

Charles S. Sperry Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Library of Congress

Prepared by Peter Bunce



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2011

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

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Collection Summary

Title: Charles S. Sperry Papers

Span Dates: 1862-1912

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1900-1911)

ID No.: MSS40923

Creator: Sperry, Charles S. (Charles Stillman), 1847-1911

Extent: 2,300 items; 14 containers plus 1 oversize; 6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English, with some French

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

Abstract: Naval officer and diplomat. General and family correspondence, orders to duty, journals, reports, memoranda, and other papers relating to Sperry'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

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.

Sperry, Charles S. (Charles Stillman), 1847-1911.

Organizations

Conference for the Revision of the Geneva Convention of 1864 (1906 : Geneva, Switzerland)

International Peace Conference (2nd : 1907 : Hague, Netherlands)

United States. Navy--Foreign service--Philippines.

Occupations

Diplomats.

Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Charles S. Sperry, naval officer and diplomat, were given to the Library of Congress by his son, Charles S. Sperry, in 1920, and his wife, Edith Sperry, in 1921. Another son, Marcy L. Sperry, gave additional papers in 1946.

Processing History

The papers of Charles S. Sperry were arranged and described in 1977. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Charles S. Sperry is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Charles S. Sperry 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, Charles S. Sperry Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Event</i> |
|---------------|--|
| 1847, Sept. 3 | Born, Brooklyn, N. Y. |
| 1866 | Graduated, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. Duty in USS <i>Sacramento</i> |
| 1868 | Duty in USS <i>Kearsarge</i> |
| 1871 | Duty in storeship Supply |
| 1872 | Duty in USS <i>Worcester</i> , North Atlantic Squadron |
| 1874 | Duty at U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. |
| 1877 | Married Edith Marcy |
| 1878 | Duty in USS <i>Richmond</i> |
| 1884 | Executive officer, USS <i>Quinnebaug</i> , European Station |
| 1887 | Duty at U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. |
| 1891 | Executive officer, USS <i>Chicago</i> , South Atlantic Station |
| 1894 | Duty in Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D.C. |
| 1895 | Ordnance officer, Navy Yard, New York, N.Y |
| 1898 | Commander, USS <i>Yorktown</i> , Philippines |
| 1900 | Duty in Bureau of Equipment, Navy Department, Washington, D.C. |
| 1901 | Commander, USS <i>New Orleans</i> , Asiatic Station |
| 1903 | Senior officer, Southern Squadron, Asiatic Station |
| 1904 | President, Naval War College, Newport, R.I. |
| 1906 | Promoted to rear admiral Delegate, International Conference on the Revision of the Geneva Convention of August 22, 1864, for treatment of the sick and wounded |
| 1907 | U.S. naval delegate, Second Hague Conference |
| 1908-1909 | Commander in chief of the Battle Fleet, cruise around the world |

1909 Senior member, Board on Revision of Navy Regulations Retired
1911, Feb. 1 Died, Washington, D.C

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Charles Stillman Sperry (1847-1911) span the years 1862-1912, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1900-1911. The collection consists primarily of correspondence, orders, memoranda, and reports, supplemented by journals, letterbooks, letterpress books, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. The papers are organized by type of material with oversize filed at the end.

The journals and letterbooks chiefly relate to official naval business. The journal contains notes of Sperry's voyages and ports of call, as well as several crew lists. Letterbooks and letterpress volumes deal with personnel problems and current events of concern to the navy, among other topics.

Family correspondence, 1862 to 1912, covers the span dates of the collection. The earliest letters, written by Sperry as a midshipman, are addressed to a brother, a sister, and cousin. Letters to his wife Edith and son Charles make up most of the family correspondence. Personal and social activities as well as occasional current events and official matters are discussed in letters to his wife. Many of Sperry's letters to his son reflect his views on current events. For example, he foresaw trouble in the Far East prior to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. The world cruise of the American Battle Fleet, 1907-1909, commanded by Sperry, highlights the correspondence of 1908 and early 1909.

Letters in the general correspondence are concerned chiefly with official naval business such as requests and grants for leaves of absence, letters of commendation, and reports of vessel's activities and maneuvers. The letters, chronologically arranged, span the years 1863-1911.

The subject file, alphabetically arranged, documents significant events in Sperry's life. His role as a delegate to the Geneva Convention in 1906 and the Hague Conference in 1907 is covered by correspondence, orders, memoranda, and reports, heavily supplemented by printed matter, much of it annotated. The printed matter, practically all of it in French, refers to proceedings, committee reports, and resolutions. The Ludlow case pertains to a controversy between Sperry and Commander Nicoll Ludlow over the former's fitness for duty and higher office.

Naval orders, 1865-1910, and naval promotions, 1868-1907, document Sperry's duty assignments and promotions. The Spanish-American War file, 1898-1900, deals exclusively with Sperry's activities in the Philippines. Of particular interest are the accounts of the capture of his landing party by Emilio Aguinaldo's forces. Concluding the subject file is a small amount of material on the world cruise of the American Battle Fleet. It consists of correspondence including four letters from Theodore Roosevelt, speeches, reports, and printed matter.

The speech, article, and lecture file covers some of the major events in Sperry's life. Topics include the Hague Conventions; the role of navy diplomacy; the railways in China, Manchuria, and Korea, complete with maps; and the world cruise. Most of the materials are drafts and at least one is incomplete.

The bulk of the miscellany is printed matter, including naval books and certificates and Hague Conference material.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged by type of material with oversize filed at the end.

Container List

| <i>Container</i> | <i>Contents</i> |
|------------------|---|
| BOX 1 | Journals and letterbooks |
| BOX 1 | Journal, 1866-1909 |
| BOX 1 | Letterbook, 1887 |
| BOX 1 | Letterpress books |
| BOX 1 | 1897-1902 |
| BOX 1 | 1902-1903 |
| BOX 2 | 1907-1909 |
| BOX 2 | Index to letters sent, 1906-1907 |
| BOX 2 | Index to letters received, 1906-1907 |
| BOX 3 | Family correspondence |
| BOX 3 | 1862-1899 |
| BOX 4 | 1900-1902 |
| BOX 5 | 1903-1908 |
| BOX 6 | 1909-1912, undated |
| BOX 7 | General correspondence, 1863-1911, undated |
| BOX 8 | Subject file |
| BOX 8 | Geneva Convention (1907), 1898-1906 |
| BOX 9-11 | Hague Conference (1906), 1904-1908 <i>See also Oversize</i> |
| BOX 12 | Ludlow, Nicoll, case, 1887-1895 |
| BOX 12 | Naval orders, 1865-1910 |
| BOX 12 | Naval promotions, 1868-1907 |
| BOX 12 | Spanish-American War, 1898-1900 |
| BOX 13 | World cruise, 1908-1909 |
| BOX 13 | Speeches, articles, and lectures |
| BOX 14 | Miscellany |
| BOX 14 | Printed matter |
| BOX 14 | Naval books |
| BOX 14 | Naval certificates |
| BOX 14 | Calling cards |
| BOX 14 | Greeting cards |
| BOX 14 | Postcards |
| BOX 14 | Letterheads |
| BOX 14 | Newspaper clippings |
| BOX 14 | College magazine |
| BOX 14 | Programs |
| BOX 14 | Receipts and notices |
| BOX 14 | Transportation schedules |
| BOX 14 | Other |
| BOX 14 | Financial and legal material |
| BOX 14 | Writings and sketches |

Container List

| <i>Container</i> | <i>Contents</i> |
|------------------|------------------|
| BOX 14 | Cloth samples |
| BOX OV 1 | Oversize |
| BOX OV 1 | Subject file |
| BOX OV 1 | Hague Conference |
