

Samuel Phillips Lee Papers

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



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Prepared by John P. Butler

Collection Summary

Title: Samuel Phillips Lee Papers

Span Dates: 1860-1869

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1861-1865)

ID No.: MSS52639

Creator: Lee, Samuel Phillips, 1812-1897

Extent: 19,000 items ; 65 containers ; 26 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Summary: Naval officer. Correspondence, logbook abstracts, reports, lists, memoranda, requisition orders, and printed material relating to the naval activities of the Union forces in the Civil War and pertaining chiefly to Lee's service commanding the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron and the Mississippi Squadron.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Butler, Benjamin F. (Benjamin Franklin), 1818-1893.

Devoe, James B.--Correspondence.

Foster, John G. (John Gray), 1823-1874--Correspondence.

Lee, Samuel Phillips, 1812-1897.

Welles, Gideon, 1802-1878--Correspondence.

Organizations

Mississippi (Paddle frigate)

United States. Navy Department--Correspondence.

United States. Navy. Mississippi Squadron.

United States. Navy. North Atlantic Blockading Squadron (1861-1865)

Places

Mississippi River Valley--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns.

Newport News (Va.)--History.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Blockades.

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

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

Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Occupations

Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Samuel Phillips Lee, naval officer, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1949 and converted to a gift in 1998.

Processing History

The papers of Samuel Phillips Lee were arranged and described in 1967. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Additional Guides

In 1967 the Library published Samuel Phillips Lee, a Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of *Samuel Phillips Lee* is governed by the *Copyright Law of the United States* (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Samuel Phillips Lee 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, Samuel Phillips Lee Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1812, Feb. 13	Born at "Sully," Fairfax County, Va.
1825	Appointed midshipman in the United States Navy
1828-1832	Served in frigate <i>Java</i> , Mediterranean Squadron
1833	Promoted to passed midshipman
1834-1835	Served in frigate <i>Brandywine</i> , Pacific Squadron
1836-1837	Served in sloop <i>Vincennes</i> , Pacific Squadron
1837	Promoted to lieutenant
1839-1842	Served in USS <i>Hornet</i> , West India Squadron
1842-1844	Coast survey duty
1843, Apr. 27	Married Elizabeth Blair
1845-1846	Coast survey duty
1852-1854	Hydrographic duty
1855	Duty in the Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.
1856-1860	Special duty
1861-1862	Commander of the sloop-of-war <i>Oneida</i> , Mississippi Squadron
1862	Promoted to captain and ordered to command of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron with the rank of acting rear admiral
1862-1864	Commander, North Atlantic Blockading Squadron

1864-1865	Commander, Mississippi Squadron
1866	Promoted to commodore
1866-1867	President, Naval Board to Examine Volunteer Officers
1868-1870	Special duty, Washington, D.C.
1870	Promoted to rear admiral
1870-1872	Commander, North Atlantic Squadron
1873	Retired from United States Navy
1874-1897	Lived in Washington, D.C.
1897, June 5	Died, Silver Spring, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Samuel Phillips Lee (1812-1897) span the years 1860-1869, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1861-1865. The collection deals entirely with the naval activities of the Union forces in the Civil War and consists primarily of letterbooks, letterpress books, retained copies of correspondence, and logbook abstracts supplemented by copies of reports, lists, memoranda, requisition orders, and miscellaneous material. There are comparatively few original documents in the papers. Most of the documents are copies of originals sent to the Navy Department or the Naval War Records Office. One notable exception is a file of indexed correspondence, in a [Miscellany](#) series, which originally was designated for the Naval War Records Office. The papers are organized into four series: [Letter and Letterpress Books](#), [Copies of Incoming Correspondence](#), [North Atlantic Blockading Squadron](#), and [Miscellany](#)

Lee served three tours of duty during the Civil War. His first duty station was with the Mississippi Squadron from 1861 to August 1862, when he commanded the sloop-of-war *Oneida* under Admiral David Glasgow Farragut. There is relatively little material in the collection for this duty station. A logbook for the USS *Mississippi* in the summer of 1861 and some printed matter comprise the documentation for these months.

In September 1862 Lee was made an acting rear admiral and put in charge of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. This tour of duty lasted until October 1864. The bulk of the material in this collection relates to these two years. Most of it is concerned with the routine details of the Union blockade and the Confederate efforts to break it. These details present insights into the everyday activities of the fleet of ships responsible for the blockade of the Confederate coastline. There are reports from most of the Union vessels in the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron describing the conditions under which they labored, the morale of the crews, the physical requirements of the fleet, and their attempts at disrupting Confederate shipping and blockade running. Abstracts from the logbooks of most of the vessels in the fleet, combined with monthly reports, prize lists, communications to and from the Navy Department, and squadron dispatches, present a detailed account of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron's activities in relation to the Confederate and Northern blockade runners. Details are also supplied for the interaction of the navy with the army on land maneuvers, especially with the command of General Benjamin F. Butler in and around the Newport News, Virginia, area.

In October 1864 Admiral Lee exchanged places with David D. Porter, commander of the Mississippi Squadron. His third tour of duty in the Civil War lasted until September 1865. Although the material for Lee's months as commander of the Mississippi Squadron is neither as detailed nor as illuminating as the material for his previous command, it is similar in type and arrangement. There is a good deal of information on the final months of the Mississippi River campaign, affording detailed descriptions of the everyday activities of the fleet. The papers for the year 1865 continue well past the end of hostilities in April. The correspondence, lists, memoranda, and reports describe the dismantling of the Mississippi Squadron in the months immediately following the end of hostilities. The examination, inspection, and sale of several of the

Mississippi Squadron vessels, along with the fuel requirements, discharge requests, requisition orders, and resignations, give valuable insights into the immediate postwar problems of the navy on the Mississippi River.

From 1862 to 1865 Admiral Lee maintained files on such diverse matters as court-martial trials, confidential and miscellaneous correspondence, printed copies of the general orders, and communications with the Navy Department and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. These files all reflect the degree of interaction between the fleets and the central headquarters in Washington, D.C. Of special interest are two files of correspondence in the miscellany section: one with James B. Devoe, 1864-1865, a “special agent” of Admiral Porter, and the other with Major General John G. Foster, 1863, which concerns a projected attack on the Confederate military bases in the Cape Fear, North Carolina region.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Letter and Letterpress Books, 1862-1865](#)
- [Copies of Incoming Correspondence, 1861-1865](#)
- [North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 1863-1864](#)
- [Miscellany, 1860-1869](#)

Description of Series

Container

Series

BOX 1-15

Letter and Letterpress Books, 1862-1865

Copies of letters, telegrams, and reports sent by Lee as commander, first of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, then of the Mississippi Squadron.

The letter and/or letterpress books are arranged chronologically by the first date in each volume, are indexed, and are divided into subject categories.

BOX 16-53

Copies of Incoming Correspondence, 1861-1865

Retained copies and a few originals of correspondence received by Lee as commander, first of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, then of the Mississippi Squadron, supplemented by copies of reports, lists, memoranda, requisitions, charts, drawings, and other miscellaneous papers.

Arranged alphabetically by name of vessel.

BOX 54-58

North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 1863-1864

Retained copies and a few original of correspondence, reports, prize lists, and logbook abstracts received by See as commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

Includes supplementary memoranda, charts, drawings, and miscellaneous papers.

Arranged alphabetically by name of vessel in the squadron.

BOX 59-65

Miscellany, 1860-1869

Originals and typescripts of correspondence sent and received by Lee, printed matter, a logbook, record books, a diary, captured Confederate documents, administrative Confederate States of America forms, maps, and muster rolls.

Arranged by subject heading and chronologically therein.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-15	Letter and Letterpress Books, 1862-1865 Copies of letters, telegrams, and reports sent by Lee as commander, first of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, then of the Mississippi Squadron. The letter and/or letterpress books are arranged chronologically by the first date in each volume, are indexed, and are divided into subject categories.
BOX 1	North Atlantic Blockading Squadron
BOX 1	Miscellany Letterbook, 4 Sept.-15 Oct. 1862
BOX 1	Squadron Letterbook, 16 Oct. 1862-4 July 1863
BOX 2	Navy Department Letterbook, 18 Oct. 1862-4 July 1863
BOX 2	Confidential Correspondence Letterbook, 2 Dec. 1862-12 Nov. 1863
BOX 2	Navy Department Letterbook, 13 Jan.-14 Mar. 1863
BOX 2	Squadron Letterbook, 2 Feb.-14 Apr. 1863
BOX 3	Navy Department Letterbook, 14 Mar.-22 June 1863
BOX 3	Letterbook of Correspondence Forwarded, 26 Mar.-7 Dec. 1863
BOX 3	Squadron Letterbook, 14 Apr.-4 July 1863
BOX 3	Navy Department Letterbook, 22 June-10 Dec. 1863
BOX 4	Squadron Letterbook, 4 July-10 Nov. 1863
BOX 4	Confidential Correspondence Letterbook, 4 July 1863-25 Apr. 1864
BOX 4	Miscellany Letterbook, 6 July 1863-4 June 1864
BOX 4	Squadron Letterbook, 10 Nov. 1863-20 Mar. 1864
BOX 4	Letterbook of Medical Surveys Ordered, 6 Dec. 1863-9 Aug. 1864
BOX 5	Letterbook of Correspondence Forwarded, 7 Dec. 1863-16 May 1864
BOX 5	Navy Department Letterbook, 10 Dec. 1863-31 May 1864
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BOX 6	Confidential Correspondence Letterpress Book, 25 Apr.-2 Oct. 1864
BOX 7	Squadron Letterpress Book, 2 May-23 July 1864
BOX 7	Official Letterbook, 4 May-25 June 1864
BOX 8	Letterbook of Correspondence Forwarded, 16 May-11 Oct. 1864
BOX 9	Navy Department Letterbook, 1 June-11 Oct. 1864
BOX 9	Miscellany Letterbook, 5 June-10 Oct. 1864
BOX 9	Navy Department Letterpress Book, 1 July-15 Oct. 1864
BOX 10	Miscellany Letterbook, 1 July-15 Oct. 1864
BOX 10	Squadron Letterbook, 5 July-10 Oct. 1864
BOX 10	Detail Forwarding Letterbook, 16 July-10 Oct. 1864
BOX 11	Squadron Letterpress Book, 25 July-10 Oct. 1864
BOX 11	Miscellany Letterpress Book, 8 Sept.-10 Oct. 1864
BOX 12	Mississippi Squadron
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Letter and Letterpress Books, 1862-1865

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BOX 13	Miscellany Letterpress Book, 3 Nov. 1864-31 May 1865 and Squadron Letterpress Book, 25 Apr.-31 May 1865
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BOX 14	Detail Forwarding Letterbook, 27 Apr.-17 July 1865
BOX 14	Court-Martial Letterpress Record Book, 24 Apr.-1 Aug. 1865
BOX 15	Miscellany Letterpress Book, 31 May-24 July 1865
BOX 15	Detail Forwarding Letterbook, 17 July-13 Aug. 1865
BOX 15	Miscellany Letterpress Book, 24 July-12 Aug. 1865 and a Letterpress Book of Fleet Captain Bryson, 22 June-1 Aug. 1865
BOX 15	Detail Forwarding Index and Letterbook, undated
BOX 16-53	Copies of Incoming Correspondence, 1861-1865 Retained copies and a few originals of correspondence received by Lee as commander, first of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, then of the Mississippi Squadron, supplemented by copies of reports, lists, memoranda, requisitions, charts, drawings, and other miscellaneous papers. Arranged alphabetically by name of vessel.
BOX 16	North Atlantic Blockading Squadron
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BOX 17	Court-Martial Record Cases, Feb. 1863-Nov. 1864
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BOX 22	Oct. 1863-Oct. 1864
BOX 23	Squadron Dispatches
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BOX 53	Reports on Vessels Sunken or Destroyed, May-June 1865
BOX 53	Vacancies in Crews, Apr.-Oct. 1865
BOX 54-58	North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 1863-1864 Retained copies and a few original of correspondence, reports, prize lists, and logbook abstracts received by See as commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Includes supplementary memoranda, charts, drawings, and miscellaneous papers. Arranged alphabetically by name of vessel in the squadron.
BOX 54	<i>Alabama</i>
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North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 1863-1864

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BOX 59-65	Miscellany, 1860-1869 Originals and typescripts of correspondence sent and received by Lee, printed matter, a logbook, record books, a diary, captured Confederate documents, administrative Confederate States of America forms, maps, and muster rolls.

Miscellany, 1860-1869

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Arranged by subject heading and chronologically therein.

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BOX 61	Descriptive List Book of Blockade Runners, 1862-1864
BOX 61	Cargo List Book, USS <i>Antonica</i> , May-Dec. 1863
BOX 61	Diary of Events on the James River by Lieutenant M. Mullin, 5 May-14 June 1864
BOX 61	Death List Book, Mississippi Squadron, Oct. 1864-June 1865
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BOX 61	Signal Record Book, USS <i>Tempest</i> , Mississippi Squadron, 26 May-12 Aug. 1865
BOX 62	Correspondence Designated for the Naval War Records Office, indexed, Nov. 1862-Nov. 1864
BOX 62	Correspondence with Major General John G. Foster, July-Nov. 1863
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BOX 62	Index to Consular Reports of Blockade Runners, undated
BOX 62	Two maps of Little Muscle Shoals, Tenn.
BOX 62	Blank administrative forms of the Confederate States of America
BOX 63	Typescript copies of correspondence in this collection, Nov. 1860-May 1865, selected from the main body of this collection in 1898 and apparently used in compiling sections concerning Lee in the <i>Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion</i> , serial I, vols. 7-10, published 1898-1900
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