

A. T. Mahan Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



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

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Prepared by Kevin Keaney and Bonnie Baldwin

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Collection Summary

Title: A T. Mahan Papers

Span Dates: 1779-1970

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1890-1914)

ID No.: MSS31062

Creator: Mahan, A. T. (Alfred Thayer), 1840-1914

Extent: 6,500 items

Extent: 16 containers plus 5 oversize

Extent: 7.2 linear feet

Extent: 12 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78031062>

Summary: Naval officer and historian. Correspondence, family papers, subject files, speeches and writings, scrapbooks, biographical file, printed matter, and other papers relating to Mahan's naval career, writings, and personal and family life.

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

Ashe, Samuel A. (Samuel A'Court), 1840-1938.

Erben, Henry, 1832-1909.

Hay, John, 1838-1905.

Herbert, Hilary A. (Hilary Abner), 1834-1919.

Holls, Frederick William, 1857-1903.

Kirkland, William A. (William Alexander), 1836-1898.

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924.

Long, John Davis, 1838-1915.

Low, Seth, 1850-1916.

Luce, Stephen Bleecker, 1827-1917.

Mahan family.

Mahan, A. T. (Alfred Thayer), 1840-1914.

McAdoo, W. G. (William Gibbs), 1863-1941.

Moore, John Bassett, 1860-1947.

Nelson, Horatio Nelson, Viscount, 1758-1805.

Puleston, W. D. (William Dilworth), 1881- W.D. Puleston research and writings file. 1806-1939.

Pulitzer, Joseph, 1847-1911.

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.

Root, Elihu, 1845-1937.

Saumarez, James, 1757-1836.

Schley, Winfield Scott, 1839-1911.

Organizations

Chicago (Protected cruiser)

International Peace Conference (1st : 1899 : Hague, Netherlands)

Iroquois (Sloop of war)

United States Naval Academy.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--East Asia.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--Europe.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--South America.

United States. Navy.

United States. Navy. Asiatic Squadron.

United States. Navy. European Station.
United States. Navy. South Pacific Squadron.
Wachusett (Steamer)

Subjects

Arbitration (International law)
International relations.
Military readiness.
Naval history.
Sea-power.
Shipbuilding.
War--Economic aspects.

Places

United States--History, Naval.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations.

Occupations

Historians.
Naval officers.

Provenance

The papers of A. T. Mahan, naval officer and historian, were deeded to the Library of Congress by his grandson, Alfred Thayer Mahan II, in 1974. The Library received the major part of the collection in the years 1938-1943 in several deposits by his daughters, Helen Evans Mahan and Ellen Kuhn Mahan. The deposits include the notes and correspondence made and collected by W. D. Puleston, who, at the request of the Mahan heirs, wrote Mahan's biography in 1939. One item was given by A. T. Mahan in 1903 and additions were made through gift and purchase, 1938-1978.

Processing History

The papers of A. T. Mahan were arranged and described in 1966 and reprocessed in in preparation for microfilming in 1984. The collection was expanded and revised in 2009.

Transfers

After the microfilm edition was prepared, photographs were transferred to the Prints and Photographs, where they are identified as part of the A. T. Mahan Papers.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of A. T. Mahan 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 twelve reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, A. T. Mahan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1840, Sept. 27	Born, West Point, N.Y.
1859	Graduated, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
1867-1868	Duty in <i>Iroquois</i> (sloop of war), Asiatic Squadron
1872	Married Ellen Lyle Evans
1872-1875	Commanded <i>Wasp</i> (steamer), South Atlantic Squadron
1876-1880	Ordnance duty, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
1880-1883	Duty in Navigation Department, United States Navy Yard, New York, N.Y.
1883	Published <i>The Gulf and Inland Waters</i> . New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
1883-1885	Commanded <i>Wachusett</i> (sloop of war), South Pacific Squadron
1886	President, Naval War College, Newport, R. I.
1890	Published <i>The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783</i> . Boston: Little, Brown
1892	Published <i>The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812</i> . Boston: Little, Brown. 2 vols.
1893-1895	Commanded <i>Chicago</i> (cruiser), European Station
1894	Honorary degrees, Oxford University, Oxford, England, and Cambridge University, Cambridge, England
1896	Retired
1898	Appointed to Naval War Board
1899	Member, United States delegation to the International Peace Conference, Hague, Netherlands
1908	Member, Commission on Documentary Historical Publications of the United States Government
1914, Dec. 1	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) span the years 1779 to 1970, with the bulk of the material dated 1890-1914, after the publication of Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*. The collection reflects Mahan's naval career, family background, influence as a naval historian, and the work of W. D. Puleston, Mahan's biographer. The Mahan Papers have been arranged into [Family Papers](#), [Subject File](#), [Speeches and Writings File](#), [Biographer's File](#), [Printed Matter](#), and [Miscellany](#).

The [Family Papers](#) provide insight into Mahan's close family ties and early naval career. Mahan's correspondence with his family describes his education at the United States Naval Academy, Civil War service, and navy cruises to the Far East, South America, and Europe. Mahan's letters to his wife and daughter, Ellen, during the cruise of the *Chicago* (cruiser), 1893-1895, record his controversy with Rear Admiral Henry Erben and his reception and honors in England. Letters of condolence following Mahan's death and other family correspondence are also in the file.

The impact of Mahan's writings is indicated in the files of foreign correspondence in the [Subject File](#). Anecdotes and documents from the relatives of Admirals Horatio Nelson and James Saumarez and others are included in the British correspondence files. Much of Mahan's correspondence with American naval officers, historians, diplomats, and public figures can be found within several chronological correspondence files. The Subject File also contains information relating to Mahan's views on armament, international arbitration, shipbuilding programs, the immunity of commerce in war, and his controversies with Erben and with Frederick William Holls regarding the International Peace Conference at the Hague in 1899. Other correspondence of interest includes Mahan's 1866 letter to Stephen Bleeker Luce outlining his conception of his first book on the influence of sea power; confidential letters from Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924) on foreign policy; and correspondence with Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919).

The [Speeches and Writings File](#) includes Mahan's lectures on naval warfare at the Lowell Institute, speeches on women's suffrage and religion, and drafts, notes, notebooks, and research materials for some of his books, articles, and unpublished works on Horatio Nelson, United States naval history, and foreign affairs. The publishers' correspondence files include discussions on proposed writing topics and document the progress and profitability of Mahan's works. There is also correspondence with Joseph Pulitzer and William Gibbs McAdoo concerning Woodrow Wilson's censorship order of 1914 and Mahan's rebuttals to Norman Angell's book, *The Great Illusion* (1911).

The [Biographer's File](#) contains the correspondence and personal recollections of Mahan's children and sister, his classmate, Samuel Ashe, scholars such as John Bassett Moore and Seth Low, and other contemporaries. The acquisition by W. D. Puleston of Mahan's correspondence with various persons and publishers, which he added to this collection, is documented in the file. Information concerning Mahan's family background, education, religion, naval career, and influence on Kaiser Wilhelm II, as well as copies of various government documents and periodicals, is also in the file.

The [Printed Matter file](#) contains copies of periodical articles by or about Mahan, 1896-1914, and others concerning naval history, foreign affairs, and religion. Mahan's scrapbooks of newspaper clippings include notations and short drafts. Other material of interest are Mahan's obituaries, Hague Conference reports, and a 1940 address on Mahan by John Bassett Moore.

The [Miscellany](#) series contains information about Mahan's awards and honors, his dinner with Kaiser Wilhelm in 1893, an inventory of his papers, and other items. Disbursing claims include information about his service and temporary active duty on various commissions and at the Naval War College following his retirement.

Additional correspondents in the papers include John Hay, Hilary A. Herbert, William Kirkland, John Davis Long, Elihu Root, and Winfield Scott Schley.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Family Papers, 1824-1936](#)
- [Subject File, 1797-1915](#)
- [Speeches and Writings File, 1779-1915](#)
- [Biographer's File, 1806-1939](#)
- [Printed Matter, 1893-1970](#)
- [Miscellany, 1888-1914](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	<p><u>Family Papers, 1824-1936</u></p> <p>Letters sent and received by family members. Includes Mahan's correspondence with family members and the correspondence of Mahan relatives with others. Copies of family letters, 1856-1877, with additional comments by Mahan's daughter, Ellen Mahan, are also included. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and thereunder chronologically.</p>
BOX 2-4 REEL 2-3	<p><u>Subject File, 1797-1915</u></p> <p>Correspondence, notes, naval orders, drafts, and a record of letters sent, 1895-1896, by Mahan. Includes correspondence between Mahan and various American and international public figures, naval officers, historians, and private citizens, and correspondence concerning specific subjects or events in Mahan's career. Arranged alphabetically by subject or name of correspondent, with a record of letters sent at the end.</p>
BOX 5-11 REEL 3-6	<p><u>Speeches and Writings File, 1779-1915</u></p> <p>Drafts, texts, notes, notebooks, correspondence, and other material relating to Mahan's speeches, lectures, books, articles, and research. Arranged by type of material and therein alphabetically by title, topic, name of correspondent, or type of material.</p>
BOX 12-15 REEL 7-8	<p><u>Biographer's File, 1806-1939</u></p> <p>Research and writings file of W. D. Puleston, Mahan's biographer, including correspondence with Mahan's relatives, contemporaries, publishers, and research assistants; notes, deeds, and copies of other documents; drafts of Puleston's book; compilations and extracts of government records and other sources; and miscellaneous material relating to Mahan. Arranged in a subject file and a research file and therein alphabetically by name of person, subject, or type of material.</p>
BOX 16-21 REEL 8-12	<p><u>Printed Matter, 1893-1970</u></p> <p>Newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, printed reports, and other publications. Arranged by type of material.</p>
BOX 21 REEL 12	<p><u>Miscellany, 1888-1914</u></p> <p>Awards, claims, invoices, invitations, photographs, and other material. Arranged alphabetically by subject. The photographs were transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library after filming.</p>

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 19,175

Container	Contents
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Family Papers, 1824-1936 Letters sent and received by family members. Includes Mahan's correspondence with family members and the correspondence of Mahan relatives with others. Copies of family letters, 1856-1877, with additional comments by Mahan's daughter, Ellen Mahan, are also included. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Evans family (wife's family), 1866-1936
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Dennis Hart (father), 1824-1869, 1899
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Dennis Hart, Jr. (brother), 1893, 1914
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Ellen Kuhn (daughter), 1884-1905
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Ellen Lyle Evans (wife), 1871-1927 (8 folders) <i>Correspondents</i> include Seth Low, John Bassett, and Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Frederick Augustus (brother), 1893, 1915
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Helen Evans (daughter), 1919-1931
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Jane Leigh (sister), 1868-1917, undated
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Mary Helena Okill (mother), 1848, 1867-1885
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Mahan, Milo (uncle), 1864
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Okill, Mary Helena (grandmother), 1847
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	Copies of Evans and Mahan family correspondence, by Ellen Kuhn Mahan, 1856-1877, 1936
BOX 2-4 REEL 2-3	Subject File, 1797-1915 Correspondence, notes, naval orders, drafts, and a record of letters sent, 1895-1896, by Mahan. Includes correspondence between Mahan and various American and international public figures, naval officers, historians, and private citizens, and correspondence concerning specific subjects or events in Mahan's career. Arranged alphabetically by subject or name of correspondent, with a record of letters sent at the end.
BOX 2 REEL 2-3	Admission to United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., 1856, 1907 1856, 1907 Armament, letters to the editors, <i>New York Times</i> and <i>New York Evening Post</i> , 1914
BOX 2 REEL 2-3	Boer War, 1900
BOX 2 REEL 2-3	British correspondence, 1890-1913, undated
BOX 2 REEL 2-3	British correspondence concerning Horatio Nelson, 1797-1824, 1894-1908
BOX 2 REEL 2-3	Clark, Sir Bouverie F., 1890-1914
BOX 2 REEL 2-3	Clarke, Sir George Sydenham, 1892-1898
BOX 2 REEL 2-3	Correspondence, 1858-1914 (4 folders) <i>Correspondents</i> include John Hay, Hilary A. Herbert, Seth Low, William Gibbs McAdoo, John Bassett Moore, Elilhu Root, and Winfield Scott Schley
BOX 3 REEL 3	Erben, Henry, controversy 1893-1895

Subject File, 1797-1915

Container	Contents
	<i>Correspondents</i> include Hilary A. Herbert, William Kirkland, Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924), and Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)
BOX 3 REEL 3	French officers, 1893-1894
BOX 3 REEL 3	German officers, 1893-1914
BOX 3 REEL 3	Green, Francis V., 1899-1914
BOX 3 REEL 3	Hague Conference, 1899 (2 folders)
BOX 3 REEL 3	Holls, Frederick William, controversy regarding the International Peace Conference, Hague, Netherlands, Article 27, 1900-1902 <i>Correspondents</i> include Seth Low and John Bassett Moore
BOX 3 REEL 3	Immunity of commerce in war, 1906
BOX 3 REEL 3	Japanese officers and oriental association, 1897-1914
BOX 3 REEL 3	Lodge, Henry Cabot (1850-1924), 1898-1913
BOX 4 REEL 3	Long, John Davis, secretary of the navy, 1898-1902 (3 folders)
BOX 4 REEL 3	Midshipman citation, 1861
BOX 4 REEL 3	Naval bases, 1910
BOX 4 REEL 3	Naval orders and correspondence, 1892-1914
BOX 4 REEL 3	Religious correspondence, 1897-1914, undated
BOX 4 REEL 3	Roosevelt, Theodore (1858-1919), 1890-1915 (2 folders)
BOX 4 REEL 3	Russian officer (Nicholas Portugalof), 1909-1910
BOX 4 REEL 3	Sampson-Schley controversy, Mahan letter to the <i>New York Sun</i> , Aug. 7, 1890
BOX 4 REEL 3	Santo Domingo incident, John Bassett Moore, 1902
BOX 4 REEL 3	South American cruise reports of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, 1908
BOX 4 REEL 3	Sterling, John B., Coldstream Guards, 1895-1898
BOX 4 REEL 3	Thursfield, James R., 1894-1906
BOX 4 REEL 3	USS <i>Chicago</i> cruise, 1894-1895
BOX 4 REEL 3	Record of letters sent, June 11, 1895-Jan. 22, 1896
BOX 5-11 REEL 3-6	Speeches and Writings File, 1779-1915 Drafts, texts, notes, notebooks, correspondence, and other material relating to Mahan's speeches, lectures, books, articles, and research. Arranged by type of material and therein alphabetically by title, topic, name of correspondent, or type of material.
BOX 5 REEL 3-4	Speeches
BOX 5 REEL 3-4	Address, American Historical Association, 1902
BOX 5 REEL 3-4	Holy Trinity Church speech, Mar. 1899
BOX 5 REEL 3-4	"Naval Warfare," Lowell Institute Lectures, Mar. 24-Apr. 24, 1897 (3 folders)
BOX 5 REEL 3-4	"Personality and Influence," commencement address, Dartmouth College, N.H., June 24, 1903
BOX 5 REEL 3-4	"Some Practical Considerations concerning the Spiritual Life," Church Club, Philadelphia, Pa., Feb. 25, 1907
BOX 5 REEL 3-4	Women's suffrage speech, undated
BOX 6 REEL 4	Articles

Speeches and Writings File, 1779-1915

Container	Contents
BOX 6 REEL 4	"About What Is the War?" draft, 1914-1915 <i>Correspondents</i> include William Gibbs McAdoo
BOX 6 REEL 4	"DeGrasse at Yorktown," draft, undated
BOX 6 REEL 4	"The Great Illusion," <i>North American Review</i> , drafts and notes, Mar. 1912
BOX 6 REEL 4	"The Monroe Doctrine," <i>National Review</i> , notes, Feb. 1903
BOX 6 REEL 4	"The Panama Canal and the Distribution of the Fleet," <i>North American Review</i> , draft, Sept. 1914
BOX 6 REEL 4	The Panama Canal from a Military Point of View, <i>Revue Economique Internationale</i> , draft, Jan. 1913
BOX 6 REEL 4	"Why Not Disarm?" ["The Folly of the Hague"], draft, <i>Sunday Magazine</i> , Sept. 1913
BOX 6 REEL 4	Books
BOX 6 REEL 4	<i>The Harvest Within: Thoughts on the Life of a Christian</i> (1909), notes
BOX 6 REEL 4	<i>The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783</i> (1890), notes
BOX 6 REEL 4	<i>The Interest of America in International Conditions</i> (1910), notes
BOX 6 REEL 4	Introduction to <i>Biography of Vice Admiral Tasuka Serata</i> , by K. Asami [1913], draft
BOX 6 REEL 4	<i>The Life of Nelson: The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain</i> (1897, 2nd
BOX 6 REEL 4	<i>The Life of Nelson: The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain</i> (1897, 2nd ed. rev., 1899), notebook and research material, 1779-1830, undated (3 folders)
BOX 6 REEL 4	<i>The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence</i> (1913), notebook [1897-1913?]
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	Research notes
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	Committee on Documentary Historical Publications of the U.S. Government, drafts, 1908, undated
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	"The Influence of Expansion in the History of the United States," unfinished work, drafts, notes, and notebook, 1913 (3 folders)
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	Miscellaneous drafts and notes, 1904-1914, undated
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	Notes
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	Distances
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	Elements of naval strategy
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	French feudalism, 1902
BOX 7 REEL 4-5	<i>G. L. Beer's Old Colonial System . . . and G. Rives' United States and Mexico</i> , notebook
BOX 8 REEL 5	Naval strategy
BOX 8 REEL 5	Religion, 1895-1913, undated
BOX 8 REEL 5	Russo-Japanese War
BOX 8 REEL 5	Secretary of the navy, letters to Congress
BOX 8 REEL 5	War of 1812, notebooks
BOX 8 REEL 5	Part I
BOX 8 REEL 5	Part II, John Paul Jones, Boer War
BOX 8 REEL 5	War of 1812 and naval administration, notebook
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	Publishers' correspondence
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	<i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , Horace Scudder, 1890-1900
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	Brownell, Atherton, 1914
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	Fournier, George, 1897
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	Harper and Brothers, 1897-1914
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	<i>Independent</i> , 1902-1914

Speeches and Writings File, 1779-1915

Container	Contents
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	<i>International Monthly</i> , 1901-1902, undated
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	<i>Leslie's Weekly</i> , 1914
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	Little, Brown & Co
BOX 9 REEL 5-6	1893-1905, John M. Brown (3 folders)
BOX 10 REEL 6	1897-1914 (8 folders)
BOX 11 REEL 6	<i>Metropolitan</i> , 1913
BOX 11 REEL 6	Miscellaneous, 1892-1914
BOX 11 REEL 6	<i>National Review</i> , Leopold J. Maxe, 1894-1912 (2 folders)
BOX 11 REEL 6	<i>North American Review</i> , 1897-1914
BOX 11 REEL 6	Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1893-1912
BOX 11 REEL 6	<i>The World</i> (New York), Joseph Pulitzer, 1914
BOX 11 REEL 6	Contracts with publishers, 1890-1912
BOX 12-15 REEL 7-8	Biographer's File, 1806-1939 Research and writings file of W. D. Puleston, Mahan's biographer, including correspondence with Mahan's relatives, contemporaries, publishers, and research assistants; notes, deeds, and copies of other documents; drafts of Puleston's book; compilations and extracts of government records and other sources; and miscellaneous material relating to Mahan. Arranged in a subject file and a research file and therein alphabetically by name of person, subject, or type of material.
BOX 12 REEL 7	Subject file
BOX 12 REEL 7	Ashe, Captain Samuel, 1921-1938
BOX 12 REEL 7	<i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , 1936-1937
BOX 12 REEL 7	Braitwaite, Frederick G., 1935-1938
BOX 12 REEL 7	Chiles, Rosa P., 1925-1938
BOX 12 REEL 7	Library of Congress, J. Franklin Jameson, 1936-1937
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan's education, 1936
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan's religion, 1936
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan, Dennis Hart (father), 1935-1936, undated
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan, Ellen Kuhn (daughter), 1935-1938, undated
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan, Helen Evans (daughter), 1935-1937
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan, Jane Leigh (sister), 1935-1937, undated
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan, John (grandfather), 1806, 1935-1936
BOX 12 REEL 7	Mahan, Lyle Evans (son), 1934-1938 (2 folders)
BOX 12 REEL 7	Maxe, Sir Ivor, 1937
BOX 13 REEL 7	Moore, John Bassett, 1936-1937
BOX 13 REEL 7	Morely, Rose, 1936-37
BOX 13 REEL 7	Navy biography, 1935
BOX 13 REEL 7	Puleston, W. D., "John Hay and Alfred Mahan versus Tyler Dennett, Charles Beard, et al.," 1935, undated
BOX 13 REEL 7	Roosevelt, Theodore (1858-1919), 1937
BOX 13 REEL 7	United States Embassy, London, England, 1936-1937
BOX 13 REEL 7	Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1894-1937

Biographer's File, 1806-1939

Container	Contents
BOX 13 REEL 7	General correspondence, A-Z, 1934-39, undated (3 folders)
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Research file
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Biographical notes regarding the Mahan family, and others, 1936, undated
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Book reviews by Mahan on British naval history and Horatio Nelson, 1896, 1911
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Book reviews of writings by Mahan, 1890-1906, undated (4 folders)
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Calendar of Mahan, 1859-1875 events, undated
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Connolly, C. Parker, research material and correspondence, 1936-1937 (2 folders)
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Drafts of writings
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Civil War and Naval War College chapters, undated
BOX 14 REEL 7-8	Mahan family, birth, and boyhood chapters, undated
BOX 15 REEL 8	Essays and writings on Mahan, 1929-1934, undated
BOX 15 REEL 8	Miscellaneous notes, 1935-1938, undated
BOX 15 REEL 8	Notes
BOX 15 REEL 8	On Mahan's essays and publisher's correspondence, undated
BOX 15 REEL 8	On Mahan's sea duty between 1861 and 1895, undated
BOX 15 REEL 8	Promotion examinations of Mahan for commander and captain grades, 1872, 1875
BOX 15 REEL 8	Report, Committee on Department Methods on the Documentary Historical Publications of the U.S. Government, 1909
BOX 15 REEL 8	Report of the Commission on Naval Reorganization, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Doc. 743, 1909
BOX 15 REEL 8	Reports of the Commission Appointed to Consider Certain Needs of the Navy, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Doc. 740, 1909 Statement, Secretary of the Navy Truman Newberry, before the Committee on Naval Affairs, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Doc. 693, 1909
BOX 15 REEL 8	<i>USS Congress</i> (frigate) and the Civil War
BOX 16-21 REEL 8-12	Printed Matter, 1893-1970 Newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, printed reports, and other publications Arranged by type of material.
BOX 16-17 REEL 8	Articles file
BOX 16-17 REEL 8	Photocopies of Mahan's articles and related articles by others, including indexes of titles and subjects, 1896-1914 (2 vols.)
BOX 18-19 REEL 9-10	Newspaper clippings file
BOX 18-19 REEL 9-10	Scrapbooks on the Spanish-American War, May 1898-Jan. 1899 (2 vols.)
BOX 20 REEL 11	Scrapbook
BOX 20 REEL 11	1909-1914
BOX 21 REEL 12	1909-1914, loose clippings
BOX 21 REEL 12	Obituary notices
BOX 21 REEL 12	1914-1921, undated
BOX 21 REEL 12	Copies from foreign newspapers, 1914-1915, undated
BOX 21 REEL 12	Mahan's estate, 1915, undated
BOX 21 REEL 12	Miscellaneous clippings, 1893-1936, undated

Printed Matter, 1893-1970

Container	Contents
BOX 21 REEL 12	Publications file
BOX 21 REEL 12	Book reviews of <i>The Life of Nelson. . .</i> , 1897
BOX 21 REEL 12	Hague Conference, 1899
BOX 21 REEL 12	Miscellany, 1904-1970, undated <i>Includes</i> address by John Bassett Moore, "Personal Recollections of Admiral Mahan," Sept. 27, 1940
BOX 21 REEL 12	Miscellany, 1888-1914 Awards, claims, invoices, invitations, photographs, and other material. Arranged alphabetically by subject. The photographs were transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library after filming.
BOX 21 REEL 12	Cambridge University, Cambridge, England, and Oxford University, Oxford England, honorary degrees, 1894
BOX 21 REEL 12	Chesney Medal Award, Royal United Service Institution, 1900-1902
BOX 21 REEL 12	Disbursing claims, 1888-1914 (2 folders)
BOX 21 REEL 12	Hohenzollern visit to New York, claims, 1902
BOX 21 REEL 12	Miscellaneous notes, invitations, and inventory, [1893]-1898, undated
BOX 21 REEL 12	Notes on reading, trip expenses, and health, May 29-Aug. 18, [1908?]
BOX 21 REEL 12	Statement of account, B. F. Stevens and Brown, 1898-1913 1898-1913
BOX 21 REEL 12	Photographs <i>Transferred to Prints and Photographs Division after filming</i>