

# **Matthew Fontaine Maury Papers**

## **A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**LIBRARY OF  
CONGRESS**

**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.**

**1997**

**Revised 2016 January**

Contact information:

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

Additional search options available at:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms001026>

LC Online Catalog record:

<http://lcn.loc.gov/mm79031682>

Prepared by Preparation Section staff  
Revised and expanded by Karen Linn Femia

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Matthew Fontaine Maury Papers

**Span Dates:** 1825-1960

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1830-1880)

**ID No.:** MSS31682

**Creator:** Maury, Matthew Fontaine, 1806-1873

**Extent:** 14,650 items ; 64 containers plus 2 oversize ; 17.5 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

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

**Summary:** Naval officer and oceanographer. Correspondence, letterbooks, diaries, journals, speeches, articles, and other writings, notebooks, electrical experiment book, charts, and printed material relating chiefly to Maury's naval career, scientific activities and interests, service as a Confederate agent in England, and work as an immigration official for Southern expatriates in Mexico, and to the Maury (Morey) 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

Blackford, William M., 1801-1864--Correspondence.

Coblentz, Catherine Cate, 1897-1951. Matthew Fontaine Maury biography. 1953.

Corbin, Nannie, 1837-1900--Correspondence.

Corbin, Wellford, 1835-1897--Correspondence.

Hasbrouck, William C., 1800-1870--Correspondence.

Holmes, Nathaniel J., approximately 1821- --Correspondence.

Jansen, Marin H. (Marin Henry), 1817-1893--Correspondence.

Maury family--Correspondence.

Maury family.

Maury, Ann, 1803-1876--Correspondence.

Maury, Ann, 1811-1901--Correspondence.

Maury, Matthew Fontaine, 1806-1873.

Maury, Matthew Fontaine, 1849-1886--Correspondence.

Maury, Richard L. (Richard Lancelot), 1840-1907--Correspondence.

Maury, Rutson, 1805-1882--Correspondence.

Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, 1832-1867--Correspondence.

Minor, Franklin, 1812-1867--Correspondence.

Otey, James Hervey, 1800-1863--Correspondence.

Smith, C. Alphonso (Charles Alphonso), 1864-1924. C. Alphonso Smith papers. 1864-1927.

Smith, Francis H. (Francis Henney), 1812-1890--Correspondence.

Tremlett, F. W. (Francis William), 1821-1913--Correspondence.

Werth, Mary, 1844-1928--Correspondence.

Withers, Eliza, 1846-1881--Correspondence.

### Organizations

Confederate States of America. Navy--Officers.

United States Naval Observatory.

United States. Depot of Charts and Instruments.

United States. Navy--Officers.

### Subjects

American Confederate voluntary exiles--Mexico.

Diplomatic and consular service, Confederate--Great Britain.

Meteorology.

Mines and mineral resources.  
Oceanography.  
Physical geography--Virginia.  
Science--History--19th century.  
Torpedoes.

### **Places**

Confederate States of America--Foreign relations--Great Britain.  
Confederate States of America--History, Naval.  
Great Britain--Foreign relations--Confederate States of America.  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations.  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Refugees.

### **Occupations**

Naval officers, Confederate.  
Naval officers.  
Oceanographers.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Provenance**

The papers and medals of Matthew Fontaine Maury, naval officer and oceanographer, were given to the United States by Maury's daughter, Mary Maury Werth, and other Maury descendants in 1912 in a presentation to President William Howard Taft. The medals were placed in the Smithsonian Institution and the papers in the Library of Congress later that year. The Library acquired additional Maury papers through gifts from the Maury family and others and by purchase, 1913-1996.

### **Processing History**

The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury were first arranged and described in 1962. Additional material was incorporated into the collection in 1978 and 1997.

### **Transfers**

Maps have been transferred to the Library's Geography and Map Division where they are identified as part of these papers.

### **Copyright Status**

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

### **Access and Restrictions**

The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury 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, Matthew Fontaine Maury Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## **Biographical Note**

### *Date*

1806, Jan. 14

### *Event*

Born near Fredericksburg, Va.; raised in Tennessee

1818	Entered Harpeth Academy, near Franklin, Tenn.
1825-1834	Obtained midshipman's warrant, U.S. Navy and made three extended voyages
1834	Married Ann Hull Herndon; resided in Fredericksburg, Va.
1836	Promoted to lieutenant Published <i>A New Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Navigation</i> (Philadelphia: Key and Biddle. 174 pp.)
1839	Permanently lamed in stagecoach accident and thenceforth not assigned to sea duty
1842-1844	Superintendent of the Navy Department's Depot of Charts and Instruments
1844-1861	Superintendent of the Naval Observatory and Hydrographical Office
1847	Issued first <i>Wind and Current Charts</i> (U.S. Hydrographic Office) howing best "tracks" for sailing ships in the North Atlantic
1853	U.S. representative at international maritime congress, Brussels, Belgium
1855	Published <i>The Physical Geography of the Sea</i> (New York: Harper & Bros. 274 pp.), the first modern oceanographic textbook Placed on inactive duty by the U.S. Navy
1858	Restored to active duty by presidential order; promoted to commander retroactive to 1855
1861, Apr. 20	Resigned from U.S. Navy and accepted commission as commander in Confederate Navy
1862	Special agent of the Confederate government to England
1865-1866	Imperial commissioner of immigration to the Emperor of Mexico
1866-1868	Resided in England
1868	Published <i>First Lessons in Geography</i> (New York: Richardson & Co. 62 pp.) Published <i>The World We Live in</i> (New York: Richardson & Co. 104 pp.)
1868-1872	Professor of meteorology, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.
1870	Published <i>Manual of Geography</i> (New York: University Publishing Co. 162 pp.)
1873, Feb. 1	Died, Lexington, Va.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) span the years 1825-1960, with the bulk of the material dating from the 1830s to the 1870s. The papers consist of letterbooks, correspondence, diaries, notebooks, electrical experiment book, journals, drafts and printed copies of speeches and articles, charts, related printed matter, and proofs of his unpublished work "Astronomy." The papers are organized into the following series: [General Correspondence](#), [Writings, Addresses, and Lectures](#), [Letterbooks](#), [Miscellany](#), [Additions](#) and [Oversize.](#)

The papers pertain chiefly to Maury's naval career, his scientific activities and interests, and his service to the Confederacy in the Civil War. There is also considerable material concerning the many medals and honors conferred upon him for his scientific contributions. Some subjects touched upon are mines, meteorology, the colonization of Mexico by former Confederates, physical geography of Virginia, and oceanography. Much of the [correspondence](#) is family correspondence, including many of Maury's own letters.

Prominent among his correspondents are William M. Blackford, William C. Hasbrouck, Nathaniel J. Holmes, Admiral Marin H. Jansen, Privy Councilor to the King of Holland, Ann Hull Herndon Maury, Richard L. Maury, Rutson Maury, Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, Franklin Minor, James Hervey Otey, Francis Henney Smith, Francis W. Tremlett, and Mary Herndon Maury Werth.

Placed with the collection are papers of Charles Alphonso Smith regarding Maury including clippings and notes on Maury as well as correspondence with Mary Maury (Mrs. James R.) Werth concerning her father. Also included is a typescript of a life of Maury by Catherine Cate Coblentz.

The 1978 [addition](#) to the Maury Papers consists of [correspondence](#) between various Maury family members, 1858-1878. These papers were received by the Library between 1966 and 1975. Correspondents include Nannie Corbin, Wellford Corbin, Matthew Fontaine Maury (1849-1886), Mary Herndon Maury Werth, and Eliza Hull Maury Withers. Of particular interest are the letters Maury received during the periods when he was special Confederate agent to Great Britain in London and an immigration official for Southern expatriates in Mexico.

The 1997 [addition](#) consists of Maury papers received by the Library from 1989 to 1996. It primarily contains letters written by Matthew F. Maury to his cousin, Ann Maury, relating his daily activities. Also included are correspondence with other family members, one letter of 1858 to Benjamin Silliman concerning expeditions and packet ships, news clippings (some dating from the mid-twentieth century), and copies of navigational charts.

## Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series:

- [General Correspondence, 1825-1910](#)
- [Writings, Addresses, and Lectures, 1856-1872](#)
- [Letterbooks, 1859-1891](#)
- [Miscellany, 1836-1953](#)
- [Additions, 1831-1960](#)
- [Oversize, 1855-1873](#)

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-46	<b><u>General Correspondence, 1825-1910</u></b> Correspondence. Arranged chronologically in forty-six bound volumes.
BOX 47-51	<b><u>Writings, Addresses, and Lectures, 1856-1872</u></b> Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.
BOX 52-56	<b><u>Letterbooks, 1859-1891</u></b> Copies of outgoing correspondence. Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.
BOX 57-63	<b><u>Miscellany, 1836-1953</u></b> Account books, diaries, photographs, printed matter, scrapbook, writings, and C. Alphonso Smith papers re Maury. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 64	<b><u>Additions, 1831-1960</u></b> Correspondence and family correspondence, each arranged chronologically. Miscellaneous material including genealogical records and news clippings. Arranged in two additions.
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<b><u>Oversize, 1855-1873</u></b> Diplomas, awards, and probate papers. Organized and described according to the series, folders, and boxes from which the items were removed.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
<b>BOX 1-46</b>	<b>General Correspondence, 1825-1910</b> Correspondence. Arranged chronologically in forty-six bound volumes.
<b>BOX 1</b>	6 Feb. 1825-3 Nov. 1839
<b>BOX 2</b>	6 Nov. 1839-15 July 1843
<b>BOX 3</b>	29 July 1843-13 Feb. 1850
<b>BOX 4</b>	15 Feb. 1850-17 Sept. 1855
<b>BOX 5</b>	18 Sept. 1855-4 Feb. 1856
<b>BOX 6</b>	5 Feb. 1856-25 Feb. 1857
<b>BOX 7</b>	26 Feb. 1857-6 June 1859
<b>BOX 8</b>	7 June 1859-23 Jan. 1860
<b>BOX 9</b>	29 Jan.-21 Oct. 1860
<b>BOX 10</b>	22 Oct. 1860-21 Jan. 1861
<b>BOX 11</b>	22 Jan.-4 Feb. 1861
<b>BOX 12</b>	5-22 Feb. 1861
<b>BOX 13</b>	23 Feb.-6 Apr. 1861
<b>BOX 14</b>	7 Apr.-7 Oct. 1861
<b>BOX 15</b>	8 Oct. 1861-3 May 1862
<b>BOX 16</b>	4 May-17 Sept. 1862
<b>BOX 17</b>	18 Sept. 1862-20 Apr. 1863
<b>BOX 18</b>	21 Apr.-2 Nov. 1863
<b>BOX 19</b>	3 Nov. 1863-5 Feb. 1864
<b>BOX 20</b>	6 Feb.-19 Oct. 1864
<b>BOX 21</b>	20 Oct. 1864-8 June 1865
<b>BOX 22</b>	9 June-20 Aug. 1865
<b>BOX 23</b>	21 Aug.-1 Dec. 1865
<b>BOX 24</b>	3 Dec. 1865-18 Apr. 1866
<b>BOX 25</b>	19 Apr. 1866-10 May 1867
<b>BOX 26</b>	11 May 1867-9 June 1868
<b>BOX 27</b>	10 June-27 Nov. 1868
<b>BOX 28</b>	28 Nov. 1868-2 Feb. 1869
<b>BOX 29</b>	3 Feb.-10 Mar. 1869
<b>BOX 30</b>	11 Mar.-22 Apr. 1869
<b>BOX 31</b>	23 Apr.-25 June 1869
<b>BOX 32</b>	26 June-1 Nov. 1869
<b>BOX 33</b>	2 Nov. 1869-17 Jan. 1870
<b>BOX 34</b>	18 Jan.-29 Apr. 1870
<b>BOX 35</b>	30 Apr.-4 Aug. 1870
<b>BOX 36</b>	5 Aug. 1870-10 Apr. 1871
<b>BOX 37</b>	11 Apr.-3 Sept. 1871
<b>BOX 38</b>	9 Sept. 1871-1 Jan. 1872

## General Correspondence, 1825-1910

### Container

### Contents

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BOX 39	2 Jan.-27 Mar. 1872
BOX 40	28 Mar.-10 Aug. 1872
BOX 41	11 Aug. 1872-3 Jan. 1873
BOX 42	4-30 Jan. 1873
BOX 43	1 Feb.-20 Mar. 1873
BOX 44	21 Mar.-27 Oct. 1873
BOX 45	28 Oct. 1873-8 Feb. 1895
BOX 46	13 Apr. 1895-25 Apr. 1910, undated
BOX 47-51	<b>Writings, Addresses, and Lectures, 1856-1872</b> Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.
BOX 47	June 1856-June 1868
BOX 48	Dec. 1869-Jan. 1871
BOX 49	May 1871
BOX 50	May-Dec. 1871
BOX 51	Jan.-May 1872
BOX 52-56	<b>Letterbooks, 1859-1891</b> Copies of outgoing correspondence. Arranged chronologically in five bound volumes.
BOX 52	3 Dec. 1859-18 Jan. 1861
BOX 53	9 Oct. 1868-28 Sept. 1869
BOX 54	29 Sept.-9 Oct. 1869
BOX 55	4 Apr. 1871-19 Mar. 1872
BOX 56	12 Apr.-14 Nov. 1872 Fragments, 1891
BOX 57-63	<b>Miscellany, 1836-1953</b> Account books, diaries, photographs, printed matter, scrapbook, writings, and C. Alphonso Smith papers re Maury. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 57	Account books, 1841-1872 Architectural drawing of Lee Memorial Episcopal Church, Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Va., undated "Children's recollections," 1872-1873, 1928 Coblentz, Catherine Cate, "Naval Lieutenant Matthew Fontaine Maury, First Citizen of the World, 1853-1953," 1953
BOX 58	Diaries 1863 1864 1864-1865, 1866 1865-1866 1866-1869, 1872 Diplomas and awards, 1854-1858, undated <i>See also Oversize</i> Notebooks

## Miscellany, 1836-1953

### Container

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	Electricity, 1864
	Virginia, undated
	Photographs, 1872, undated
	Printed matter
	Booklets and journals
	1854-1869
BOX 59	1870-1872
	1873-1874
	1877-1889
	1890-1904, 1923
	Undated
	General, 1860-1904, undated
	Maury monument, 1890-1905
	Newspaper clippings
	About Maury's death, 1872-1873
BOX 60	circa 1860s-1870s
	circa 1880s-1900s
	Newspapers
	circa 1860s-1870s
	circa 1880s-1890s
BOX 61	Periodicals, 1836-1897
	Probate, 1873 <i>See also Oversize</i>
	Scrapbook, 1839-1873
	Smith, Alphonso C., collection
	Correspondence
	General, 1864-1868, 1889, undated
	Regarding Maury, 1864-1867, 1923-1927, undated
	Newspaper clippings, 1922-1924
	Photographs, undated
BOX 62	Writings about Maury
	1903-1923
	1924, undated
	Testimonial volume to Maury, 1859
	Writings by Maury
	Articles, undated
	Astronomical observations made at the National Observatory, Washington, D.C., 1846-1851
BOX 63	"Astronomy," undated
	<i>First Lessons in Geography</i> , 1884
	<i>Lieut. Maury's Investigations of the Winds and Currents of the Sea</i> , 1851
	<i>Physical Survey of Virginia</i> , 1869
	Published letters and commentary, 1857-1871
	<i>Report of Lieut. Matthew F. Maury, United States Navy, on the Loss of the United States Mail Steamer "Central America," under the Command of Commander William Lewis Herndon, United States Navy (1857)</i> , inscribed by President Chester A. Arthur, 1884

## Miscellany, 1836-1953

### Container

### Contents

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Speeches, 1856-1873

BOX 64

#### Additions, 1831-1960

Correspondence and family correspondence, each arranged chronologically. Miscellaneous material including genealogical records and news clippings. Arranged in two additions.

BOX 64

1978 Addition, 1858-1878, undated

Family correspondence

Index, undated

1858-1872

1873-1878, undated

Genealogy, undated *See also Oversize*

1997 Addition, circa 1831-1960, undated

Correspondence

circa 1831-1837

1838

1839

1840

1841

1842-1843

1844-1846

1847-1849 *See also Oversize*

1850-1859

1860-1872, undated

Miscellany, 1857-1873, 1956-1960, undated

BOX OV 1-OV 2

#### Oversize, 1855-1873

Diplomas, awards, and probate papers.

Organized and described according to the series, folders, and boxes from which the items were removed.

BOX OV 1

Miscellany

Diplomas and awards, 1856, undated (Container 58)

Document accompanying gold medal of honor at the Universal Exposition of 1855

Commission as commander, Jan. 27, 1858

Award of 3,000 guineas in appreciation of interest of maritime science, undated

Probate, 1873 (Container 61)

BOX OV 2

1978 Addition, 1858-1878, undated

Genealogy, undated (Container 64)

BOX OV 2

1997 Addition, circa 1831-1960, undated

Correspondence

1847-1849

"Genealogical Chart of the Fontaine and Maury Families," undated Lieut. Maury's Investigations of the Winds and Currents of the Sea, 1851 (Container 64)