

# **Robert Wilson Shufeldt Papers**

## **A Finding Aid to the Papers in the Naval Historical Foundation Collection in the Library of Congress**



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

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

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Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms011195>

Prepared by John P. Butler

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2011

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Robert Wilson Shufeldt Papers

**Span Dates:** 1836-1910

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1860-1880)

**ID No.:** MSS52688

**Creator:** Shufeldt, Robert Wilson, 1822-1895

**Extent:** 15,000 items

**Extent:** 37 containers

**Extent:** 15 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

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

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm70052688>

**Summary:** Naval officer, explorer, and diplomat. Correspondence, journals, diaries, notebooks, logbooks, subject files, newspaper clippings, and printed matter relating to Shufeldt's career in the navy and as an explorer and diplomat.

## 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

Atkinson, Edward, 1827-1905--Correspondence.

Bache, A. D. (Alexander Dallas), 1806-1867--Correspondence.

Bancroft, George, 1800-1891--Correspondence.

Bell, Henry Haywood, 1808-1868--Correspondence.

Boggs, Charles Stuart, 1811-1888--Correspondence.

Bradford, William, 1823-1892--Correspondence.

Butler, Benjamin F. (Benjamin Franklin), 1795-1858--Correspondence.

Carpenter, Cyrus Clay, 1829-1898--Correspondence.

Dahlgren, John Adolphus Bernard, 1809-1870--Correspondence.

Du Pont, Samuel Francis, 1803-1865--Correspondence.

Farragut, David Glasgow, 1801-1870--Correspondence.

Fish, Hamilton, 1808-1893--Correspondence.

Hargous, P. A. (Peter A.)--Correspondence.

Henshaw, David, 1791-1852--Correspondence.

Hopkins, Alfred--Correspondence.

Jenkins, Thornton A. (Thornton Alexander), 1811-1893--Correspondence.

Kennedy, John Pendleton, 1795-1870--Correspondence.

Kondō, Masuki--Correspondence.

Li, Hongzhang, 1823-1901--Correspondence.

Mackenzie, Alexander Slidell, 1803-1848--Correspondence.

Mason, J. M. (James Murray), 1798-1871--Correspondence.

Perry, Matthew Calbraith, 1794-1858--Correspondence.

Porter, David D. (David Dixon), 1813-1891--Correspondence.

Seward, William H. (William Henry), 1801-1872--Correspondence.

Shufeldt family--Correspondence.

Shufeldt, Mason A. (Mason Abercrombie), 1852-1892. Mason A. Shufeldt papers. 1883-1893.

Shufeldt, Robert Wilson, 1822-1895.

Smith, Truman, 1791-1884--Correspondence.

Stevens, Benjamin Franklin, 1833-1902--Correspondence.

Walker, John Grimes, 1835-1907--Correspondence.

Welles, Gideon, 1802-1878--Correspondence.

### Organizations

Ticonderoga (Sloop of war)  
United States. Navy--History--19th century.

### **Subjects**

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Cuba.  
Voyages around the world.

### **Places**

Africa--Discovery and exploration.  
Africa--Foreign relations--United States.  
Asia--Foreign relations--United States.  
Cuba--Foreign relations--United States.  
Mexico--Discovery and exploration.  
Tehuantepec, Isthmus of (Mexico)--Surveys.  
United States--Foreign relations--1861-1865.  
United States--Foreign relations--19th century.  
United States--Foreign relations--Africa.  
United States--Foreign relations--Asia.  
United States--Foreign relations--Cuba.  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations.

### **Occupations**

Diplomats.  
Explorers.  
Naval officers.

## **Provenance**

The papers of Robert Wilson Shufeldt, naval officer, explorer, and diplomat, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1949, 1952, and 1954, and converted to a gift in 1998.

## **Processing History**

The papers of Robert Wilson Shufeldt were arranged and described in 1968. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

## **Additional Guides**

In 1969 the Library published *Robert Wilson Shufeldt, a Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress*.

## **Copyright Status**

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

## **Access and Restrictions**

The papers of Robert Wilson Shufeldt 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, Robert Wilson Shufeldt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

| Date          | Event  |
|---------------|--|
| 1822, Feb. 21 | Born, Red Hook, N.Y.   |
| 1839          | Appointed midshipman in the U.S. Navy  |
| 1839-1840     | Duty in USS <i>United States</i> , Home Squadron   |
| 1840-1841     | Duty in USS <i>Potomac</i> , Brazil Squadron   |
| 1841-1842     | Duty in USS <i>Marion</i> , Brazil Squadron  |
| 1842-1843     | Duty in USS <i>Bainbridge</i> , Home Squadron  |
| 1843-1844     | Duty in USS <i>Potomac</i> , Home Squadron   |
| 1844-1845     | Duty at the Naval School, Philadelphia, Pa.  |
| 1845          | Promoted to passed midshipman  |
| 1845-1846     | Coast survey duty  |
| 1846          | Duty in USS <i>United States</i> , Africa Squadron   |
| 1846-1848     | Duty in USS <i>Marion</i> , Africa and Mediterranean Squadrons   |
| 1847          | Married Sarah Hutchins Abercrombie (died 1871)   |
| 1849          | Duty in USS <i>Morris</i>  |
| 1850-1851     | Duty in USS <i>Atlantic</i>  |
| 1851          | Duty in USS <i>Georgia</i>   |
| 1851-1854     | On leave from the navy   |
| 1854          | Commissioned lieutenant  |
|               | Resigned from the navy   |
| 1854-1856     | Chief officer, Collins Steamship Line  |
| 1856-1861     | Commanded commercial ships and helped survey the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Mexico)                                   |
| 1861-1863     | Consul general, Havana, Cuba 1862 Served on a mission to Mexico  |
| 1863          | Commissioned commander   |
|               | Commanded USS <i>Conemaugh</i> , South Atlantic Blockade Squadron  |
| 1863-1865     | Commanded USS <i>Proteus</i> , East Gulf Squadron  |
| 1865-1866     | Commanded USS <i>Hartford</i> , East India Squadron  |
| 1866-1868     | Commanded USS <i>Wachusett</i> , East India-Asiatic Squadron   |
| 1868          | Ordnance duty, New York Navy Yard  |
| 1868-1869     | Commanded New York Naval Rendezvous  |
| 1869-1870     | Commanded USS <i>Minantonomoh</i>  |
| 1870          | Promoted to captain  |
|               | Ordnance duty, Portsmouth Navy Yard  |
| 1870-1871     | Commanded Tehuantepec (Mexico) Survey Expedition   |
| 1871-1872     | Commanded USS <i>Wabash</i> , European Squadron  |
| 1872-1873     | Commanded USS <i>Plymouth</i> , European Squadron  |
| 1873-1875     | Executive officer, New York Navy Yard  |
| 1875-1878     | Chief of the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting  |
| 1878-1880     | Commanded USS <i>Ticonderoga</i> on a world cruise sponsored by the Department of the Navy and Department of State |
| 1881          | Naval attaché, Peking, China   |
| 1882-1884     | President, Naval Advisory Board  |
| 1883-1884     | Superintendent, Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.  |

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1884         | Promoted to rear admiral<br>Retired from the navy |
| 1889         | Declined post of U.S. minister to China           |
| 1895, Nov. 6 | Died, Washington, D.C.                            |

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Robert W. Shufeldt (1822-1895) span the years 1836-1910, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1860-1880. Shufeldt's forty-five year naval career was interrupted by a nine-year period in the merchant marine service and in surveying for a proposed isthmian canal route. The correspondence for his broken-service years, however, includes many papers of interest on naval affairs.

The Shufeldt collection consists primarily of correspondence, letterbooks, and subject files, supplemented by diaries, notebooks, journals, logbooks, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and a small file of material concerning explorations in Africa by Shufeldt's youngest son, Mason. The topics of interest are the nineteenth-century navy, its growth and development; Civil War naval and diplomatic activities; foreign relations in the 1870s and 1880s, especially with Africa and Asia; and the Tehuantepec, Mexico, surveying expeditions. The collection is organized into nine series: [Diaries, Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals](#); [Letterbooks, Letterpress Books, and Letter Index Books](#); [Official Correspondence](#); [General Correspondence](#); [Subject File](#); [Newspaper Clippings](#); [Printed Matter](#); [Miscellany](#); and [Mason A. Shufeldt File](#).

Shufeldt resigned his commission in the navy in 1854 and entered the merchant marine to command the *Quaker City*. Later, he became interested in the construction of a canal across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico and in 1860 led an expedition through that region. In 1861, Shufeldt was appointed consul general to serve in Cuba. Correspondents for the years 1839-1861 include A. D. Bach, George Bancroft, Charles Stuart Boggs, Benjamin F. Butler, John Adolphus Dahlgren, Samuel Francis Du Pont, David Glasgow Farragut, John Pendleton Kennedy, James Murray Mason, Matthew Calbraith Perry, David D. Porter, and Gideon Welles.

Shufeldt returned to active duty in the navy in 1863 with the rank of commander. During the Civil War, he served both ashore and afloat. After the Civil War, Shufeldt served at sea in the Far East and in 1868 he returned to the United States and was assigned ordnance duty ashore in New York.

In 1870, Shufeldt was promoted to the rank of captain and was assigned special duty in command of a survey expedition to Tehuantepec, Mexico. After the exploration, Shufeldt recommended that this territory be considered as a likely site for a transisthmus canal.

In 1878, Shufeldt was given command of the *Ticonderoga* that was to sail on a round-the-world cruise. The documentation for the cruise fills about one-third of the containers in this collection. After returning to the United States in 1881, he was reassigned to Peking, China, as the naval attaché.

Shufeldt was appointed president of the Naval Advisory Board, for which he served two years before retiring in 1884. It was during this last tour of duty that he helped formulate the plans for a new navy incorporating the technological advance from sail to steam propulsion and from wood to iron and steel hulls.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in nine series:

- [Diaries, Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals, 1865-1880](#)
- [Letterbooks, Letterpress Books, and Letter Index Books, 1864-1880](#)
- [Official Correspondence, 1839-1889](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1838-1900](#)
- [Subject File, 1861-1883](#)
- [Newspaper Clippings, 1859-1899](#)
- [Printed Matter, 1849-1910](#)
- [Miscellany, 1836-1893](#)
- [Mason A. Shufeldt File, 1883-1893](#)

## Description of Series

| Container | Series   |
|-----------|--|
| BOX 1-2   | <p><b><u>Diaries, Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals, 1865-1880</u></b></p> <p>Diaries, notebooks, log abstracts, logbooks, navigational data, journals, and other writings. Arranged chronologically.</p>  |
| BOX 3-4   | <p><b><u>Letterbooks, Letterpress Books, and Letter Index Books, 1864-1880</u></b></p> <p>Copies of correspondence and reports sent by Shufeldt as commander of various ships. A few of the volumes are indexed.</p>   |
| BOX 5-10  | <p><b><u>Official Correspondence, 1839-1889</u></b></p> <p>Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent. Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning Shufeldt's years in Cuba, the Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the world cruise in the <i>Ticonderoga</i> is in the Subject File.</p>  |
| BOX 11-17 | <p><b><u>General Correspondence, 1838-1900</u></b></p> <p>Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent, mostly of a personal and family nature, but some material relating to Shufeldt's activities in Cuba, Mexico, and elsewhere. Arranged chronologically.</p>   |
| BOX 18-29 | <p><b><u>Subject File, 1861-1883</u></b></p> <p>Correspondence, reports, memoranda, manuscripts, maps, printed matter, newspaper clippings, drafts of writings, bills and receipts, and miscellaneous items pertaining to Cuba, the Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the <i>Ticonderoga</i> world cruise. Material concerning Cuba and Tehuantepec Survey Expedition is chronologically arranged and files concerning the <i>Ticonderoga</i> are arranged according to the area covered by the cruise.</p> |
| BOX 30-31 | <p><b><u>Newspaper Clippings, 1859-1899</u></b></p> <p>Clippings chiefly concerned with naval incidents. Arranged alphabetically by topic.</p>   |
| BOX 32-33 | <p><b><u>Printed Matter, 1849-1910</u></b></p> <p>Articles, pamphlets, speeches, general orders, and other writings. Arranged chronologically.</p>   |
| BOX 34-35 | <p><b><u>Miscellany, 1836-1893</u></b></p> <p>An account book, calling cards and invitations, notes and fragments, inventories, quartermaster reports, ship descriptions, officer register, ship specifications and blueprints, admiralty board arguments, bills, receipts, inventories, copies of treaties, certificates and awards, poetry, songs, and essays. Arranged by topic.</p>  |
| BOX 36-37 | <p><b><u>Mason A. Shufeldt File, 1883-1893</u></b></p> <p>Correspondence, reports, writings, and miscellaneous material. This file is mostly concerned with Mason A. Shufeldt's explorations of Africa. Arranged by topic and therein chronologically.</p>   |

# Container List

| Container | Contents  |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 1-2   | <b>Diaries, Notebooks, Logbooks, and Journals, 1865-1880</b><br>Diaries, notebooks, log abstracts, logbooks, navigational data, journals, and other writings.<br>Arranged chronologically.            |
| BOX 1     | Diary of <i>Hartford</i> , 1865, Aug. -Dec.   |
| BOX 1     | Notebook, <i>Wachusett</i> , 1866-1867  |
| BOX 1     | Logbook, <i>Wachusett</i>   |
| BOX 1     | 1866, Sept.-1867, Mar.  |
| BOX 1     | 1867  |
| BOX 1     | Mar.-June   |
| BOX 1     | June-Nov.   |
| BOX 2     | 1867, Nov.-1868, Jan.   |
| BOX 2     | Journal, <i>Mayflower</i> and <i>Kansas</i> , 1870, Nov.-1871, May  |
| BOX 2     | Diary   |
| BOX 2     | 1875  |
| BOX 2     | 1876  |
| BOX 2     | 1877  |
| BOX 2     | 1878  |
| BOX 2     | Journal of F. A. Miller, <i>Ticonderoga</i>   |
| BOX 2     | 1878, Dec.-1879, Aug.   |
| BOX 2     | 1879, Aug.-Dec.   |
| BOX 2     | 1879, Dec.-1880, May  |
| BOX 3-4   | <b>Letterbooks, Letterpress Books, and Letter Index Books, 1864-1880</b><br>Copies of correspondence and reports sent by Shufeldt as commander of various ships.<br>A few of the volumes are indexed. |
| BOX 3     | Letterbook  |
| BOX 3     | <i>Proteus</i> , 1864-1865  |
| BOX 3     | <i>Wachusett</i> , 1866-1868  |
| BOX 3     | Letter index book, <i>Minantomoh</i> , 1869-1870  |
| BOX 3     | Letterbook  |
| BOX 3     | <i>Kansas</i> , 1870, Oct. -Nov. and <i>Mayflower</i> , 1870, Nov.-1871, Mar.   |
| BOX 3     | <i>Mayflower</i> , 1871, Mar.-Aug.  |
| BOX 3     | Letter index book, <i>Ticonderoga</i> , 1878, Dec.-1880, Nov.   |
| BOX 4     | Letterpress book, <i>Ticonderoga</i>  |
| BOX 4     | 1878, Dec.-1880, Nov.   |
| BOX 4     | 1878, Dec.-1880, Nov.   |
| BOX 4     | 1879, Jan.-July   |
| BOX 5-10  | <b>Official Correspondence, 1839-1889</b><br>Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent.   |

## Official Correspondence, 1839-1889

### Container

### Contents

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Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning Shufeldt's years in Cuba, the Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the world cruise in the *Ticonderoga* is in the Subject File.

**BOX 5** 1839-1862  
**BOX 6** 1863-1865  
**BOX 7** 1866  
**BOX 8** 1867  
**BOX 9** 1868-1872  
**BOX 10** 1873-1889

**BOX 11-17** **General Correspondence, 1838-1900**

Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent, mostly of a personal and family nature, but some material relating to Shufeldt's activities in Cuba, Mexico, and elsewhere.  
Arranged chronologically.

**BOX 11** 1838-1861  
**BOX 12** 1862-1867  
**BOX 13** 1868-1870  
**BOX 14** 1870-1871  
**BOX 15** 1872-1875  
**BOX 16** 1876-1884  
**BOX 17** 1887-1900, undated

**BOX 18-29** **Subject File, 1861-1883**

Correspondence, reports, memoranda, manuscripts, maps, printed matter, newspaper clippings, drafts of writings, bills and receipts, and miscellaneous items pertaining to Cuba, the Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, and the *Ticonderoga* world cruise.  
Material concerning Cuba and Tehuantepec Survey Expedition is chronologically arranged and files concerning the *Ticonderoga* are arranged according to the area covered by the cruise.

**BOX 18** Cuba, 1861-1863, undated  
**BOX 18** Correspondence  
**BOX 18** 1861, May-1862, Jan.  
**BOX 19** 1862, Feb.-1863, Apr., undated  
**BOX 19** Bills, receipts, and inventories  
**BOX 19** Miscellany  
**BOX 20** Tehuantepec Survey Expedition, Mexico, 1861-1873  
**BOX 20** Correspondence  
**BOX 21** Bills, receipts, and inventories  
**BOX 21** Maps  
**BOX 21** Miscellany  
**BOX 21** Newspaper clippings  
**BOX 21** Printed matter  
**BOX 22** World cruise, *Ticonderoga*, 1879-1883, undated  
**BOX 22** West Africa  
**BOX 22** Angola  
**BOX 22** South Africa



## Subject File, 1861-1883

| Container | Contents  |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 22    | Congo   |
| BOX 22    | Dahomey   |
| BOX 22    | Sierra Leone  |
| BOX 22    | Zanzibar  |
| BOX 22    | Johanna   |
| BOX 22    | Madagascar  |
| BOX 22    | Aden  |
| BOX 22    | India   |
| BOX 22    | Singapore   |
| BOX 22    | Japan   |
| BOX 23    | Liberia   |
| BOX 24    | China   |
| BOX 24    | Korea   |
| BOX 25    | General correspondence  |
| BOX 25    | Maps  |
| BOX 25    | Oriental documents  |
| BOX 25    | Miscellany  |
| BOX 26    | Unpublished manuscript  |
| BOX 26    | Chapters 1-14   |
| BOX 27    | Chapters 15-19  |
| BOX 27    | Collected material for the manuscript   |
| BOX 27    | Liberia   |
| BOX 27    | South Africa  |
| BOX 27    | Middle East   |
| BOX 27    | India   |
| BOX 28    | Singapore   |
| BOX 28    | Philippine Islands  |
| BOX 28    | Japan   |
| BOX 28    | China   |
| BOX 28    | Korea   |
| BOX 29    | Miscellany  |
| BOX 30-31 | <b>Newspaper Clippings, 1859-1899</b><br>Clippings chiefly concerned with naval incidents.<br>Arranged alphabetically by topic. |
| BOX 30    | China   |
| BOX 30    | Gherardi, Bancroft-Walker, John, controversy  |
| BOX 30    | Japan   |
| BOX 30    | Interocean canal  |
| BOX 30    | Korea   |
| BOX 31    | Liberia   |
| BOX 31    | Miscellany  |
| BOX 31    | St. Helena  |
| BOX 31    | Sierra Leone  |
| BOX 31    | U.S. Navy   |
| BOX 31    | <i>Quaker City</i>  |

## Newspaper Clippings, 1859-1899

| Container | Contents   |
|-----------|--|
| BOX 31    | <i>Ticonderoga</i>   |
| BOX 32-33 | <b>Printed Matter, 1849-1910</b><br>Articles, pamphlets, speeches, general orders, and other writings.<br>Arranged chronologically.  |
| BOX 32    | 1849-1910, undated   |
| BOX 33    | <i>Minantonomoh</i> , 1869-1870  |
| BOX 34-35 | <b>Miscellany, 1836-1893</b><br>An account book, calling cards and invitations, notes and fragments, inventories, quartermaster reports, ship descriptions, officer register, ship specifications and blueprints, admiralty board arguments, bills, receipts, inventories, copies of treaties, certificates and awards, poetry, songs, and essays.<br>Arranged by topic. |
| BOX 34    | Account book, 1876-1877  |
| BOX 34    | Calling cards and invitations, 1870-1882, undated  |
| BOX 34    | Notes and fragments, mostly undated  |
| BOX 34    | Poetry notes and fragments, mostly undated   |
| BOX 34    | Inventories, quartermaster reports, and ship descriptions, 1863-1870, undated  |
| BOX 34    | Officer registers and related material, 1864-1870, undated   |
| BOX 34    | Ship specifications and blueprints, including material by and about John Ericsson, 1864-1881, undated  |
| BOX 34    | Admiralty board arguments, undated   |
| BOX 35    | Bills, receipts, and inventories, 1862-1893, undated   |
| BOX 35    | Copies and treaties between the United States and foreign countries, 1836-1880   |
| BOX 35    | Certificates, awards, and passports, 1853-1861   |
| BOX 35    | Poems, songs, and essays written aboard <i>Proteus</i> and <i>Hartford</i> , 1864-1868   |
| BOX 36-37 | <b>Mason A. Shufeldt File, 1883-1893</b><br>Correspondence, reports, writings, and miscellaneous material. This file is mostly concerned with Mason A. Shufeldt's explorations of Africa.<br>Arranged by topic and therein chronologically.  |
| BOX 36    | General correspondence   |
| BOX 36    | Madagascar expedition  |
| BOX 36    | Bills and receipts   |
| BOX 36    | Correspondence   |
| BOX 36    | Maps   |
| BOX 36    | Newspaper clippings  |
| BOX 36    | Photographs  |
| BOX 37    | Printed matter   |
| BOX 37    | Reports  |
| BOX 37    | Writings   |
| BOX 37    | Columbian World Exposition, Chicago, Ill.  |
| BOX 37    | Miscellany   |