

Frederick Rodgers Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2012

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm84061670>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms012194>

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Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2012

Collection Summary

Title: Frederick Rodgers Papers

Span Dates: 1852-1920

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1860-1905)

ID No.: MSS61670

Creator: Rodgers, Frederick, 1842-1917

Extent: 3,150 items

Extent: 18 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 7.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English, Spanish, and French

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm84061670>

Summary: Naval officer. Correspondence, reports, journals, notebooks and diaries, charts and maps, writings, legal papers, photographs, and printed matter relating to Rodgers's naval career and family.

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

Allen, Charles H. (Charles Herbert), 1848-1934--Correspondence.

Cixi, Empress dowager of China, 1835-1908.

Rodgers family.

Rodgers, Frederick, 1842-1917.

Rodgers, John, 1812-1882--Correspondence.

Rodgers, Sarah M. Fall, approximately 1850- --Correspondence.

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.

Organizations

New York (Cruiser)

New York Naval Shipyard.

United States Naval Academy.

United States. Navy--Appointments and retirements.

United States. Navy.

United States. Navy. Board of Inspection and Survey.

United States. Navy. Examining and Retiring Board.

Subjects

Harbors--Atlantic Coast (U.S.)

Lighthouses--Atlantic Coast (U.S.)

Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905.

Spanish-American War, 1898--Naval operations.

Voyages around the world.

Warships--United States.

Places

Beijing (China)--History.

China--History--Boxer Rebellion, 1899-1901.

Havre de Grace (Md.)--Social life and customs.

Philippines--History--Philippine American War, 1899-1902.

Sion Hill (Md. : Estate)

United States--Foreign relations--1865-1921.

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

Occupations

Naval officers.

Provenance

The papers of Frederick Rodgers, naval officer, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1984.

Processing History

The papers of Frederick Rodgers were arranged and described in 1984. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Other Repositories

Other Rodgers family papers can be found at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pa., and the Navy Department Library at the Washington Navy Yard.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the Rodgers Family Papers (1740-1987) and an additional group of Rodgers Family Papers (1788-1944) donated by the Naval Historical Foundation.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Frederick Rodgers 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, Frederick Rodgers Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1842, Oct. 3	Born, Harve de Grace, Md.
1857-1861	Midshipman, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md
1861-1865	Served: <i>Wabash</i> , 1861 <i>Santee</i> , 1861-1862 <i>Kineo</i> , executive officer, 1862-1863 <i>Grand Gulf</i> , 1863-1865 Engagements at Donaldsonville, Port Hudson, and College Point, La., 1862

1866-1869	Served: <i>Chattanooga</i> , 1866 <i>Sacramento</i> , 1866-1867 (wrecked near Madras, India) <i>Michigan</i> , 1868-1869
1869-1872	Served North Pacific Squadron: <i>Pensacola</i> <i>St. Mary's</i> <i>Saranac</i>
1872-1873	Inspector of ordnance, Washington, D.C., Navy Yard
1873-1876	Commanded <i>Despatch</i>
1876-1877	Lighthouse inspector, 11th District
1877-1879	Commanded <i>Adams</i>
1881-1883	Lighthouse inspector, 4th District
1882	Married Sarah M. ("Sally") Fall
1883-1887	Commanded <i>Independence</i>
1887-1890	Lighthouse inspector, 3rd District
1890-1892	Commanded <i>Philadelphia</i>
1892-1893	Supervisor, New York Harbor
1893-1896	Captain of yard, New York Naval Shipyard
1896-1897	Commanded <i>Massachusetts</i>
1897	Member, U.S. Navy Examining and Retiring Board Member, Board of Inspection and Survey
1898	Commanded <i>Puritan</i>
1898-1901	President, Board of Inspection and Survey
1901	Senior squadron commander, Asiatic Squadron
1902	Commander-in-chief, Asiatic Fleet
1903-1904	Commandant, New York Naval Shipyard
1904	Retired
1904-1907	Special naval board duties
1917, Nov. 3	Died, St. James, Long Island, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Frederick Rodgers (1842-1917) span the period 1852-1920, with the bulk of material dated 1860-1905. The collection reflects a life steeped in naval history and is arranged in six series: [Family Correspondence](#) ; [Special Correspondence](#) ; [General Correspondence](#) ; [Miscellany](#) ; [Journals, Notebooks, and Diaries](#) ; and [Oversize](#) .

Frederick Rodgers was born into a military family living at Sion Hill, an estate in Havre de Grace, Maryland. His paternal grandfather, Commodore John Rodgers (1772-1837), began his service in the navy battling privateers and advanced to the highest rank then available in the navy after distinguished service in the Tripolitan Wars in North Africa and the War of 1812 with Britain. His twenty years of administrative service on the Board of Navy Commissioners established standards for naval vessels and equipment. Frederick Rodgers's maternal grandfather, Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794-1858), was distinguished in the War of 1812 and the Mexican War and is best known for his Asian expeditions, 1852-1854, which opened trade and diplomatic relations with Japan. His father, Robert Smith Rodgers, a civil engineer, served in the Union Army during the Civil War, while his uncles, John Rodgers (1812-1882) and Henry Rodgers, followed their father into service in the navy, as did numerous Rodgers cousins. His uncle by marriage, Montgomery C. Meigs, was quartermaster general of the Union Army during the Civil War.

The [Family Correspondence](#) is principally between Rodgers and his parents, wife, and son with occasional letters from extended family members. Early correspondence concerns his education at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and service during the Civil War. His subsequent naval assignments are touched upon lightly. Other matters concern the settlement of the family estate, Sion Hill, after the death of his mother, Sarah Perry Rodgers.

The [Special Correspondence](#) series includes copies of selected letters including one from his uncle John Rodgers and one from Theodore Roosevelt as assistant secretary of the navy.

The [General Correspondence](#) series principally concerns naval matters. Orders and reports document Rodgers's naval career, along with correspondence from naval, diplomatic, and maritime associates. Some items are written in Spanish, French, and one in a language of Polynesia reflecting Rodgers's assignments in the South Pacific and along the Pacific coast of South America in the 1870s. Items in the 1880s and 1890s concern the condition and management of New York harbor and New York Naval Shipyard, and lighthouses and other ports along the Atlantic coast. Other items from 1897-1898 document Rodgers's service on the Naval Examining and Retiring Board and as senior member of the Board of Inspection and Survey to appraise naval vessels for service in the lead-up to and during the Spanish-American War. The series includes several letters from Theodore Roosevelt as assistant secretary and acting secretary of the navy.

Reports on all aspects of naval operations were received by Rodgers as president of the navy's Board of Inspection and Survey, 1899-1901, with the purpose of identifying improvements and efficiencies, including inspections of German submarines. Folders for 1900 include a few letters from former navy associate and first civilian governor of Puerto Rico, Charles H. Allen. Correspondence during the Spanish-American War, 1898, and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902, is routine. Correspondence, 1901-1903, from attorneys apprise Rodgers on his lawsuit regarding the pay for certain rear admirals, a case that was argued before the Supreme Court in 1902 as *Frederick Rodgers v. United States*. A letter in 1903 from the Japanese statesman Count Kentaro Kaneko refers to the impending Russo-Japanese War. Following his mandatory retirement from the navy in 1903, Rodgers was appointed president of a naval board to improve the New York Naval Shipyard and numerous reports and recommendations, 1904-1906, are included in the series.

The [General Correspondence](#) series also reflects Rodgers's business interests and involvement in social clubs. Items from 1906 concern the division of the Sion Hill estate of his mother, Sarah Perry Rodgers, in Havre de Grace, Maryland. Correspondence dated 1911-1918 is principally addressed to Sarah Fall Rodgers, wife of Frederick Rodgers, who managed family affairs after her husband's debilitation by illness.

A file of writings in the [Miscellany](#) series includes speeches and reports by Rodgers on naval matters. It also includes staff reports on the round-the-world cruise of the *USS New York* (cruiser) flagship, 1901-1902, when Rodgers assumed command of the Asiatic Station, with another narrative describing his audience with Cixi, Empress dowager of China in June 1902 and conditions in Beijing following the Boxer Rebellion.

The series of [Journals, Notebooks, and Diaries](#) provides detailed records of Rodgers's service at sea. His youthful diaries and notebooks include incidental notes on family life and school exercises. His naval journals, 1862-1901, include orders, lists of crew and duties, and notes on navigational and meteorological observations. The watch, quarter, and station bills are administrative records of regulations and personnel with lists of duties and stations for the crew. The letterbooks include copies of correspondence sent by Rodgers on administrative matters. Professional notes are Rodgers's gleanings on principles of naval command such as tactics and warfare, seamanship, international law, military law, regulations on drills and navigational lights and signals, and notes on armaments and ordnance, especially torpedoes, as well as management and care of boilers. The remarks books contain observations on sea and weather conditions and other nautical data. Night orders and morning orders record navigational instructions. His journals emphasize navigational and meteorological observations and include notes on arrivals and departures, drills, salutes, signals, disciplinary actions, conditions at ports, status of equipment and ordnance, provisions for water and other daily shipboard matters with occasional reference to diplomatic activities.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Family Correspondence, 1853-1920](#)
- [Special Correspondence, 1857-1917](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1857-1918](#)
- [Miscellany](#)
- [Journals, Notebooks, and Diaries, 1852-1913](#)
- [Oversize, 1868-circa 1900](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-6	<p><u>Family Correspondence, 1853-1920</u></p> <p>Principally letters exchanged by Rodgers and his parents, wife, and son. Includes letters from extended family.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 6	<p><u>Special Correspondence, 1857-1917</u></p> <p>Selected photocopies of correspondence about events or persons noteworthy to Rodgers and letters of condolence upon his death in 1917.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 7-11	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1857-1918</u></p> <p>Personal letters and naval orders and reports.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 11-13	<p><u>Miscellany</u></p> <p>Writings, legal papers, naval charts and maps, school records, Sion Hill estate records, drawings, a certificate, photographs and printed matter.</p> <p>Arranged by type of material.</p>
BOX 14-18	<p><u>Journals, Notebooks, and Diaries, 1852-1913</u></p> <p>Notebooks, diaries, day books, and naval journals. Arranged in two groups. Notebooks and diaries include school records and notes on daily activities. Naval journals concern duty at sea and include crew lists and assignments, orders, professional notes, administrative correspondence and nautical remarks.</p> <p>Each group arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX OV 1	<p><u>Oversize, 1868-circa 1900</u></p> <p>Certificate, drawings, and photographs.</p> <p>Arranged and described according to the series and folders from which the items were removed.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-6	Family Correspondence, 1853-1920 Principally letters exchanged by Rodgers and his parents, wife, and son. Includes letters from extended family. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1	1853-1881 (7 folders)
BOX 2	1882-1890 (9 folders)
BOX 2	1891, Jan.-Aug. (2 folders)
BOX 3	1891, Sept.-Dec.
BOX 3	1892-1898 (8 folders)
BOX 4	1899-1901 (6 folders)
BOX 5	1902-1909 (8 folders)
BOX 6	1910-1920
BOX 6	Undated
BOX 6	Special Correspondence, 1857-1917 Selected photocopies of correspondence about events or persons noteworthy to Rodgers and letters of condolence upon his death in 1917. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 6	Condolences, 1917, Nov.-Dec.
BOX 6	Photocopies, 1857-1901
BOX 7-11	General Correspondence, 1857-1918 Personal letters and naval orders and reports. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 7	1857-1887 (13 folders)
BOX 8	1888-1897 (10 folders)
BOX 9	1898-1901 (6 folders)
BOX 10	1902-1909 (11 folders)

General Correspondence, 1857-1918

Container	Contents
BOX 11	1910-1918 (4 folders)
BOX 11-13	Miscellany Writings, legal papers, naval charts and maps, school records, Sion Hill estate records, drawings, a certificate, photographs and printed matter. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 11	Financial papers
BOX 12	General
BOX 12	Certificate, 1868 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 12	Drawings, <i>Sacramento</i> wreck in 1867, undated <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 12	Inventories, estate of Sarah Perry Rodgers
BOX 12	Legal papers
BOX 12	Navy charts and maps
BOX 12	Photographs, undated <i>See also Oversize</i>
BOX 12	Poems
BOX 12	School records
BOX 12	Rodgers, Frederick
BOX 12	Rodgers, Frederick (son)
BOX 12	Sion Hill, division plans
BOX 12	Writings
BOX 13	Printed matter
BOX 13	Bowditch, Nathaniel, <i>Useful Tables from the American Practical Navigator</i> , 1906
BOX 13	General
BOX 13	Announcements
BOX 13	Calling cards
BOX 13	Menus
BOX 13	Passes
BOX 13	Programs
BOX 13	Clippings
BOX 14-18	Journals, Notebooks, and Diaries, 1852-1913 Notebooks, diaries, day books, and naval journals. Arranged in two groups. Notebooks and diaries include school records and notes on daily activities. Naval journals concern duty at sea and include crew lists and assignments, orders, professional notes, administrative correspondence and nautical remarks. Each group arranged chronologically.
BOX 14	Notebooks and diaries
BOX 14	Rodgers, Frederick
BOX 14	1852-1854, 1855, 1881-1882, 1891-1892 (5 vols.)
BOX 14	1902-1913 (7 vols.)
BOX 14	Undated (2 vols.)
BOX 14	Rodgers, Robert Smith (father), 1870

Journals, Notebooks, and Diaries, 1852-1913

Container	Contents
BOX 14	Naval journals
BOX 14	circa 1860, professional notes
BOX 14	circa 1862, <i>Kineo</i> , watch, quarter and station bills
BOX 15	circa 1861-1865, unidentified, watch, quarter and station bills
BOX 15	1865, Apr. 23-Oct. 30, <i>Grand Gulf</i> , morning orders
BOX 15	1869-1874, orders
BOX 15	1873, Nov. 24-1874, Apr. 4, <i>Despatch</i> , journal
BOX 15	1873-1874, <i>Despatch</i> , ordnance notes and other memoranda with clippings
BOX 15	1875, June, <i>Despatch</i> , watch, quarter and station bills
BOX 16	1876, Aug. 6-1879, Feb. 25, <i>Adams</i> , letterbook
BOX 16	1877-1879, <i>Adams</i> , orders
BOX 16	1877, April 21-June 2, <i>Adams</i> , remarks book, including wind and weather abstracts
BOX 16	1877-1878, <i>Adams</i> , remarks book, including wind and weather abstracts
BOX 16	1877, May 18-Nov. 6, <i>Adams</i> , night orders
BOX 17	1877, June 2-Dec. 3, <i>Adams</i> , letterbook
BOX 17	1878, Jan. 12-Mar. 17, <i>Adams</i> , remarks book
BOX 17	1878, Aug. 1-1879, July 24, <i>Adams</i> , journal
BOX 17	1878, Sept. 22-1879, May 16, <i>Adams</i> , remarks book
BOX 17	1879, May 17-July 28, <i>Adams</i> , remarks book
BOX 17	circa 1879-1886, professional notes with clippings
BOX 18	1884, <i>Independence</i> , journal
BOX 18	1890-1892, <i>Philadelphia</i> , night orders
BOX 18	1891, June 13-Nov. 3, [<i>Philadelphia</i> ?], journal
BOX 18	1896, Aug. 6-1897, July 17, <i>Massachusetts</i> , night orders
BOX 18	1901, June 20-Dec. 31, Asiatic Station journal
BOX 18	Undated
BOX 18	“Watch, Quarter, and Station Bills,” blank form
BOX 18	Photographs
BOX OV 1	Oversize, 1868-circa 1900 Certificate, drawings, and photographs. Arranged and described according to the series and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Miscellany
BOX OV 1	Certificate, 1868 (Container 12)
BOX OV 1	Drawings, <i>Sacramento</i> wreck of 1867, undated (Container 12)
BOX OV 1	Photographs, circa 1900 (Container 12)