

# Alfred Mordecai Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the  
Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of  
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2010

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

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# Collection Summary

Title: Alfred Mordecai Papers

Span Dates: 1790-1948

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1833-1887)

ID No.: MSS33415

Creator: Mordecai, Alfred, 1804-1887

Extent: 3,850 items; 17 containers; 4.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: United States Army officer, engineer, and ordnance expert. Correspondence, travel and other diaries and journals, and miscellaneous papers of Mordecai and his family.

## 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

Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889--Correspondence.

Gratz, Miriam Simon, 1749-1808--Correspondence.

Gratz, Rebecca, 1781-1869--Correspondence.

Longstreet, Mary C.--Correspondence.

Mordecai family--Correspondence.

Mordecai, Alfred, 1804-1887.

Mordecai, Sara Anne Hays--Correspondence.

Wistar, Owen--Correspondence.

### Organizations

Imperial Mexican Railway.

United States. Military Commission to Europe.

### Subjects

Crimean War, 1853-1856.

Ordnance.

Railroads--Mexico.

Weapons systems.

### Places

Mexico--Claims.

### Occupations

Army officers.

Engineers.

Ordnance experts.

## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The papers of Alfred Mordecai, United States Army officer, engineer, and ordnance expert, were purchased by the Library of Congress between 1941 and 1950. Additional material was given by Mrs. Leslie Ashburner in 1961 and by John D. Miley in 1999.

## Processing History

The papers of Alfred Mordecai were arranged and described in 1992. An addition of Mordecai's letters to his sister, Rosa Mordecai Lazarus, was made to the collection in 2000. The papers were reprocessed at that time and the finding aid was revised in 2010.

## Transfers

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Some maps have been transferred to the Geography and Map Division, photographs to the Prints and Photographs Division, and printed items to the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Alfred Mordecai papers.

## Copyright Status

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

## Access and Restrictions

The papers of Alfred Mordecai 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, Alfred Mordecai Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1804, Jan. 3	Born, Warrenton, N.C.
1819-1823	Attended United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1823	Commissioned brevet second lieutenant, Corps of Engineers, United States Army
1824-1825	Detailed principal assistant professor of engineering, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1825	Assistant engineer in the construction of Fortress Monroe and Fort Calhoun, Hampton Roads, Va.
1828	Appointed assistant to the chief of engineers, Corps of Engineers, United States Army
1832	Commissioned captain of ordnance and appointed assistant ordnance officer, Ordnance Corps, United States Army, Washington Arsenal in the District of Columbia
1833	Published <i>A Digest of the Laws Relating to the Military Establishment of the United States</i> Washington, D.C.: Thomas and Homans.
1833-1834	Commander, Washington Arsenal in the District of Columbia

1835-1838	Commander, Frankfort Arsenal, Pa.
1836	Married Sara Hays (died 1894)
1838-1842	Assistant to chief of ordnance of the United States Army, Washington Arsenal in the District of Columbia
1839-1860	Member, United States Ordnance Board
1840	Member, commission to Europe to study development and manufacture of weapons
1841	Published <i>The Ordnance Manual for the Use of Officers of the United States Army, in 1841 and 1850</i> Washington, D.C.: Gideon and Co.
1845	Published <i>Report of Experiments on Gunpowder, made at Washington Arsenal, in 1843 and 1844</i> Washington, D.C.: J. & G. S. Gideon.
1848	Brevetted major during Mexican War
1848-1855	Commander, Washington Arsenal in the District of Columbia
1849	Published <i>Second Report of Experiments on Gunpowder, made at Washington Arsenal, in 1845, '47, and '48.</i> Washington, D.C.: J. & G. S. Gideon. Published <i>Artillery for the United States Land Service, as devised and arranged by the Ordnance Board.</i> Washington, D.C.: J. & G. S. Gideon.
1853	Visited Mexico to settle war claims
1854	Commissioned major, Ordnance Corps, United States Army
1855-1857	Member, United States Military Commission to Europe
1861	Resigned from United States Army
1865-1866	Assistant engineer, Imperial Mexican Railway
1867-1887	Appointed treasurer and secretary, Pennsylvania Canal Co., a company owned by the Pennsylvania Railroad Co.
1887, Oct. 23	Died, Philadelphia, Pa.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Alfred Mordecai (1804-1887) span the years 1790-1948 with the bulk of material dating between 1833 and 1887. The collection is organized in three series, [Diaries](#), [General Correspondence and Related Matter](#), and [Miscellany](#), which document a lengthy military career that included Mordecai's work on the development and organization of pre-Civil War weapons systems. Included in the papers are several diaries and journals kept by Mordecai during official trips to Europe and Mexico.

Although the [diaries](#) vary in the amount of detail they provide, they document many aspects of his settlement of war claims in Mexico in 1853, his report on military tactics used in the Crimea War as a member of the United States Military Commission to Europe in 1855-1857, and his work as an engineer with the Imperial Mexican Railway in 1865-1866. More information on his travels, including his trip to Europe in 1840 to study weapons development and manufacture, can be found in letters to his wife and sister and other writings located in [General Correspondence and Related Matter](#).

Mordecai's personal and professional correspondence is mounted in two sets of bound volumes. Material in these volumes, which also includes drafts of writings, printed essays and addresses, assorted diagrams, news clippings, genealogy charts, maps, photographs, and marriage announcements, is arranged in approximate chronological order although there is some overlap between volumes. There is considerable chronological and subject overlap between the two sets. Mordecai's correspondence consists chiefly of letters to his wife, Sara Anne Hays Mordecai, and to his sisters and daughters, and concerns personal family matters, though the papers also include some professional correspondence pertaining to his military and professional career. Prominent correspondents include Jefferson Davis, Miriam Gratz, Rebecca Gratz, Mary C. Longstreet, and Owen Wister.

The [Miscellany](#) series includes unbound calling cards, certificates, essays and addresses, genealogical material, greeting cards, maps, pamphlets, photographs, poems, postcards, and sermons.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in three series:

- [Diaries, 1853-1866](#)
- [General Correspondence and Related Material, 1790-1948](#).
- [Miscellany, 1821-1944](#)

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1	<u>Diaries, 1853-1866</u> Personal and business journals kept by Mordecai relating to personal and business trips to Europe and Mexico. Arranged chronologically
BOX 2-13	<u>General Correspondence and Related Material, 1790-1948</u> Letters sent and received as well as certificates, diagrams, maps, and photographs. Organized chronologically in two sets of bound volumes with a small amount of unbound family and miscellaneous correspondence organized at the end of the series.
BOX 13-17	<u>Miscellany, 1821-1944</u> Correspondence, calling cards, certificates, essays and addresses, genealogical research, greeting cards, maps, pamphlets, photographs, poems, postcards, and sermons. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Diaries, 1853-1866 Personal and business journals kept by Mordecai relating to personal and business trips to Europe and Mexico. Arranged chronologically
BOX 1	1853, May 19-Aug. 20; 1865, June 17-July 18
BOX 1	1855, Aug. 26-1856, Feb.12
BOX 1	1855, Aug. 26-1856, Feb.12
BOX 1	1865, June 16-1866, Oct. 30
BOX 2-13	General Correspondence and Related Material, 1790-1948 Letters sent and received as well as certificates, diagrams, maps, and photographs. Organized chronologically in two sets of bound volumes with a small amount of unbound family and miscellaneous correspondence organized at the end of the series.
BOX 2	Bound
BOX 2	Set A
BOX 2	1806, June 26-1855, June 22
BOX 3	1855, June 29-1861, Mar. 11
BOX 4	1861, Mar. 17-1866, Oct. 13
BOX 5	1866-1890, 1933, undated
BOX 6	1879, Apr. 25-1887, June 9
BOX 7	Set B
BOX 7	1790, Nov. 4-1833, Aug. 24
BOX 8	1833, Sept.11-1844, Jan. 4
BOX 9	1844, Jan. 19-1866, Sept. 2
BOX 10	1860, Oct. 17-1867, Dec. 29
BOX 11	1868, Jan. 10-1883, Sept. 29
BOX 12	1883, Oct. 4-1935, Nov. 19
BOX 13	Unbound
BOX 13	Family
BOX 13	General, 1857-1948, undated
BOX 13	Lazarus, Rosa Mordecai (sister), 1833-1834
BOX 13	Miscellaneous, 1946-1948, undated
BOX 13-17	Miscellany, 1821-1944 Correspondence, calling cards, certificates, essays and addresses, genealogical research, greeting cards, maps, pamphlets, photographs, poems, postcards, and sermons. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.

## Miscellany, 1821-1944

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 13	Broadside, undated
BOX 13	Calling cards, 1859-1860, 1873-1879, 1904, undated
BOX 13	Deaths
BOX 13	Mordecai, Alfred
BOX 13	Calling cards, 1887 (3 folders)
BOX 13	Correspondence, 1887-1888 (2 folders)
BOX 14	( 2 folders)
BOX 14	Obituaries and memorials, 1887-1888
BOX 14	Mordecai, Sara Anne Hays (wife), 1894 (3 folders)
BOX 14	Fiftieth wedding anniversary, 1886
BOX 14	Calling cards (1 folder)
BOX 15	(2 folders)
BOX 15	Correspondence (5 folders)
BOX 16	Greeting cards
BOX 16	Lists
BOX 16	Miscellany
BOX 16	Genealogical material
BOX 16	Correspondence, 1948, undated
BOX 16	Lists and notes, 1847-1924, undated (3 folders)
BOX 16	Printed matter, 1897-1942
BOX 16	Human hair, 1887
BOX 16	Lists and miscellaneous writings, 1821-1897, undated
BOX 17	Newspaper clippings, 1804-1944, undated (2 folders)
BOX 17	<i>Official Register of the Officers and Cadets in the U.S. Military Academy,</i> 1864
BOX 17	Passport, 1855-1856
BOX 17	Photographs, 1886, undated
BOX 17	Poetry, circa 1826, undated
BOX 17	<i>Recollections of My Aunt, Rebecca Gratz</i> , correspondence concerning, 1876, 1893-1894
BOX 17	Wedding announcements and invitations, 1886-1941, undated