

A. T. Mahan Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Kevin Keaney and Bonnie
Baldwin



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: A T. Mahan Papers

Span Dates: 1779-1970

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1890-1914)

ID No.: MSS31062

Creator: Mahan, A. T. (Alfred Thayer), 1840-1914

Extent: 6,500 items; 16 containers plus 5 oversize; 7.2 linear feet; 12 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Naval officer and historian. Correspondence, family papers, subject files, speeches and writings, scrapbooks, biographical file, printed matter, and other papers relating to Mahan's naval career, writings, and personal and family life.

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

Ashe, Samuel A. (Samuel A'Court), 1840-1938.

Erben, Henry, 1832-1909.

Hay, John, 1838-1905.

Herbert, Hilary A. (Hilary Abner), 1834-1919.

Holls, Frederick William, 1857-1903.

Kirkland, William.

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924.

Long, David.

Low, Seth, 1850-1916.

Luce, Stephen Bleecker, 1827-1917.

Mahan, A. T. (Alfred Thayer), 1840-1914.

McAdoo, William Gibbs, 1863-1941.

Moore, John Bassett, 1860-1947.

Puleston, W. D. (William Dilworth), b. 1881.

Pulitzer, Joseph, 1847-1911.

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.

Root, Elihu, 1845-1937.

Schley, Winfield Scott, 1839-1911.

Organizations

Chicago (U.S.S.)

International Peace Conference (1st : 1899 : Hague, Netherlands)

Iroquois (Ship)

United States Naval Academy.

United States. Navy. Asiatic Squadron.

United States. Navy. European Station.

United States. Navy. South Pacific Squadron.

Wachusett (Ship)

Subjects

Arbitration, International.

Military readiness.

Shipbuilding.

Occupations
Historians.
Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of A. T. Mahan, naval officer and historian, were deeded to the Library of Congress by his grandson, Alfred Thayer Mahan II, in 1974. The Library received the major part of the collection in the years 1938-1943 in several deposits by his daughters, Helen Evans Mahan and Ellen Kuhn Mahan. The deposits include the notes and correspondence made and collected by W. D. Puleston, who, at the request of the Mahan heirs, wrote Mahan's biography in 1939. One item was given by A. T. Mahan in 1903 and additions were made through gift and purchase, 1938-1978.

Processing History

The papers of A. T. Mahan were arranged and described in 1966 and reprocessed in in preparation for microfilming in 1984. The collection was expanded and revised in 2009.

Transfers

After the microfilm edition was prepared, photographs were transferred to the Prints and Photographs, where they are identified as part of the A. T. Mahan Papers.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of A. T. Mahan 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 twelve reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, A. T. Mahan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1840, Sept. 27	Born, West Point, N.Y.
1859	Graduated, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
1867-1868	Duty in <i>Iroquois</i> (sloop of war), Asiatic Squadron
1872	Married Ellen Lyle Evans

1872-1875	Commanded <i>Wasp</i> (steamer), South Atlantic Squadron
1876-1880	Ordnance duty, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
1880-1883	Duty in Navigation Department, United States Navy Yard, New York, N.Y.
1883	Published <i>The Gulf and Inland Waters</i> . New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
1883-1885	Commanded <i>Wachusett</i> (sloop of war), South Pacific Squadron
1886	President, Naval War College, Newport, R. I.
1890	Published <i>The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783</i> . Boston: Little, Brown
1892	Published <i>The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812</i> . Boston: Little, Brown. 2 vols.
1893-1895	Commanded <i>Chicago</i> (cruiser), European Station
1894	Honorary degrees, Oxford University, Oxford, England, and Cambridge University, Cambridge, England
1896	Retired
1898	Appointed to Naval War Board
1899	Member, United States delegation to the International Peace Conference, Hague, Netherlands
1908	Member, Commission on Documentary Historical Publications of the United States Government
1914, Dec. 1	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) span the years 1779 to 1970, with the bulk of the material dated 1890-1914, after the publication of Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*. The collection reflects Mahan's naval career, family background, influence as a naval historian, and the work of W. D. Puleston, Mahan's biographer. The Mahan Papers have been arranged into [Family Papers](#), [Subject File](#), [Speeches and Writings File](#), [Biographer's File](#), [Printed Matter](#), and [Miscellany](#).

The [Family Papers](#) provide insight into Mahan's close family ties and early naval career. Mahan's correspondence with his family describes his education at the United States Naval Academy, Civil War service, and navy cruises to the Far East, South America, and Europe. Mahan's letters to his wife and daughter, Ellen, during the cruise of the *Chicago* (cruiser), 1893-1895, record his controversy with Rear Admiral Henry Erben and his reception and honors in England. Letters of condolence following Mahan's death and other family correspondence are also in the file.

The impact of Mahan's writings is indicated in the files of foreign correspondence in the [Subject File](#). Anecdotes and documents from the relatives of Admirals Horatio Nelson and James Saumarez and others are included in the British correspondence files. Much of Mahan's correspondence with American naval officers, historians, diplomats, and public figures can be found within several chronological correspondence files. The Subject File also contains information relating to Mahan's views on armament, international arbitration, shipbuilding programs, the immunity of commerce in war, and his controversies with Erben and with Frederick William Holls regarding the International Peace Conference at the Hague in 1899. Other correspondence of interest includes Mahan's 1866 letter to Stephen Bleeker Luce outlining his conception of his first book on the influence of sea power; confidential letters from Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924) on foreign policy; and correspondence with Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919).

The [Speeches and Writings File](#) includes Mahan's lectures on naval warfare at the Lowell Institute, speeches on women's suffrage and religion, and drafts, notes, notebooks, and research materials for some of his books, articles, and unpublished works on Horatio Nelson, United States naval history, and foreign affairs. The publishers' correspondence files include discussions on proposed writing topics and document the progress and profitability of Mahan's works. There is also correspondence with Joseph Pulitzer and William Gibbs McAdoo concerning Woodrow Wilson's censorship order of 1914 and Mahan's rebuttals to Norman Angell's book, *The Great Illusion* (1911).

The [Biographer's File](#) contains the correspondence and personal recollections of Mahan's children and sister, his classmate, Samuel Ashe, scholars such as John Bassett Moore and Seth Low, and other contemporaries. The acquisition by W. D. Puleston of Mahan's correspondence with various persons and publishers, which he added to this collection, is documented in the file. Information concerning Mahan's family background, education, religion, naval career, and influence on Kaiser Wilhelm II, as well as copies of various government documents and periodicals, is also in the file.

The [Printed Matter file](#) contains copies of periodical articles by or about Mahan, 1896-1914, and others concerning naval history, foreign affairs, and religion. Mahan's scrapbooks of newspaper clippings include notations and short drafts. Other material of interest are Mahan's obituaries, Hague Conference reports, and a 1940 address on Mahan by John Bassett Moore.

The [Miscellany](#) series contains information about Mahan's awards and honors, his dinner with Kaiser Wilhelm in 1893, an inventory of his papers, and other items. Disbursing claims include information about his service and temporary active duty on various commissions and at the Naval War College following his retirement.

Additional correspondents in the papers include John Hay, Hilary A. Herbert, William Kirkland, David Long, Elihu Root, and Winfield Scott Schley.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Family Papers, 1824-1936](#)
- [Subject File, 1797-1915](#)
- [Speeches and Writings File, 1779-1915](#)
- [Biographer's File, 1806-1939](#)
- [Printed Matter, 1893-1970](#)
- [Miscellany, 1888-1914](#)

Description of Series

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Series

Family Papers, 1824-1936

Letters sent and received by family members. Includes Mahan's correspondence with family members and the correspondence of Mahan relatives with others. Copies of family letters, 1856-1877, with additional comments by Mahan's daughter, Ellen Mahan, are also included. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and thereunder chronologically.

BOX 2-4
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Subject File, 1797-1915

Correspondence, notes, naval orders, drafts, and a record of letters sent, 1895-1896, by Mahan. Includes correspondence between Mahan and various American and international public figures, naval officers, historians, and private citizens, and correspondence concerning specific subjects or events in Mahan's career. Arranged alphabetically by subject or name of correspondent, with a record of letters sent at the end.

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Speeches and Writings File, 1779-1915

Drafts, texts, notes, notebooks, correspondence, and other material relating to Mahan's speeches, lectures, books, articles, and research. Arranged by type of material and therein alphabetically by title, topic, name of correspondent, or type of material.

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Biographer's File, 1806-1939

Research and writings file of W. D. Puleston, Mahan's biographer, including correspondence with Mahan's relatives, contemporaries, publishers, and research assistants; notes, deeds, and copies of other documents; drafts of Puleston's book; compilations and extracts of government records and other sources; and miscellaneous material relating to Mahan. Arranged in a subject file and a research file and therein alphabetically by name of person, subject, or type of material.

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