

J. C. Bancroft Davis Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2009

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm82017905>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009077>

Prepared by David Mathisen and Division staff
Revised by Paul Colton

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2009
Revised 2010 April

Collection Summary

Title: J. C. Bancroft Davis Papers

Span Dates: 1849-1902

ID No.: MSS17905

Creator: Davis, J. C. Bancroft, 1822-1907

Extent: 11,000 items

Extent: 88 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 16.8 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm82017905>

Summary: Jurist, diplomat, journalist, and court reporter. Bound volumes of correspondence, diaries, journals, reports, printed material, and other papers chiefly relating to Davis's diplomatic career, especially his role in the *Alabama* claims dispute with Great Britain following the Civil War. Also documents his work as an American correspondent for the *London Times*, United States Supreme Court reporter; and his part in negotiations with Great Britain relating to Central American affairs.

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

Davis, J. C. Bancroft (John Chandler Bancroft), 1822-1907.

Organizations

United States. Supreme Court.

Subjects

Alabama claims.

Foreign correspondents--United States.

Law reporters--United States.

Places

Central America--History--1821-1951.

Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.

United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Claims.

Titles

Times (London, England)

Occupations

Diplomats.

Journalists.

Judges.

Law reporters.

Lawyers.

Provenance

The papers of J. C. Bancroft Davis, jurist, diplomat, journalist, and court reporter, were given to the Library of Congress by the estate of his widow, Frederica Gore Davis via his son, Andrew McFarland Davis, in 1917.

Processing History

The papers of J. C. Bancroft Davis were arranged and described in 1975. The collection was expanded and revised in 1998. The finding aid was revised in 2009.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of J. C. Bancroft Davis is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of J. C. Bancroft Davis 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, J. C. Bancroft Davis Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1822, Dec. 29	Born, Worcester, Mass.
1844	Admitted to Massachusetts bar
1847	A.B., Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass. Published <i>Massachusetts Justice</i> . Worcester: W. Lazell
circa 1845	Began law practice, New York, N.Y.
1849-1852	Secretary, United States legation, London, England
1854-1861	Practiced law, New York, N.Y. American correspondent, London <i>Times</i>
1857	Married Frederica Gore King
1868	Elected to New York state legislature
1869-1871	Assistant secretary of state
1871	American agent for <i>Alabama</i> claims, Geneva Arbitration Tribunal, Geneva, Switzerland Published <i>The Case of the United States</i> . Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office
1873-1874	Assistant secretary of state
1874-1877	Minister to Germany
1878-1883	Judge, United States Court of Claims
1883-1902	Reporter, United States Supreme Court
1893	Published <i>Mr. Fish and the Alabama Claims</i> . Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.
1907, Dec. 27	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Chandler Bancroft Davis (1822-1907) span the years 1849-1902 and consist of bound volumes of correspondence, diaries, journals, reports, printed matter, and related material. The collection focuses mainly on Davis's diplomatic career, especially his part in the *Alabama* claims dispute with Great Britain, but it also features his stint from 1854 to 1861 as American correspondent for the London *Times* and the nearly two decades after 1883 that he spent as

reporter of the United States Supreme Court, where he edited volumes 108-186 of the *United States Reports*. The collection is organized in five series: [Correspondence](#), [Diaries](#), [Alabama Claims](#), [Subject File](#), and [Oversize](#).

Included in the [Alabama Claims](#) series are official and personal correspondence, reports, arguments, and other documentation relating to Davis's role as commissioner and agent representing American interests in Geneva, Switzerland, during the negotiations over compensation from Great Britain for damages inflicted by the British-built, Southern-operated cruiser *Alabama* on Northern merchant ships during the Civil War. Featured in the [Subject File](#) are scrapbooks of Davis's writings as American correspondent in London prior to the Civil War and documentation concerning various negotiations involving the United States and Great Britain between 1849 and 1853. One volume related to the [Alabama](#) negotiations focuses on issues pertaining to Central America. Also in the [Subject File](#) is a certificate of President Ulysses S. Grant's appointment of Davis in 1870 as arbitrator between Great Britain and Portugal in a matter involving colonial possessions in West Africa.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- [Correspondence, 1850-1902](#)
- [Diaries, 1870-1874](#)
- [Alabama Claims, 1871-1872](#)
- [Subject File, 1849-1891](#)
- [Oversize, 1870](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-64	<p><u>Correspondence, 1850-1902</u></p> <p>Bound correspondence and related matter. Organized by letters received and letters sent and therein chronologically.</p>
BOX 65-66	<p><u>Diaries, 1870-1874</u></p> <p>Two volumes of diaries by Davis, one of which contains copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 67-83	<p><u>Alabama Claims, 1871-1872</u></p> <p>Bound correspondence, reports, notes, background information, printed matter, and other material relating to the cruiser <i>Alabama</i>. Organized alphabetically by type of material or name of topic.</p>
BOX 84-87	<p><u>Subject File, 1849-1891</u></p> <p>Bound journals, reports, correspondence, scrapbooks, an index of correspondence, printed matter, and other material. Organized alphabetically by topic or type of material.</p>
BOX OV 1	<p><u>Oversize, 1870</u></p> <p>Certificate of appointment. Arranged and described according to the series, container, and folder from which the item was removed.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-64	Correspondence, 1850-1902 Bound correspondence and related matter. Organized by letters received and letters sent and therein chronologically.
BOX 1	Letters received
BOX 1	5 Jan. 1856-22 Feb. 1861
BOX 2	25 Feb. 1861-3 Feb. 1869
BOX 3	4 Feb.-14 June 1869
BOX 4	15 June-19 Nov. 1869
BOX 5	20 Nov. 1869-15 Mar. 1870
BOX 6	16 Mar.-14 June 1870
BOX 7	16 June-20 Sept. 1870
BOX 8	21 Sept. 1870-11 Feb. 1871
BOX 9	14 Feb.-5 Aug. 1871
BOX 10	6 Aug.-15 Oct. 1871
BOX 11	17 Oct. 1871-22 Dec. 1872
BOX 12	26 Dec. 1872-23 Apr. 1873
BOX 13	26 Apr.-25 July 1873
BOX 14	26 July-6 Nov. 1873
BOX 15	7 Nov. 1873-11 Mar. 1874
BOX 16	12 Mar.-4 Aug. 1874
BOX 17	6 Aug.-6 Oct. 1874
BOX 18	7 Oct.-30 Dec. 1874
BOX 19	31 Dec. 1874-2 Apr. 1875
BOX 20	3 Apr.-28 July 1875
BOX 21	29 July-17 Nov. 1875
BOX 22	20 Nov. 1875-16 Apr. 1876
BOX 23	17 Apr.-1 Sept. 1876
BOX 24	2 Sept. 1876-12 Feb. 1877
BOX 25	14 Feb.-14 Apr. 1877
BOX 26	15 Apr. 1877-2 Jan. 1879
BOX 27	3 Jan. 1879-15 Feb. 1880
BOX 28	16 Feb. 1880-28 Jan. 1881
BOX 29	29 Jan.-10 Oct. 1881
BOX 30	12 Oct. 1881-12 Jan. 1882
BOX 31	13 Jan.-1 Apr. 1882
BOX 32	3 Apr.-15 Aug. 1882
BOX 33	19 Aug. 1882-29 June 1883
BOX 34	30 June 1883-28 Jan. 1884
BOX 35	29 Jan.-13 June 1884
BOX 36	14 June 1884-16 Jan. 1885
BOX 37	17 Jan.-12 Nov. 1885

Correspondence, 1850-1902

Container

Contents

BOX 38	13 Nov. 1885-19 Apr. 1886
BOX 39	20 Apr.-10 Nov. 1886
BOX 40	11 Nov. 1886-30 May 1887
BOX 41	31 May 1887-30 Mar. 1888
BOX 41A	2 Jan. 1888-25 Dec. 1888
BOX 42	31 Mar. 1888-5 Jan. 1889
BOX 43	6 Jan.-15 June 1889
BOX 44	17 June 1889-3 Feb. 1890
BOX 45	4 Feb.-7 Oct. 1890
BOX 46	9 Oct. 1890-29 Mar. 1891
BOX 47	30 Mar.-14 Dec. 1891
BOX 48	15 Dec. 1891-13 June 1892
BOX 49	15 June 1892-2 June 1893
BOX 50	5 June 1893-9 May 1894
BOX 51	11 May 1894-29 May 1895
BOX 52	2 June 1895-24 Dec. 1896
BOX 53	28 Dec. 1896-10 June 1898
BOX 54	17 June 1898-23 June 1902
BOX 55	Letters sent
BOX 55	6 June 1850-8 Jan. 1851
BOX 56	8 Jan.-10 May 1851
BOX 57	13 May-20 Dec. 1851
BOX 58	29 Dec. 1851-17 Sept. 1852
BOX 59	18 Sept. 1852-23 Oct. 1854
BOX 60	7 Nov. 1854-15 Mar. 1855
BOX 61	3 Feb. 1873-7 Jan. 1874
BOX 62	13 Jan.-30 June 1874
BOX 63	21 Jan. 1876-30 Nov. 1878
BOX 64	1 Dec. 1878-7 July 1882
BOX 65-66	Diaries, 1870-1874 Two volumes of diaries by Davis, one of which contains copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 65	26 July 1870-25 Oct. 1871
BOX 66	24 Jan. 1873-18 Jan. 1874
BOX 67-83	Alabama Claims, 1871-1872 Bound correspondence, reports, notes, background information, printed matter, and other material relating to the cruiser <i>Alabama</i> . Organized alphabetically by type of material or name of topic.
BOX 67	Arguments by Davis, 1871
BOX 67	"The Case of the United States"
BOX 68	"Counter Case of the United States"
BOX 69	Letterbooks
BOX 69	Letters from Davis to Hamilton Fish, 1871-1872

Alabama Claims, 1871-1872

Container	Contents
BOX 70	Letters received, 1871-1872
BOX 70	Vol. 1
BOX 71	Vol. 2
BOX 72	Vol. 3
BOX 73	Vol. 4
BOX 74	Letters sent, 1872
BOX 74	Vol. A
BOX 75	Vol. B
BOX 76	Vol. C
BOX 77	Record of proceedings kept by Davis, 1871-1872
BOX 77	Vol. I
BOX 78	Vol. II
BOX 79	Vol. III
BOX 80	Vol. IV
BOX 81	Treaty of Washington, papers relating to the American and British Joint High Commission, 1871
BOX 81	Part 1
BOX 82	Part 2
BOX 83	Part 3
BOX 84-87	Subject File, 1849-1891 Bound journals, reports, correspondence, scrapbooks, an index of correspondence, printed matter, and other material. Organized alphabetically by topic or type of material.
BOX 84	Appointment by Ulysses S. Grant as arbitrator between Great Britain and Portugal, 1870 <i>See</i> <i>Oversize</i>
BOX 84	Great Britain
BOX 84	"Belligerent Recognition, May 21, 1861," facsimile of message from William H. Seward to Charles Francis Adams, 1861, undated
BOX 84	Central America, negotiations relating to, 1849-1851
BOX 85	<i>London Times</i> , scrapbook of writings as American correspondent, 1854-1861 (2 vols.)
BOX 86	Negotiations in London, 1849-1853
BOX 87	Index to letters received, 1872-1874, 1891
BOX 87	Trip to Paris, France; Italy; and Switzerland, 1852
BOX 87	Vienna Exposition, Vienna, Austria, report of evidence and special commission in the case of Thomas B. Van Buren, 1873
BOX OV 1	Oversize, 1870 Certificate of appointment. Arranged and described according to the series, container, and folder from which the item was removed.
BOX OV 1	Appointment by Ulysses S. Grant as arbitrator between Great Britain and Portugal, 1870 (Container 84)