i> (New York: Richardson & Co. 62 pp.) Published <i>The World We Live in</i> (New York: Richardson & Co. 104 pp.)
1868-1872	Professor of meteorology, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.
1870	Published <i>Manual of Geography</i> (New York: University Publishing Co. 162 pp.)
1873, Feb. 1	Died, Lexington, Va.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) span the years 1825-1960, with the bulk of the material dating from the 1830s to the 1870s. The papers consist of letterbooks, correspondence, diaries, notebooks, electrical experiment book, journals, drafts and printed copies of speeches and articles, charts, related printed matter, and proofs of his unpublished work "Astronomy." The papers are organized into the following series: [General Correspondence](#), [Writings, Addresses, and Lectures](#), [Letterbooks](#), [Miscellany](#), [Additions](#) and [Oversize](#).

The papers pertain chiefly to Maury's naval career, his scientific activities and interests, and his service to the Confederacy in the Civil War. There is also considerable material concerning the many medals and honors conferred upon him for his scientific contributions. Some subjects touched upon are mines, meteorology, the colonization of Mexico by former Confederates, physical geography of Virginia, and oceanography. Much of the [correspondence](#) is family correspondence, including many of Maury's own letters.

Prominent among his correspondents are William M. Blackford, William C. Hasbrouck, Nathaniel J. Holmes, Admiral Marin H. Jansen, Privy Councilor to the King of Holland, Ann Hull Herndon Maury, Richard L. Maury, Rutson Maury, Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, Franklin Minor, James Hervey Otey, Francis Henney Smith, Francis W. Tremlett, and Mary Herndon Maury Werth.

Placed with the collection are papers of Charles Alphonso Smith regarding Maury including clippings and notes on Maury as well as correspondence with Mary Maury (Mrs. James R.) Werth concerning her father. Also included is a typescript of a life of Maury by Catherine Cate Coblenz.

The 1978 [addition](#) to the Maury Papers consists of [correspondence](#) between various Maury family members, 1858-1878. These papers were received by the Library between 1966 and 1975. Correspondents include Nannie Corbin, Wellford Corbin, Matthew Fontaine Maury (1849-1886), Mary Herndon Maury Werth, and Eliza Hull Maury Withers. Of particular interest are the letters Maury received during the periods when he was special Confederate agent to Great Britain in London and an immigration official for Southern expatriates in Mexico.

The 1997 [addition](#) consists of Maury papers received by the Library from 1989 to 1996. It primarily contains letters written by Matthew F. Maury to his cousin, Ann Maury, relating his daily activities. Also included are correspondence with other family members, one letter of 1858 to Benjamin Silliman concerning expeditions and packet ships, news clippings (some dating from the mid-twentieth century), and copies of navigational charts.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series:

- [General Correspondence, 1825-1910](#)
- [Writings, Addresses, and Lectures, 1856-1872](#)
- [Letterbooks, 1859-1891](#)
- [Miscellany, 1836-1953](#)
- [Additions, 1831-1960](#)
- [Oversize, 1855-1873](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-46	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1825-1910</u> Correspondence. Arranged chronologically in forty-six bound volumes.</p>
BOX 47-51	<p><u>Writings, Addresses, and Lectures, 1856-1872</u> Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.</p>
BOX 52-56	<p><u>Letterbooks, 1859-1891</u> Copies of outgoing correspondence. Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.</p>
BOX 57-63	<p><u>Miscellany, 1836-1953</u> Account books, diaries, photographs, printed matter, scrapbook, writings, and C. Alphonso Smith papers re Maury. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.</p>
BOX 64	<p><u>Additions, 1831-1960</u> Correspondence and family correspondence, each arranged chronologically. Miscellaneous material including genealogical records and news clippings. Arranged in two additions.</p>
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<p><u>Oversize, 1855-1873</u> Diplomas, awards, and probate papers. Organized and described according to the series, folders, and boxes from which the items were removed.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-46	General Correspondence, 1825-1910 Correspondence. Arranged chronologically in forty-six bound volumes.
BOX 1	1825, Feb. 6-1839, Nov.3 Digital content available
BOX 2	1839, Nov. 6-1843, July 15 Digital content available
BOX 3	29 July 1843-13 Feb. 1850 Digital content available
BOX 4	1850, Feb. 15-1855, Sept. 17 Digital content available
BOX 5	1855, Sept. 18-1856, Feb. 4 Digital content available
BOX 6	1856, Feb. 5-1857, Feb. 25 Digital content available
BOX 7	1857, Feb. 26-1859, June 6 Digital content available
BOX 8	7 June 1859-23 Jan. 1860 Digital content available
BOX 9	29 Jan.-21 Oct. 1860 Digital content available
BOX 10	22 Oct. 1860-21 Jan. 1861 Digital content available
BOX 11	22 Jan.-4 Feb. 1861 Digital content available
BOX 12	5-22 Feb. 1861 Digital content available
BOX 13	23 Feb.-6 Apr. 1861 Digital content available
BOX 14	7 Apr.-7 Oct. 1861 Digital content available
BOX 15	8 Oct. 1861-3 May 1862 Digital content available
BOX 16	4 May-17 Sept. 1862 Digital content available
BOX 17	18 Sept. 1862-20 Apr. 1863 Digital content available
BOX 18	21 Apr.-2 Nov. 1863 Digital content available
BOX 19	3 Nov. 1863-5 Feb. 1864 Digital content available

General Correspondence, 1825-1910

Container	Contents
BOX 20	6 Feb.-19 Oct. 1864 Digital content available
BOX 21	20 Oct. 1864-8 June 1865 Digital content available
BOX 22	9 June-20 Aug. 1865 Digital content available
BOX 23	21 Aug.-1 Dec. 1865 Digital content available
BOX 24	3 Dec. 1865-18 Apr. 1866 Digital content available
BOX 25	19 Apr. 1866-10 May 1867 Digital content available
BOX 26	11 May 1867-9 June 1868 Digital content available
BOX 27	10 June-27 Nov. 1868 Digital content available
BOX 28	28 Nov. 1868-2 Feb. 1869 Digital content available
BOX 29	3 Feb.-10 Mar. 1869 Digital content available
BOX 30	11 Mar.-22 Apr. 1869 Digital content available
BOX 31	23 Apr.-25 June 1869 Digital content available
BOX 32	26 June-1 Nov. 1869 Digital content available
BOX 33	2 Nov. 1869-17 Jan. 1870 Digital content available
BOX 34	18 Jan.-29 Apr. 1870 Digital content available
BOX 35	30 Apr.-4 Aug. 1870 Digital content available
BOX 36	5 Aug. 1870-10 Apr. 1871 Digital content available
BOX 37	11 Apr.-3 Sept. 1871 Digital content available
BOX 38	9 Sept. 1871-1 Jan. 1872 Digital content available
BOX 39	2 Jan.-27 Mar. 1872 Digital content available
BOX 40	28 Mar.-10 Aug. 1872 Digital content available
BOX 41	11 Aug. 1872-3 Jan. 1873 Digital content available
BOX 42	4-30 Jan. 1873 Digital content available
BOX 43	1 Feb.-20 Mar. 1873 Digital content available

General Correspondence, 1825-1910

Container	Contents
BOX 44	21 Mar.-27 Oct. 1873 Digital content available
BOX 45	28 Oct. 1873-8 Feb. 1895 Digital content available
BOX 46	13 Apr. 1895-25 Apr. 1910, undated Digital content available
BOX 47-51	Writings, Addresses, and Lectures, 1856-1872 Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.
BOX 47	June 1856-June 1868 Digital content available
BOX 48	Dec. 1869-Jan. 1871 Digital content available
BOX 49	May 1871 Digital content available
BOX 50	May-Dec. 1871 Digital content available
BOX 51	Jan.-May 1872 Digital content available
BOX 52-56	Letterbooks, 1859-1891 Copies of outgoing correspondence. Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.
BOX 52	3 Dec. 1859-18 Jan. 1861 Digital content available
BOX 53	9 Oct. 1868-28 Sept. 1869 Digital content available
BOX 54	29 Sept.-9 Oct. 1869 Digital content available
BOX 55	4 Apr. 1871-19 Mar. 1872 Digital content available
BOX 56	12 Apr.-14 Nov. 1872, Fragments, 1891 Digital content available
BOX 57-63	Miscellany, 1836-1953 Account books, diaries, photographs, printed matter, scrapbook, writings, and C. Alphonso Smith papers re Maury. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 57	Account books, 1841-1872 Digital content available Architectural drawing of Lee Memorial Episcopal Church, Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Va., undated Digital content available "Children's recollections," 1872-1873, 1928 Digital content available

Miscellany, 1836-1953

Container

Contents

	Coblentz, Catherine Cate, "Naval Lieutenant Matthew Fontaine Maury, First Citizen of the World, 1853-1953," 1953 Digital content available
BOX 58	Diaries 1863 Digital content available 1864 Digital content available 1864-1865, 1866 Digital content available 1865-1866 Digital content available 1866-1869, 1872 Digital content available Diplomas and awards, 1854-1858, undated <i>See also Oversize</i> Digital content available Notebooks Electricity, 1864 Digital content available Virginia, undated Digital content available Photographs, 1872, undated Digital content available Printed matter Booklets and journals 1854-1869 Digital content available 1870-1872 Digital content available 1873-1874 Digital content available 1877-1889 Digital content available 1890-1904, 1923 Digital content available Undated Digital content available General, 1860-1904, undated Digital content available Maury monument, 1890-1905 Digital content available Newspaper clippings About Maury's death, 1872-1873 Digital content available
BOX 59	circa 1860s-1870s Digital content available circa 1880s-1900s Digital content available
BOX 60	

Miscellany, 1836-1953

Container

Contents

- Newspapers
circa 1860s-1870s
[Digital content available](#)
circa 1880s-1890s
[Digital content available](#)
- BOX 61
Periodicals, 1836-1897
[Digital content available](#)
Probate, 1873 *See also Oversize*
[Digital content available](#)
Scrapbook, 1839-1873
[Digital content available](#)
Smith, Alphonso C., collection
Correspondence
General, 1864-1868, 1889, undated
[Digital content available](#)
Regarding Maury, 1864-1867, 1923-1927, undated
[Digital content available](#)
Newspaper clippings, 1922-1924
[Digital content available](#)
Photographs, undated
[Digital content available](#)
- BOX 62
Writings about Maury
1903-1923
[Digital content available](#)
1924, undated
[Digital content available](#)
Testimonial volume to Maury, 1859
[Digital content available](#)
Writings by Maury
Articles, undated
[Digital content available](#)
- BOX 63
Astronomical observations made at the National Observatory, Washington, D.C., 1846-1851
"Astronomy," undated
[Digital content available](#)
First Lessons in Geography, 1884
[Digital content available](#)
Lieut. Maury's Investigations of the Winds and Currents of the Sea, 1851
[Digital content available](#)
Physical Survey of Virginia, 1869
Published letters and commentary, 1857-1871
[Digital content available](#)
Report of Lieut. Matthew F. Maury, United States Navy, on the Loss of the United States Mail Steamer "Central America," under the Command of Commander William Lewis Herndon, United States Navy (1857), inscribed by President Chester A. Arthur, 1885
[Digital content available](#)

Miscellany, 1836-1953

Container

Contents

Speeches, 1856-1873
[Digital content available](#)

BOX 64

Additions, 1831-1960

Correspondence and family correspondence, each arranged chronologically. Miscellaneous material including genealogical records and news clippings.

Arranged in two additions.

BOX 64

1978 Addition, 1858-1878, undated

Family correspondence

Index, undated

[Digital content available](#)

1858-1872

[Digital content available](#)

1873-1878, undated

[Digital content available](#)

Genealogy, undated *See also Oversize*

[Digital content available](#)

1997 Addition, circa 1831-1960, undated

Correspondence

circa 1831-1837

[Digital content available](#)

1838

[Digital content available](#)

1839

[Digital content available](#)

1840

[Digital content available](#)

1841

[Digital content available](#)

1842-1843

[Digital content available](#)

1844-1846

[Digital content available](#)

1847-1849 *See also Oversize*

[Digital content available](#)

1850-1859

[Digital content available](#)

1860-1872, undated

[Digital content available](#)

Miscellany, 1857-1873, 1956-1960, undated

[Digital content available](#)

BOX OV 1-OV 2

Oversize, 1855-1873

Diplomas, awards, and probate papers.

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

BOX OV 1

Miscellany

Oversize, 1855-1873

Container

Contents

BOX OV 2

Diplomas and awards, 1856, undated (Container 58)

Document accompanying gold medal of honor at the Universal Exposition of 1855

[Digital content available](#)

Commission as commander, Jan. 27, 1858

[Digital content available](#)

Award of 3,000 guineas in appreciation of interest of maritime science, undated

[Digital content available](#)

Probate, 1873 (Container 61)

[Digital content available](#)

1978 Addition, 1858-1878, undated

Genealogy, undated (Container 64)

[Digital content available](#)

1997 Addition, circa 1831-1960, undated

Correspondence

1847-1849

"Genealogical Chart of the Fontaine and Maury Families," undated (Container 64)

[Digital content available](#)