

**John Bigelow Papers**  
**A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**2011**

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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2014  
Revised 2023 December

## 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, 1817-1911. John Bigelow abstract of diary. 1886-1911.

Bigelow, John, 1854-1936.

Lee, Robert E. (Robert Edward), 1807-1870.

### Organizations

Isthmian Canal Commission (U.S.) Isthmian Canal Commission (U.S.) records.

Massachusetts. Militia.

United States. Constitution--Juvenile literature.

### 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**

The Bigelow Papers are described in *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1943*: 126, 132-133.

## **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

Date	Event
1854, May 12	Born, New York, N.Y.
1877	Graduated United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1877-circa 1891	Served with Ninth and Tenth Cavalry regiments in the American West
1883	Married Mary Braxton Dallam (died circa 1941)
1884	Published <i>Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte</i> . Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office
1891	Published <i>Principles of Strategy: Illustrated Mainly from American Campaigns</i> . London: T. Fisher Unwin
1894-1898	Professor of military science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.
1896	Published "The Tenth Regiment of Cavalry" in <i>The Army of the United States; Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief</i> . New York: Maynard, Merrill & Co.
1898-1903	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
1899	Published <i>Reminiscences of the Santiago Campaign</i> . New York: Harper & Brothers
1904	Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, California Retired from army
1905-1910	Professor of French, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
1906-1909	Served in Adjutant General's Office, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia
1910	Published <i>The Campaign at Chancellorsville</i> . New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press
1914	Published <i>American Policy: The Western Hemisphere in Its Relation to the Eastern</i> . New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
1915	Published <i>World Peace: How War Cannot Be Abolished; How It May Be Abolished</i> . New York: Mitchell Kennerley
1917	Published <i>Breaches of Anglo-American Treaties</i> . New York: Sturgis & Walton
1917-1918	Professor of military science, Rutgers College, New Brunswick, N.J.
1918-1919	Recalled to active duty and assigned to history branch of general staff, War Department, Washington, D.C.
1919	Retired from army
1936, Feb. 29	Died, Washington, D.C.

## 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 Bartholomew 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

<b>Container</b>	<b>Series</b>
BOX 1-53	<p><b><u>Series I, 1775-1934</u></b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Arranged as received.</p>
BOX 54-65	<p><b><u>Series II, 1492-1914</u></b></p> <p>Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, card files, maps, clippings, and printed matter.</p> <p>Arranged as received</p>
BOX 66-76	<p><b><u>Series III, 1775-1936</u></b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Arranged as received.</p>
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<p><b><u>Oversize, 1823-1907</u></b></p> <p>Maps.</p> <p>Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.</p>

# Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-53	<b>Series I, 1775-1934</b> 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 <i>See also Oversize</i> Memoranda, 1931 Saratoga Campaign, New York Notes
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