

C. B. Comstock Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Revised by Patrick Kerwin



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2003

Contact information: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/mss/address.html>

Finding aid encoded by Library of
Congress Manuscript Division, 2009

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009101>

Collection Summary

Title: C. B. Comstock Papers

Span Dates: 1847-1908

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1862-1890)

ID No.: MSS16527

Creator: Comstock, C. B. (Cyrus Ballou), 1831-1910

Extent: 900 items; 4 containers; 1.6 linear feet; 4 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Correspondence, memoranda, diaries, notebooks, orders, reports, and drawings primarily concerning Comstock's Civil War service as chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac. Also includes material relating to the Mexican War and Comstock's tenure as president of the United States Mississippi River Commission, 1884.

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.

Personal Names

Adams, Henry Martyn, 1844-1909--Correspondence.

Alexander, B. S. (Barton Stone), 1819-1878--Correspondence.

Butterfield, Daniel, 1831-1901--Correspondence.

Comstock, C. B. (Cyrus Ballou), 1831-1910.

Eads, James Buchanan, 1820-1887--Correspondence.

Grant, Jesse Root, 1794-1873--Correspondence.

Grant, Jesse Root, 1794-1873--Family.

Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885--Correspondence.

Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885--Resignation from office.

Halleck, H. W. (Henry Wager), 1815-1872--Correspondence.

Humphreys, A. A. (Andrew Atkinson), 1810-1883--Correspondence.

Meade, George Gordon, 1815-1872--Correspondence.

Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849.

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

Schofield, John McAllister, 1831-1906--Correspondence.

Sheridan, Philip Henry, 1831-1888--Correspondence.

Sherman, William T. (William Tecumseh), 1820-1891--Correspondence.

Sickles, Daniel Edgar, 1819-1914--Correspondence.

Townsend, E. D. (Edward Davis), 1817-1893--Correspondence.

Trowbridge, William Pettit, 1828-1892.

Williams, Seth, 1822-1866--Correspondence.

Wright, Horatio Gouverneur, 1820-1899--Correspondence.

Organizations

United States. Army of the Potomac.

United States. Mississippi River Commission.

Subjects

Fords (Stream crossings)--Virginia--Rapidan River.

Fords (Stream crossings)--Virginia--Rappahannock River.

Fortification--North Carolina.

Mexican War, 1846-1848.

Presidents--United States--Messages.

Locations

Aquia Creek (Va.)--History.
Fort Fisher (N.C. : Fort)--Capture, 1865.
Harpers Ferry (W. Va.)--History.
Mississippi River--Navigation.
Mississippi--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
North Carolina--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
Rapidan River (Va.)
Rappahannock River (Va.)
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Engineering and construction.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
Vicksburg (Miss.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
Vicksburg (Miss.)--History--Siege, 1863.
Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
West Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Occupations

Army officers.
Engineers.

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of C. B. Comstock, army officer, were given to the Library of Congress by the Comstock family, 1914-1951.

Processing History:

The papers of C. B. Comstock were processed in 1979. The finding aid was revised in 2003.

Copyright Status:

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of C. B. Comstock 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.

Microfilm:

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on four reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, C. B. Comstock Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1831, Feb. 3	Born, West Wrentham, Mass.

1855	Graduated, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. Breveted second lieutenant, United States Corps of Engineers
1862	Became chief engineer, Army of the Potomac
1863	Participated in the siege of Vicksburg, Miss.
1864	Participated in the Battle of the Wilderness
1864-1866	Aide-de-camp to Ulysses S. Grant
1865	Participated in the capture of Fort Fisher, N.C., and in the capture of Mobile, Ala.
1866-1870	Aide-de-camp to Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman
1869	Married Elizabeth Blair
1870-1874	Superintending engineer, geodetic survey of the north and northwestern lakes of the United States
1884	Member and president, United States Mississippi River Commission
1886	In charge of the fort and engineering school of application at Willet's Point, N.Y.
1895	Retired as colonel from the regular army
1904	Advanced to rank of brigadier general on the retired list
1910, May 29	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Cyrus Ballou Comstock (1831-1910) span the years 1847-1908, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1862-1890. The collection principally contains military letters and telegrams, memoranda, special orders, general orders, and reports relating to the operations during the Civil War around Vicksburg, Mississippi, with lists of the number and kinds of guns in position before the city at certain dates and a full report of the siege.

The papers also include reports of other operations covering almost the entire war period; a diary, notebook, and a diary-field notebook containing entries recording Comstock's activities as an engineer attached to the Army of the Potomac; drawings of, and comments on, the fords on the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers; sketches of the defenses at Harpers Ferry and the Aquia Creek depot; a memoir of the capture of Fort Fisher; the draft of Ulysses S. Grant's letter of resignation as secretary of war under Andrew Johnson; a letter from Jesse Root Grant relating to his ancestry; and a memoir of William Petit Trowbridge prepared by Comstock. Later papers deal with work on the improvements of the Mississippi River when Comstock was president of the Mississippi River Commission. Miscellaneous items include a printed copy of the annual message of James K. Polk to Congress and related documents, 1847, concerning the war with Mexico.

Correspondents include Henry Martyn Adams, B. S. Alexander, Daniel Butterfield, James Buchanan Eads, Ulysses S. Grant, H. W. Halleck, A. A. Humphreys, George Gordon Meade, David D. Porter,

John McAllister Schofield, Philip Henry Sheridan, William T. Sherman, Daniel Edgar Sickles, E. D. Townsend, Seth Williams, and Horatio Gouverneur Wright.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in three series:

- [Diaries and Notebooks, 1862-1867](#)
- [General Correspondence and Related Material, 1855-1908](#)
- [Miscellany, 1847-1862](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1 REEL 1	<u>Diaries and Notebooks, 1862-1867</u> Diary-field notebook, notebook, and pocket diary. Arranged alphabetically bt type of material.
BOX 1-3 REEL 1-3	<u>General Correspondence and Related Material, 1855-1908</u> Correspondence and related material. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 3-4 REEL 3-4	<u>Miscellany, 1847-1862</u> General orders and printed copy of the annual message of President James K. Polk to Congress. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and topic.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 17,650

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1 REEL 1	Diaries and Notebooks, 1862-1867 Diary-field notebook, notebook, and pocket diary. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 1 REEL 1	Diary-field notebook, 1862-1863
BOX 1 REEL 1	Notebook, circa 1863-1865
BOX 1 REEL 1	Pocket diary, 1863-1867
BOX 1-3 REEL 1-3	General Correspondence and Related Material, 1855-1908 Correspondence and related material. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1 REEL 1	1855, Oct. 1-1878, Dec. 14 (5 folders)
BOX 2 REEL 2	1879, Jan. 18-1890, Nov. 22 (7 folders)
BOX 3 REEL 3	1890, Nov. 24-1908, Sept. 5, undated (3 folders)
BOX 3-4 REEL 3-4	Miscellany, 1847-1862 General orders and printed copy of the annual message of President James K. Polk to Congress. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and topic.
BOX 3 REEL 3	General orders, 1862 (3 folders)
BOX 4 REEL 4	United States Congress, Senate, <i>Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress, 7 Dec. 1847</i> , 30th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Executive Document No. 1. (1 folder)
BOX 4 REEL 4	(7 folders)