

John Crittenden Watson Papers

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



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Collection Summary

Title: John Crittenden Watson Papers

Span Dates: 1844-1960

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1884-1923)

ID No.: MSS51771

Creator: Watson, John Crittenden, 1842-1923

Extent: 1,500 items ; 9 containers ; 7 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Summary: Naval officer. General and family correspondence, notes, reports, official orders, newspaper clippings, photographs, and scrapbooks relating to Watson's service in the Civil War and naval career. Includes papers of his sons, Edward H. Watson, naval officer, and James T. Watson, army officer.

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

Brownson, Willard H. (Willard Herbert), 1845-1935--Correspondence.

Casey, Silas, 1841-1913--Correspondence.

Chandler, William E. (William Eaton), 1835-1917.

Dewey, George, 1837-1917--Correspondence.

Edward VII, King of Great Britain, 1841-1910.

Farragut, David Glasgow, 1801-1870--Correspondence.

Meredith, William T.--Correspondence.

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

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.

Watson family--Correspondence.

Watson, Edward H. (Edward Howe), 1873-1942. Edward H. Watson papers.

Watson, James T. James T. Watson papers.

Watson, John Crittenden, 1842-1923.

Organizations

New York Naval Shipyard.

United States. Navy. Asiatic Squadron.

United States. Navy. European Station.

Wyoming (Sloop of war)

Subjects

Mobile Bay, Battle of, Ala., 1864.

Navy-yards and naval stations--New York (State)--New York.

New Orleans (La.)--History--Capture, 1862.

Shipwrecks--California--Honda, Point.

Places

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

Chalmette (La.)--History.

Fort Jackson (La.)--History--Siege, 1862.

Fort Saint Philip (La.)--History.

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

Mississippi--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

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

Vicksburg (Miss.)--History.

Occupations

Army officers.
Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of John Crittenden Watson, naval officer, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1967 and converted to a gift in 1998.

Processing History

The papers of John Crittenden Watson were arranged and described in 1968. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Additional Guides

In 1968, the Library published *John Lansing Callan [and] John Crittenden Watson, a Register of Their Papers in the Library of Congress Naval Historical Foundation Collection*.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Crittenden Watson 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, John Crittenden Watson Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1842	Born, Frankfort, Ky.
1860	Graduated, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. Duty in USS <i>Susquehanna</i>
1861	Duty in USS <i>Richmond</i> and USS <i>Sabine</i>
1864	Duty in USS <i>Hartford</i> , Battle of Mobile Bay
1865-1867	Duty in USS <i>Colorado</i> , European Squadron
1873	Married Elizabeth Anderson Thornton
1874	Duty in Navy Yard, Mare Island, Calif.
1878-1880	Commanded USS <i>Wyoming</i> , European Station

1883	Equipment Officer, Brooklyn Navy Yard
1895-1898	Governor, Naval Home, Philadelphia, Pa.
1898	Duty in USS <i>Newark</i> and USS <i>Oregon</i> , Guantanamo Bay
1899	Promoted to rear admiral Commanded Asiatic Fleet
1902	American naval representative to coronation of Edward VII of Great Britain
1903	President, Naval Examining Board
1916	Published <i>Farragut and Mobile Bay—Personal Reminiscences</i> . Washington, D. C.: Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Commandery of the District of Columbia. War paper, no. 98
1923, Dec. 14	Died, buried in Arlington National Cemetery

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John C. Watson (1842-1923) span the years 1844-1960, with the bulk of the material falling in the period 1884-1923. The collection consists of family and general correspondence, official orders, a subject file, and miscellaneous documents. Included are the papers of his sons, Edward H. Watson and James T. Watson, also military officers.

The family correspondence consists mainly of letters written to Watson's wife and children about his cruises, places of interest he visited, and official receptions in foreign lands. The general correspondence is composed mainly of letters from friends and naval officers. Among the correspondents are Willard H. Brownson, Silas Casey, George Dewey, David Glasgow Farragut, William T. Meredith, David D. Porter, and Theodore Roosevelt.

Watson's official orders date from his appointment as midshipman in 1860 to his special assignment in Europe in 1904. They detail his service in the Civil War, particularly his participation in the bombardment and passage of Forts Jackson, St. Philip, and the Chalmette batteries in April 1862; passage of Vicksburg batteries, June and July 1862; and the Battle of Mobile Bay on 5 Aug. 1864, while aboard Farragut's flagship, the USS *Hartford*. The orders also illustrate his postwar duty with the European Squadron, 1867-1878, and his later command of the USS *Wyoming*, which conveyed the United States exhibit to the Paris Exposition in 1878.

Of interest in the subject file is the controversy between Secretary of the Navy William E. Chandler and Watson as the equipment officer at the Brooklyn Navy Yard over the dismissal of civilian employees in 1883. There are letters to Nicholas Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilkerson Call, and others concerning these dismissals which resulted in Watson's detachment to other duty. The subject file also includes material on Watson's command of the Asiatic station from 1899-1900. Letters from the secretary of state, secretary of the navy, naval officers, proclamations, official orders, and telegrams document the problems and daily activities of the fleet and the casualties of the Philippine American War.

There are also letters, telegrams, and notes from which James T. Watson, his son, prepared for the judge advocate cases concerning the indebtedness of an army officer and the theft of United States Army surplus medical property.

The papers of Edward H. Watson document the Honda Point disaster, which occurred on the night of 8 September 1923, when a squadron of nine destroyers commanded by him went aground at Point Honda, California, resulting in the death of twenty-three men, and the loss of eight destroyers. The papers concern the ensuing court of inquiry and show Watson's willingness to assume full responsibility.

The remainder of the collection consists of two scrapbooks, one made by Rear Admiral Watson on the USS *Baltimore*, and the other compiled by his son, Edward H. Watson, during his duty as aide to his father in 1902 at the coronation of King Edward VII of England.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is organized by type of material.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Family correspondence
BOX 1	Letters to his wife
BOX 1	1874-Mar. 1900
BOX 2	Apr. 1900-1902, undated
BOX 2	Letters to his children, 1887-1899
BOX 2	Letters to and from his sister, 1867-1870
BOX 2	Letters received from John J. Crittenden (grandfather), 1858-1861
BOX 2	Letters from Edward H. Watson (son), 1891-1916
BOX 2	Letters to Mrs. John C. Watson from her parents and cousins, 1873-1918
BOX 2	Miscellaneous, 1844-1935
BOX 3	General correspondence
BOX 3	Letters received and a few drafts of letters sent, 1861-1922
BOX 3	Official orders, 1860-1904
BOX 4	Subject file
BOX 4	Equipment officer, Brooklyn Navy Yard, 1873-1874
BOX 4	Commander in chief, Asiatic Squadron
BOX 4	1899
BOX 5	1900
BOX 5	Reports from special assignment in Europe, 1904
BOX 6	Miscellany
BOX 6	Statute book of steam frigate <i>Merrimack</i> , 1859-1860
BOX 6	Night orders of USS <i>Wyoming</i> , 1878-1880
BOX 6	Speeches and sermons
BOX 6	Notes for <i>Farragut and Mobile Bay</i>
BOX 6	Notes for a proposed biography of David Glasgow Farragut
BOX 6	Genealogical material
BOX 6	Newspaper clippings and photographs
BOX 7	Edward H. Watson and the Honda Point, Calif., disaster, 1923
BOX 7	Letters, telegrams, scrapbook, and printed matter concerning the Honda Point, Calif., disaster, 1923-1960
BOX 8	Edward H. Watson's official orders, 1895-1918
BOX 8	James T. Watson's notes, letters, and telegrams for preparation of two cases, 1922-1923
BOX 9	Scrapbooks
BOX 9	Vol. 1, USS <i>Baltimore</i> , 1900
BOX 9	Vol. 2, compiled by Edward H. Watson as aide to his father, Rear Admiral Watson, naval representative to the coronation of King Edward VII of Great Britain, containing letters, invitations, programs, calling card, and memorabilia, 1902