Collection Summary

Title: John Bigelow Papers
Inclusive Dates: 1492-1936
Bulk Dates: 1866-1936
ID No.: MSS12724
Creator: Bigelow, John, 1854-1936
Extent: 25,000 items
Extent: 76 containers plus 2 oversize
Extent: 30.4 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English with French, German, Italian, and Spanish
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78012724
Summary: Army officer, professor, and author. Correspondence, research notes, manuscripts of articles and books, photostatic copies of manuscripts in foreign archives, bibliographical material, photographs, drawings, maps, clippings, card files, and printed matter relating largely to canals especially, the Panama and Suez canals, along with the early history of Latin America, and also including material on the American Revolution, Civil War, Robert E. Lee, Monroe Doctrine, military education, and American foreign policy.

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
Bigelow, John, 1854-1936.

Organizations
Massachusetts. Militia.

Subjects
Canals--Rates and tolls.
Canals.
History, Ancient.
International law.
Military education.
Military history.
Military policy.
Monroe doctrine.
Saratoga Campaign, N.Y., 1777.
World War, 1914-1918.

Places
Eastern Hemisphere--Maps.
Egypt--History.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
Latin America--History.
New York (State)--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.
Nicaragua Canal (Nicaragua)
Panama Canal (Panama)
Panama--History--To 1903.
Saint Lawrence Seaway.
Suez Canal (Egypt)
Tehuantepec Canal (Mexico)
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--Foreign relations.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Campaigns.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.
United States--Territorial expansion.
Western Hemisphere--Maps.

**Occupations**
Army officers.
Authors.
Educators.

**Acquisition Information**
The papers of John Bigelow, army officer, professor, and author, were given to the Library of Congress by Mrs. John Bigelow in 1942 and by Mrs. Thomas H. Ellett from 1949 to 1951.

**Processing History**
The collection was processed by Manuscript Division staff circa 1951. The finding aid was revised by Melinda K. Friend in 2011.

**Additional Guides**

**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 John Bigelow is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

**Access and Restrictions**
The papers of John Bigelow 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, John Bigelow Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Biographical Note

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1854, May 12</td>
<td>Born, New York, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Graduated United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-circa 1891</td>
<td>Served with Ninth and Tenth Cavalry regiments in the American West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Married Mary Braxton Dallam (died circa 1941)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Published Principles of Strategy: Illustrated Mainly from American Campaigns. London: T. Fisher Unwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-1898</td>
<td>Professor of military science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-1903</td>
<td>Served in the Spanish-American War with Tenth Cavalry Regiment; wounded four times in attack on San Juan Hill and awarded Silver Star during Spanish-American War; later investigated Spanish war claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Published Reminiscences of the Santiago Campaign. New York: Harper &amp; Brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retired from army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1910</td>
<td>Professor of French, Massachusetts Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1909</td>
<td>Served in Adjutant General's Office, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Published The Campaign at Chancellorsville. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Published American Policy: The Western Hemisphere in Its Relation to the Eastern. New York: Charles Scriber's Sons</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Published World Peace: How War Cannot Be Abolished; How It May Be Abolished. New York: Mitchell Kennerley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Published Breaches of Anglo-American Treaties. New York: Sturgis &amp; Walton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-1918</td>
<td>Professor of military science, Rutgers College, New Brunswick, N.J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-1919</td>
<td>Recalled to active duty and assigned to history branch of general staff, War Department, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Retired from army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936, Feb. 29</td>
<td>Died, Washington, D.C.</td>
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Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Bigelow (1854-1936) span the years 1492-1936, with the bulk of the collection dating from 1866 to 1936. The collection was organized as received and material relating to a single topic is dispersed throughout the papers. Many items in the collection, including notes taken by Bigelow, are in French, German, Italian, and Spanish as well as in English. The papers are organized into the following series: [Series I](#), [Series II](#), [Series III](#), and [Oversize](#).

[Series I](#) contains material on the Panama and Suez canals mostly under subheadings that Bigelow titled "Panama Canal file" and "Suez Canal file." Both files are organized into an alphabetical subject file filled with notes, books, pamphlets, photostatic copies of manuscripts in foreign archives, clippings, and maps, and a chronological correspondence file containing copies of historical letters as well as research letters sent and received. There is also a large number of maps of the Old and New Worlds. Other topics of interest include the choice of routes for the Panama Canal, tolls, the Nicaraguan Canal and Tehuantepec Canal, and the minutes of the Isthmian Canal Commission. Material relating to the early history of civilization, the Panama Canal, and other canals is supplemented by card files in [Series II](#).

A manuscript copy of Bigelow's "Suez Canal-Panama Canal" appears in Series I with a second manuscript containing appendices appearing in [Series II](#). Also relating to Panama is an abstract from the diary of Bigelow's father and diplomat, John Bigelow (1817-1911). Bigelow's article, "The So-called Barholomew Columbus Map of 1506," is also split between [Series I](#) and [Series II](#). Correspondence relating to his book Principles of Strategy: Illustrated Mainly from American
Campaigns appears in both Series I and Series III, while correspondence relating to Breaches of Anglo-American Treaties is in Series I.

Series I also contains research material on American subjects such as the Saratoga Campaign in New York during the Revolutionary War, the Constitution, the Civil War, relations with Great Britain, the Monroe Doctrine, and westward expansion. Other topics include Egypt, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and international law. A card file related to the Saratoga Campaign is located in Series III.

Series II contains correspondence, manuscripts, and notes related to Bigelow's writings including The Campaign at Chancellorsville, "The Russo-German War: A Military Sketch," "How Theodore Roosevelt Took Panama," and "Alabama Claims." Included also are subject files on Central America, international law, origin of the name America, and World War I. Also of interest is the correspondence of the Nicaraguan Canal Commission.

Series III contains manuscripts, correspondence, and notes regarding Bigelow's work on Robert E. Lee, his book Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte, and a proposed biography of St. Christopher. Also of interest are the bibliographies of Panama Canal records from 1857 to 1932, an index to the maps collected by Bigelow, bibliographies on other topics, and papers and correspondence relating to Bigelow's service in the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- Series I, 1775-1934
- Series II, 1492-1914
- Series III, 1775-1933
- Oversize, 1823-1907
## Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1-53</td>
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<td>Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, maps, clippings, photographs, drawings, diary abstract, and printed matter. Arranged as received.</td>
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<td>BOX OV 1-OV 2</td>
<td><strong>Oversize, 1823-1907</strong></td>
<td>Maps.</td>
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Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
Container List

<table>
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Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, maps, clippings, photographs, drawings, diary abstract, and printed matter.  
Arranged as received.  
| BOX 1 | "Suez Canal-Panama Canal," manuscript  
| BOX 2 | "The So-called Bartholomew Columbus Map of 1506"  
Background information, undated  
(6 folders)  
Manuscripts, 1935  
(2 folders)  
Maps, 1895-1907 *See also Oversize*  
Memoranda, 1931  
Saratoga Campaign, New York  
Notes  
| BOX 3 | Manuscript (Parts 1 and 2)  
Woodrow Wilson and canal tolls  
*Breaches of Anglo-American Treaties* and *Principles of Strategy*, correspondence  
| BOX 4 | Saratoga Campaign, New York, letters, 1775  
| BOX 5 | Maps, photostatic copies and blueprints of maps, and notes  
Columbus, Christopher  
(8 folders)  
Photostatic copies  
Pleitos (lawsuit) corrections  
Old World  
(5 folders)  
| BOX 6 | Old and New World  
(6 folders)  
(3 folders)  
| BOX 7 | (7 folders)  
| BOX 8 | (8 folders)  
| BOX 9 | (5 folders)  
| BOX 10 | Panama Canal file  
Alexander VI-Cartography  
Central America  
Contracts for transportation  
| BOX 11 | Description-Diplomatic history  
Chagres River-Darien route  
| BOX 12 | Demarcation line-Honduras  
| BOX 13 | Humboldt, Alexander von-Martyr, Peter (1457-1526)  
| BOX 14 | Medina, Pedro de-New York  
Nicaragua  

John Bigelow Papers
Series I, 1775-1934

Correspondence

1849
Apr. 30-July 31
(2 folders)

BOX 15
Aug. 1-Dec. 31
1850-1857
(4 vols.)

BOX 16
1858-1904
(6 folders)

Geography/United States
North America-Ojeda, Alonso de

BOX 17
Panama and Monroe Doctrine
Panama Canal and international law
Panama Canal, construction-views
Panama Canal Bill-Panama Canal Zone
Panama City, Panama
Panama

Commerce
Correspondence

1841-1843
(2 folders)

BOX 18
1844-1884
(6 folders)
1885
Jan.-Feb.

BOX 19
Mar.-Dec.
(5 folders)
1886-1889

BOX 20
1900-1902
(3 folders)
1903
Jan.-Oct.
(3 folders)

BOX 21
Nov.-Dec.
(5 folders)
1904
Jan.-Mar.
(2 folders)

BOX 22
Apr.-Dec.
1905-1931
(2 folders)

Geography/Revolution
Ríos, Pedro de los-Traffic

BOX 23
Paterson, William-San Blas Coast

BOX 24
Solís, Juan Díaz de-Yucatán (Mexico)

BOX 25
Suez Canal (Egypt) file
Abyssinia-Constantinople
Degree-Europe

BOX 26

Florence, Italy-Imperialism
India

BOX 27

Indian Ocean-Mediterranean

BOX 28

Mensuration-Neutralization
Nile River

BOX 29

Ophir-Silk

BOX 30

Suez
Correspondence, 1863-1931
(6 folders)
Cost-Utility
Suez and Panama canals-Xerxes Canal

BOX 31

Ancient religion
Early history of civilization
Ancient Egypt
General
Geography

BOX 32

Geography
Egypt
General, 1923
Photographs of boats
Egypt and France, 1882
Evolution, collective
Greeks, ancient Alexandrians, and early Egyptians
The Negro
North Africa
Orientation of the mihrāb in mosques
Population(human geography)

BOX 33

Kharga Oasis, Egypt
China-Tibet
(2 vols.)
China I & II
(2 vols.)
Navigazione nei Porti del Regno, 1877
Tenativo dei Navigatori e Scopritori Genovesi per riuscire all' India lunghesso la Costa Occidentale dell' Africa . . . , 1881
Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana, Feb. 1880
France
British empire
British constitution

BOX 34

British policy
Canada and U.S.
Canadian government
Disarmament on the Great Lakes
French and others in Mexico
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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</table>
| BOX 35 | Great Lakes to Atlantic Ocean passage  
1932-1934  
St. Lawrence Seaway  
1846-1898  
Mexico and U.S., 1849, 1890  
(2 folders)  
Church and state, Mexico  
Texas and U.S., 1899  
Italy |
| BOX 36 | Church and state  
Clippings, circa 1930-circa 1931  
Pamphlets, circa 1900-circa 1901  
International law, 1909-1910  
(2 folders)  
International right  
Neutrality  
Roman Catholic doctrines |
| BOX 37 | America before Columbus  
Bigelow, John (1817-1911), diary abstract regarding Panama, 1886-1911  
Exploration and discovery  
Greece, Italy, Spain, and Arabia  
Naval architecture  
Neutral rights at sea  
Ribero, Diego (died 1533)  
Spain, law and government  
Strategy.  
Tidal and upland waters  
Tides |
| BOX 38 | Anthropology  
European waterways  
Maritime history and insurance  
Suez Canal (Egypt), neutralization, 1854-1906  
United States inland waterways, 1807- |
| BOX 39 | Le Canal de Suez, bulletin, 1922  
Clédat, Jean, pamphlets on Suez Canal, 1909-1924  
Interoceanic Canal, 1892-1897  
Isthmian Canal Commission, 1906  
Suez Canal (Egypt), various notes and pamphlets |
| BOX 40 | Canals, navigation, and irrigation, 1886-1908  
Nicaraguan Canal, 1887-1889, 1902-1932  
Tehuantepec Canal, 1869-circa 1884 |
| BOX 41 | Caribbean Sea, 1875-circa 1934  
Hydrography  
Nicaragua, 1840-1859  
Nicaraguan Canal, 1929  
Turkey |
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Container</th>
<th>Colombia, reparation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 42</td>
<td>I, circa 1903-1915</td>
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<td>&quot;Interoceanic Ship Canal Discussion,&quot; <em>American Geographic Society Bulletin</em>, 1879</td>
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<td>Atlantic and Pacific Canal Co.</td>
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<td>Choice of route, 1879-1893</td>
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<td>BOX 44</td>
<td><em>Canal Inter-Océanique par le Nicaragua</em>, 1875, 1879</td>
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<td><em>Les États-Unis et le Canal Interocéanique</em>, 1904-1905</td>
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<td>General, 1879-1884</td>
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<td>Pamphlets and clippings, 1915, 1926</td>
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<td>BOX 46</td>
<td><em>Annuaire des Valeurs Admises à la Cote Officielle</em>, 1926-1927</td>
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<td><em>Diplomatic History of the Panama Canal</em>, 1914</td>
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<td>&quot;Historical notes relative to the Universal Interoceanic Canal Company (1880-1894) until the organization of the new Company&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Memorial of Wm. H. Aspinwall, John L. Stephens, and Henry Chauncey in Reference to the Construction of a Railroad Across the Isthmus of Panama,&quot; 1848</td>
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<td>Panama Canal, 1878-1894</td>
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"El Canal de Panama en 1886," *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid*, 1887
Colombia, separation, circa 1903-circa 1916
General Ulysses S. Grant and the Panama Canal, 1879
Miscellany
Panama, 1885-1886, 1904-1911
(5 vols.)

**BOX 48**
Interocenanic Canal, Panama, 1885-1886
Johnson, Emory R., *Panama Traffic and Tolls*, statement, 1912
Panama, 1850-1880, 1898, 1906
(3 vols.)
Panama Canal, 1912-1913
*The Panama Canal and Our Relations with Colombia*, 1914
Panama Canal tolls, 1931
*Political Relations of the United States of America and the Republic of Columbia [sic] to the Panama Canal, under the Treaty of 1846-8, and the Concessions to the New Panama Canal Company*, undated
*Special Message of the President of the United States concerning the Panama Canal*, 1906
Taylor, Hannis, *Why the Pending Treaty with Colombia Should Be Ratified*, 1914

**BOX 49**
Pan America, 1911-1916
United States history
Colonial
Miscellaneous, 1822-1934
Monroe Doctrine
United States revolution
Vol. I

**BOX 50**
Vol. II
Civil War
Expansion-U.S., Louisiana
Party doctrines, 1896-1920
United States and Great Britain
1780-1855
1856-1868
1869
1870
United States Constitution
Article I
Article II
Clippings
Pamphlets

**BOX 51**
Bryce, James, *The Predictions of Hamilton and De Tocqueville*, 1887
Expansion-U.S., Texas
Monroe Doctrine
Prohibition and the U.S. Constitution
(2 vols.)
Smith-Marshall question (Roman Catholicism and politics)
United States foreign policy
Vol. I
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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| BOX 52 | Vol. II  
*Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field*, 1863, 1898, 1902  
Panama Canal, *Congressional Record*, 1913-1914, 1921  
(2 folders) |
| BOX 53 | Miscellaneous clippings, pamphlets, and printed matter |
| BOX 54-65 | **Series II, 1492-1914**  
Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, card files, maps, clippings, and printed matter.  
Arranged as received |
| BOX 54 | *The Campaign at Chancellorsville*, correspondence and notes, circa 1906-circa 1912  
(4 folders)  
Franco-German War (1870-1871)  
Laws of war  
"The Russo-German War: A Military Sketch," 1914  
World peace |
| BOX 55 | World War I  
A-G  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 56 | I-R  
(5 folders) |
| BOX 57 | S-W  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 58 | "How Theodore Roosevelt Took Panama," manuscript and notes  
"The So-called Bartholomew Columbus Map of 1506," background information, circa 1492-circa 1538  
Central America  
1838-1841  
1842-1911 |
| BOX 59 | Name origin of America |
| BOX 60 | "Suez Canal-Panama Canal," manuscript and appendix  
(2 folders) |
| BOX 61 | Alphabetical file |
| BOX 62 | "Alabama Claims," manuscript and notes  
Correspondence, 1862-1865  
"Naval Scouting, 1903-1904," manuscript and notes  
Notebook of editorial corrections  
Tyler, Julia Gardiner, "Reply to the Duchess of Sutherland and the Ladies of England," 1853, Jan. 24 (handwritten copy) |
| BOX 63 | Alphabetical file, "General" (E-S)  
International law, alphabetical file  
Nicaraguan Canal Commission, correspondence, 1897 |
| BOX 64 | Card file  
Early history of civilization and Panama Canal |
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 65</td>
<td>Canals</td>
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| BOX 66-76 | **Series III, 1775-1936**
Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, card file, maps, clippings, printed matter, and bibliographical material.
Arranged as received. |
| BOX 66    | Index of maps |
| BOX 67    | *Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte*
Lecture notes
Notes and correspondence
Text
St. Christopher, notes and photographs for a biography |
| BOX 68    | Lee, Robert E. |
| BOX 69    | Miscellaneous |
| BOX 70    | *Principles of Strategy*, correspondence, 1890-1892
Miscellaneous notes and correspondence
Civil War
El Alish and Convention of Cintra
Falkland Islands
Military education
Revolutionary War records
Western posts |
| BOX 71    | *Di Alcuni Lavori Ed Acquisti Della Biblioteca Vaticana*, 1892
Miscellaneous book lists and notes
Notebook |
| BOX 72    | Bibliographies of Panama Canal records, 1857-1932
(2 folders)
*Bulletin du Canal Interoceanique*, 1888
Landings in Panama, 1848-1904
Notes regarding books |
| BOX 73    | Panama Canal
Clippings and notes
Printed matter |
<table>
<thead>
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| BOX 74    | Bigelow, Jane Poulteny, correspondence, 1913  
Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, correspondence and papers, 1906-1909  
Miscellaneous material  
Clippings, notes, and printed matter, circa 1896-circa 1935  
Maps and notes  
Notes on army regulations  
Paper money from Italy  
Photographs and postcards, circa 1913  
Unpublished essays |
| BOX 75    | Card file, Saratoga Campaign catalogue |
| BOX 76    | Civil War, correspondence and papers, 1862-1863  
Panama Canal, correspondence, 1931  
World War I  
Miscellaneous material  
Map of New York state, 1823 [See Oversize]  
Notes on books  
Photostatic copies  
Saratoga Campaign clippings |
| BOX OV 1-OV 2 | Oversize, 1823-1907  
Maps.  
Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed. |
| BOX OV 1  | Series I  
_Mappamondo Catalano della Estense_, 1907 (Container 2) |
| BOX OV 2  | Series III  
Map of New York state, 1823 (Container 76) |