

**C. B. Comstock Papers**  
**A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**2003**

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm79016527>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009101>

Prepared by Wilhelmena B. Curry  
Revised by Patrick Kerwin

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

## Collection Summary

**Title:** C. B. Comstock Papers

**Span Dates:** 1847-1908

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1862-1890)

**ID No.:** MSS16527

**Creator:** Comstock, C. B. (Cyrus Ballou), 1831-1910

**Extent:** 900 items

**Extent:** 4 containers

**Extent:** 1.6 linear feet

**Extent:** 4 microfilm reels

**Language:** Collection material in English

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

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm79016527>

**Summary:** Correspondence, memoranda, diaries, notebooks, orders, reports, and drawings primarily concerning Comstock's Civil War service as chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac. Also includes material relating to the Mexican War and Comstock's tenure as president of the United States Mississippi River Commission, 1884.

## 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

Adams, Henry Martyn, 1844-1909--Correspondence.  
Alexander, B. S. (Barton Stone), 1819-1878--Correspondence.  
Butterfield, Daniel, 1831-1901--Correspondence.  
Comstock, C. B. (Cyrus Ballou), 1831-1910.  
Eads, James Buchanan, 1820-1887--Correspondence.  
Grant, Jesse Root, 1794-1873--Correspondence.  
Grant, Jesse Root, 1794-1873--Family.  
Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885--Correspondence.  
Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885--Resignation from office.  
Halleck, H. W. (Henry Wager), 1815-1872--Correspondence.  
Humphreys, A. A. (Andrew Atkinson), 1810-1883--Correspondence.  
Meade, George Gordon, 1815-1872--Correspondence.  
Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849.  
Porter, David D. (David Dixon), 1813-1891--Correspondence.  
Schofield, John McAllister, 1831-1906--Correspondence.  
Sheridan, Philip Henry, 1831-1888--Correspondence.  
Sherman, William T. (William Tecumseh), 1820-1891--Correspondence.  
Sickles, Daniel Edgar, 1819-1914--Correspondence.  
Townsend, E. D. (Edward Davis), 1817-1893--Correspondence.  
Trowbridge, W. P. (William Petit), 1828-1892.  
Williams, Seth, 1822-1866--Correspondence.  
Wright, Horatio Gouverneur, 1820-1899--Correspondence.

### Organizations

United States. Army of the Potomac.  
United States. Mississippi River Commission.

### Subjects

Fords (Stream crossings)--Virginia--Rapidan River.  
Fords (Stream crossings)--Virginia--Rappahannock River.  
Fortification--North Carolina.

Mexican War, 1846-1848.  
Presidents--United States--Messages.

### **Places**

Aquia Creek (Va.)--History.  
Fort Fisher (N.C. : Fort)--Capture, 1865.  
Harpers Ferry (W. Va.)--History.  
Mississippi River--Navigation.  
Mississippi--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.  
North Carolina--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Rapidan River (Va.)  
Rappahannock River (Va.)  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Engineering and construction.  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Vicksburg (Miss.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.  
Vicksburg (Miss.)--History--Siege, 1863.  
Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.  
West Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

### **Titles**

*Cyrus Ballou Comstock papers*

### **Occupations**

Army officers.  
Engineers.

## **Provenance**

The papers of C. B. Comstock, army officer, were given to the Library of Congress by the Comstock family, 1914-1951.

## **Processing History**

The papers of C. B. Comstock were processed in 1979. The finding aid was revised in 2003.

## **Copyright Status**

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

## **Access and Restrictions**

The papers of C. B. Comstock 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.

## **Microfilm**

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on four reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

## Preferred Citation

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

## Biographical Note

Date	Event
1831, Feb. 3	Born, West Wrentham, Mass.
1855	Graduated, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. Brevetted second lieutenant, United States Corps of Engineers
1862	Became chief engineer, Army of the Potomac
1863	Participated in the siege of Vicksburg, Miss.
1864	Participated in the Battle of the Wilderness
1864-1866	Aide-de-camp to Ulysses S. Grant
1865	Participated in the capture of Fort Fisher, N.C., and in the capture of Mobile, Ala.
1866-1870	Aide-de-camp to Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman
1869	Married Elizabeth Blair
1870-1874	Superintending engineer, geodetic survey of the north and northwestern lakes of the United States
1884	Member and president, United States Mississippi River Commission
1886	In charge of the fort and engineering school of application at Willet's Point, N.Y.
1895	Retired as colonel from the regular army
1904	Advanced to rank of brigadier general on the retired list
1910, May 29	Died, New York, N.Y.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Cyrus Ballou Comstock (1831-1910) span the years 1847-1908, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1862-1890. The collection principally contains military letters and telegrams, memoranda, special orders, general orders, and reports relating to the operations during the Civil War around Vicksburg, Mississippi, with lists of the number and kinds of guns in position before the city at certain dates and a full report of the siege.

The papers also include reports of other operations covering almost the entire war period; a diary, notebook, and a diary-field notebook containing entries recording Comstock's activities as an engineer attached to the Army of the Potomac; drawings of, and comments on, the fords on the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers; sketches of the defenses at Harpers Ferry and the Aquia Creek depot; a memoir of the capture of Fort Fisher; the draft of Ulysses S. Grant's letter of resignation as secretary of war under Andrew Johnson; a letter from Jesse Root Grant relating to his ancestry; and a memoir of William Petit Trowbridge prepared by Comstock. Later papers deal with work on the improvements of the Mississippi River when Comstock was president of the Mississippi River Commission. Miscellaneous items include a printed copy of the annual message of James K. Polk to Congress and related documents, 1847, concerning the war with Mexico.

Correspondents include Henry Martyn Adams, B. S. Alexander, Daniel Butterfield, James Buchanan Eads, Ulysses S. Grant, H. W. Halleck, A. A. Humphreys, George Gordon Meade, David D. Porter, John McAllister Schofield, Philip Henry Sheridan, William T. Sherman, Daniel Edgar Sickles, E. D. Townsend, Seth Williams, and Horatio Gouverneur Wright.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in three series:

- [Diaries and Notebooks, 1862-1867](#)
- [General Correspondence and Related Material, 1855-1908](#)
- [Miscellany, 1847-1862](#)

## Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1 REEL 1	<b><u>Diaries and Notebooks, 1862-1867</u></b> Diary-field notebook, notebook, and pocket diary. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 1-3 REEL 1-3	<b><u>General Correspondence and Related Material, 1855-1908</u></b> Correspondence and related material. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 3-4 REEL 3-4	<b><u>Miscellany, 1847-1862</u></b> General orders and printed copy of the annual message of President James K. Polk to Congress. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and topic.

# Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 17,650

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>BOX 1 REEL 1</b>	<b>Diaries and Notebooks, 1862-1867</b> Diary-field notebook, notebook, and pocket diary. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
<b>BOX 1 REEL 1</b>	Diary-field notebook, 1862-1863
<b>BOX 1 REEL 1</b>	Notebook, circa 1863-1865
<b>BOX 1 REEL 1</b>	Pocket diary, 1863-1867
<b>BOX 1-3 REEL 1-3</b>	<b>General Correspondence and Related Material, 1855-1908</b> Correspondence and related material. Arranged chronologically.
<b>BOX 1 REEL 1</b>	1855, Oct. 1-1878, Dec. 14 (5 folders)
<b>BOX 2 REEL 2</b>	1879, Jan. 18-1890, Nov. 22 (7 folders)
<b>BOX 3 REEL 3</b>	1890, Nov. 24-1908, Sept. 5, undated (3 folders)
<b>BOX 3-4 REEL 3-4</b>	<b>Miscellany, 1847-1862</b> General orders and printed copy of the annual message of President James K. Polk to Congress. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and topic.
<b>BOX 3 REEL 3</b>	General orders, 1862 (3 folders)
<b>BOX 4 REEL 4</b>	United States Congress, Senate, <i>Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress, 7 Dec. 1847</i> , 30th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Executive Document No. 1. (1 folder)
<b>BOX 4 REEL 4</b>	(7 folders)