

David Foote Sellers Papers

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



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Washington, D.C.
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LC Online Catalog record:

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Prepared by Ruth S. Nicholson

Collection Summary

Title: David Foote Sellers Papers

Span Dates: 1860-1949

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1927-1938)

ID No.: MSS50112

Creator: Sellers, David Foote, 1874-1949

Extent: 6,500 items ; 20 containers ; 10 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Summary: Naval officer. Correspondence, journals, photos, scrapbooks, and newspaper clippings relating to Sellers's naval career.

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

Adams, Charles Francis, 1866-1954--Correspondence.

Baldrige, Harry Alexander, 1880-1952--Correspondence.

Baldwin, Hanson Weightman, 1903-1991--Correspondence.

Byrd, Richard Evelyn, 1888-1957--Correspondence.

Dodds, Harold W. (Harold Willis), 1889-1980--Correspondence.

Keller, Helen, 1880-1968--Correspondence.

Knox, Dudley Wright, 1877-1960--Correspondence.

Sellers, David Foote, 1874-1949.

Organizations

Germany. Kriegsmarine.

Panama-Pacific International Exposition (1915 : San Francisco, Calif.)

United States Naval Academy.

United States. Naval Training Station (San Diego, Calif.)

United States. Navy--Officers.

United States. Navy. Special Service Squadron.

United States. Navy. U.S. Fleet.

Subjects

Spanish-American War, 1898--Naval operations, American.

World War, 1914-1918--Naval operations, American.

Places

Nicaragua--History--1909-1937.

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

Samoa--History.

Occupations

Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of David Foote Sellers, naval officer, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1951. The foundation deposited additional material in 1963, and the collection was converted to a gift in 1998.

Processing History

The papers of David Foote Sellers were arranged and described in 1968. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Additional Guides

In 1969 the Library published *David Foote Sellers and Stephen B. Luce, a Register of Their Papers in the Library of Congress*.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of David Foote Sellers is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of David Foote Sellers 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, David Foote Sellers Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1874, Feb. 4	Born, Austin, Tex.
1894	Graduated, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
1894-1898	Duty in USS <i>Massachusetts</i> , Essex, Alliance
1898	Duty in USS <i>Philadelphia</i> during the Spanish American War
1899-1902	Duty in USS <i>New York</i> during Samoan campaign and Philippine American War
1903-1904	Naval aide to the White House
1904	Commanded destroyer USS <i>Stewart</i>
1905	Married Anita Clay Evans
1907	Duty in Bureau of Navigation and naval aide to the White House
1912	Temporary duty, aide to commander of the division of German ships visiting the United States
1915	Duty in connection with Panama-Pacific International Exposition
1916	Commanded USS <i>Birmingham</i> Duty at Naval War College as student
1917	Commanded USS <i>Wisconsin</i>
1918	Commanded USS <i>Agamemnon</i> , troop transport

1919	Member of staff, Naval War College
1920	Duty in Bureau of Navigation and aide to the secretary of the navy
1922	Commanded USS <i>Maryland</i>
1923	Commanded U.S. Naval Training Station, San Diego, Calif.
1926	Chief of staff to the commander, Scouting Fleet
1927	Promoted to rear admiral Commander, Special Service Squadron
1929	Appointed judge advocate general of the navy
1931-1932	Commander, Battleship Division, Battle Force
1932	Promoted to vice admiral
1933	Promoted to admiral Commander in chief, U.S. Fleet
1934	Superintendent, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. Reverted to rank of rear admiral
1942	Promoted to admiral on the retired list
1949, Jan. 27	Died, Naval Hospital, Bethesda, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of David Foote Sellers (1874-1979) span the years 1860-1949, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1927-1938. The collection consists of journals, correspondence, photographs, scrapbooks, and newspaper clippings. It reflects all aspects of Sellers's service from his duty as cadet midshipman in 1890 to his last active duty as superintendent of the United States Naval Academy. The collection is organized into six series: [Journal, Personal Logs, and Fitness Reports](#); [Correspondence](#); [Special Service Squadron File](#); [Miscellany](#); [Photograph Album](#); and [Scrapbooks](#).

Sellers served in the Spanish-American War, the Samoan campaign, and during the Philippine American War. He also had duty as a naval aide to the White House in 1903-1904, temporary duty as aide to the commander of the division of German ships visiting the United States in 1912, and service in connection with the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915.

Sellers kept a file of his fitness reports that is complete from his days as a junior officer through his duty as superintendent of the naval academy. In addition to his cadet journal, he kept one while on board USS *Birmingham* and another while on board USS *Agamemnon*.

Much of the correspondence in the collection relates to the problems Sellers faced when he was on two years' duty as commander, Special Service Squadron, in Nicaragua from 1927 to 1929. Other correspondence relates to his duty as commander of the Naval Training Station at San Diego, as commander in chief of the United States Fleet, and as superintendent at the naval academy. Correspondents include Charles Francis Adams, Harry Alexander Baldridge, Hanson Weightman Baldwin, Richard Evelyn Byrd, Harold W. Dodds, Helen Keller, and Dudley Wright Knox. Of interest is the exchange of letters between Sellers and Adolphus Andrews, over the latter's description in a college thesis of the passage of the fleet through the Panama Canal in 1934 under the command of Sellers.

Sellers's naval career is also documented by snapshots and professional photographs and by scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and memorabilia. There are two large albums containing material on the first naval overseas flight of six seaplanes from San Francisco to Honolulu in 1935.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Journal, Personal Logs, and Fitness Reports, 1894-1938](#)
- [Correspondence, 1896-1947](#)
- [Special Service Squadron File, 1926-1929](#)
- [Miscellany, 1906-1949](#)
- [Photograph Albums, 1898-1934](#)
- [Scrapbooks, 1860-1938](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-2	<u>Journal, Personal Logs, and Fitness Reports, 1894-1938</u> Originals or copies of the reports. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 3-4	<u>Correspondence, 1896-1947</u> Letters, official orders, official correspondence received, and copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 5-6	<u>Special Service Squadron File, 1926-1929</u> Binders containing official and personal letters received and sent by Sellers as commander of the Special Service Squadron. Arranged by binder number.
BOX 7-10	<u>Miscellany, 1906-1949</u> Speeches, memoranda, notes and two notebooks, newspaper clippings, photographs, and printed matter. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 11-13	<u>Photograph Albums, 1898-1934</u> Photographs taken by Sellers and by professional photographers of cruises and various tours of duty. Arranged by name of vessel or subject.
BOX 14-20	<u>Scrapbooks, 1860-1938</u> Newspaper and magazine clippings, memorabilia, and souvenirs. Also scrapbook compiled by J. E. Nurse. Arranged by subject or creator

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
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BOX 1	Personal log, USS <i>Birmingham</i> , 1915, Nov. 15-1916, May 7
BOX 1	Personal log, USS <i>Agamemnon</i> , 1918, Mar. 30-Oct. 11
BOX 2	Fitness reports, 1898-1938
BOX 3-4	Correspondence, 1896-1947 Letters, official orders, official correspondence received, and copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 3	1896-1933
BOX 4	1934-1947
BOX 5-6	Special Service Squadron File, 1926-1929 Binders containing official and personal letters received and sent by Sellers as commander of the Special Service Squadron. Arranged by binder number.
BOX 5	Binder nos. 1-6
BOX 6	Binder nos. 7-10
BOX 7-10	Miscellany, 1906-1949 Speeches, memoranda, notes and two notebooks, newspaper clippings, photographs, and printed matter. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 7	Dispatches and stories to the <i>New York Herald</i> , 1906-1907
BOX 8	Speeches, 1920-1934
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BOX 8	Notebooks, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., containing notes on leadership and strategy, and undated notes, speeches, and memoranda
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BOX 11-13	Photograph Albums, 1898-1934 Photographs taken by Sellers and by professional photographers of cruises and various tours of duty. Arranged by name of vessel or subject.
BOX 11	USS <i>Philadelphia</i> , 1898
BOX 11	USS <i>New York</i> , 1899-1904

Photograph Albums, 1898-1934

Container

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BOX 11	USS <i>Arkansas</i> , 1915 and duty at Vera Cruz, Mexico
BOX 12	USS <i>Rochester</i> , 1928
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BOX 14-20	Scrapbooks, 1860-1938 Newspaper and magazine clippings, memorabilia, and souvenirs. Also scrapbook compiled by J. E. Nourse. Arranged by subject or creator
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BOX 14	Aide to Wm. S. Cowles, representative to tercentennial celebration of founding of Quebec, 1908, and aide to commander of the division of German ships visiting the United States, 1912
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BOX 19	USS <i>Pennsylvania</i> and duty as superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., 1934-1938
BOX 20	Scrapbook compiled by J. E. Nourse containing sermons and newspaper clippings on religious subjects