

The David D. Porter Family

A Register of Its Papers in the Library of Congress

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Revised by Margaret McAleer



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

1997

Contact information: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/mss/address.html>

**Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress
Manuscript Division, 2000**

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/eadmss.ms000015>

Latest revision: 2004-11-17

Collection Summary

Title: Papers of the David D. Porter Family

Span Dates: 1799-1899

ID No.: MSS36574

Creator: Porter, David D. (David Dixon), 1813-1891

Extent: 7,000 items; 33 containers plus 1 oversize; 10 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Naval officer. Correspondence, journals, logbooks, orders, reports, memoranda, family papers, drafts of articles, memoirs, poems, short stories, and other literary writings, sketches, photographs, and printed matter documenting David D. Porter's naval career. Includes material on his years as a midshipman, his service in the Mexican War, trips to the Mediterranean to secure camels for use by the U.S. Army, Civil War service, superintendency of the United States Naval Academy, mission to Santo Domingo concerning the lease of Samaná Bay in the Dominican Republic, and his career as an advisor to the Navy Dept. (1870-1891) and chairman of the U.S. Navy Board of Inspection (1877-1891).

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.

Names:

Porter, David D. (David Dixon), 1813-1891
Boutelle, Charles A., b. 1839--Correspondence
Farragut, David Glasgow, 1801-1870--Correspondence
Fox, Gustavus Vasa, 1821-1883--Correspondence
Hamilton, Paul, 1762-1816--Correspondence
Heap, Gwinn Harris--Correspondence
Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851--Correspondence
Porter, Evelina Anderson, 1790-1871--Correspondence
Porter family
Robeson, George M. (George Maxwell), 1829-1897--Correspondence
Rodgers, John, 1812-1882--Correspondence
Sherman, William T. (William Tecumseh), 1820-1891--Correspondence
Shields, Thomas, d. 1827--Correspondence
Southard, Samuel L. (Samuel Lewis), 1787-1842--Correspondence
Welles, Gideon, 1802-1878--Correspondence
Wolcott, Oliver, 1760-1833--Correspondence
Mexico. Armada
United States. Army--History--19th century
United States. Navy--Foreign service--Puerto Rico
United States. Navy--Foreign service--West Indies
United States. Navy--History--19th century
United States. Navy. Board of Inspection
United States. Navy Dept.
Enterprize (Schooner : 1799-1811)
Essex (Frigate)
United States Naval Academy
Porter, David, 1780-1843. Papers of David Porter

Subjects:

Camels
Mexican War, 1846-1848--Naval operations, American
Pirates--Caribbean Area
Diplomatic and consular service, American--Algeria

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Turkey
Algeria--Foreign relations--United States
Dominican Republic--Foreign relations--United States
Fajardo (P.R.)--History
Mediterranean Region--Description and travel
Samaná Bay (Dominican Republic)
Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)--History
Turkey--Foreign relations--United States
United States--Foreign relations--Algeria
United States--Foreign relations--Dominican Republic
United States--Foreign relations--Turkey
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Naval operations

Occupation:

Naval officers

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The family papers of David Dixon Porter (1813-1891), naval officer and author, were purchased by the Library of Congress from various sources between 1901 and 1934. Other material was given by the New York Public Library in 1903 and by Mrs. Oscar H. Rogers in 1934.

Processing History:

The papers of the David Dixon Porter family were arranged and described in 1963. This register was revised in 1997.

Transfers:

Some 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 the David D. Porter family is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, David D. Porter Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Notes

David Porter

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1780, Feb. 1	Born, Boston, Mass.
1798	Appointed midshipman, United States Navy Duty, <i>Constellation</i> (frigate)
1799	Duty, <i>Experiment</i> (schooner)
1801	Duty, <i>Enterprize</i> (schooner)

1803	Duty, <i>Philadelphia</i> (ship)
1803-1805	Prisoner of war, Tripoli
1808	Married Evelina Anderson
1808-1810	Commandant, naval station, New Orleans, La.
1811-1814	Commanded <i>Essex</i> (frigate)
1812	Promoted to captain
1815	Published <i>Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean</i> (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep. 2 vols. in 1)
1815-1823	Commissioner, United States Navy Board
1823-1825	Commander-in-chief, West Indian squadron
1825	Published <i>An Exposition of the Facts and Circumstances Which Justified the Expedition to Foxardo</i> (Washington: Davis and Force. 107 pp.)
1826	Resigned, United States Navy
1826-1829	Commander-in-chief, Mexican navy
1830	Appointed consul general, Algiers, Algeria
1831	Appointed chargé d'affaires, Turkey
1835	Published <i>Constantinople and Its Environs</i> (New York: Harper and Brothers. 2 vols.)
1839	Appointed United States minister, Turkey
1843, Mar. 3	Died, Pera, Turkey

David D. Porter

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1813, June 8	Born, Chester, Pa.
1827	Appointed midshipman, Mexican navy
1829	Appointed midshipman, United States Navy
1839	Married George Ann Patterson
1842	Duty, <i>Congress</i> (frigate)
1847	Duty, <i>Spitfire</i> (side-wheel steamer)

1849	Commanded <i>Panama</i> (mail steamer)
1850-1853	Commanded <i>Georgia</i> (mail steamer)
1855	Commanded <i>Supply</i> (storeship)
1857-1860	Duty, navy yard, Portsmouth, N.H.
1861	Commanded <i>Powhatan</i> (side-wheel steamer)
1863	Commanded Mississippi squadron Promoted to rear admiral
1864	Commanded North Atlantic blockading squadron
1865-1869	Superintendent, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
1866	Promoted to vice admiral
1866-1867	Diplomatic mission, Santo Domingo
1870	Promoted to admiral
1875	Published <i>Memoir of Commodore David Porter</i> (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell. 427 pp.)
1877-1891	Chairman, Naval Board of Inspection
1885	Published <i>The Adventures of Harry Marline</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 378 pp.) Published <i>Allan Dare and Robert le Diable</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 357 pp.) Published <i>Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 357 pp.)
1886	Published <i>The Naval History of the Civil War</i> (New York: Sherman Publishing Co. 843 pp.)
1889	Published <i>Arthur Merton</i> (New York: D. Appleton. 328 pp.)
1891, Feb. 13	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the David Dixon Porter family span the years 1799-1899. The collection documents the naval careers of Porter and his father, David Porter, which combined encompassed most of the nineteenth century. The papers contain correspondence, letterbooks, journals, logbooks, orders, reports, photographs and sketches, maps, financial records, and printed matter. They are arranged in four series: [Family Papers](#), [David Porter Papers](#), [David D. Porter Papers](#), and [Oversize](#).

The [Family Papers](#) series, the bulk of which is mounted in bound volumes, includes the papers of David D. Porter; his father, David Porter; and his mother, Evelina Anderson Porter. Correspondence and related material dating from 1799 to 1843 largely pertain to David Porter, including his command of the *Enterprize* (schooner) from 1805 to 1806, the *Essex* (frigate) during the War of 1812, and the West Indian squadron employed in suppressing piracy in the Caribbean between 1823 and 1825. Porter's numerous letters to Samuel Hambleton between 1808 and 1824 provide a particularly detailed chronicle of his activities during that period. Events relating to Porter's seizure of the town of Fajardo, Puerto Rico, in 1825, as well as his subsequent court martial, his resignation from the American navy, and his command of Mexico's navy are discussed in his correspondence

between 1825 and 1829. Letters to his wife and children recount his diplomatic service in Algeria and Turkey from 1830 to 1843.

The [David Porter Papers](#) series consists of letterbooks, a logbook from the *Enterprize*, and unbound correspondence documenting Porter's naval service, especially his early career and the Fajardo incident. A letter from Porter to Oliver Wolcott in 1798 and several letters dated 1824 concerning the West Indian squadron were transferred from the Manuscript Division's Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection. Prominent correspondents in this series and in the [Family Papers](#) include Paul Hamilton, Joel Roberts Poinsett, John Rodgers (1773-1838), Thomas Shields, and Samuel L. Southard. Further information on Porter's command of the Mexican navy is available in transcribed documents in the miscellany subgrouping in the [David D. Porter Papers](#) series.

The bulk of the collection pertains to [David D. Porter](#). Correspondence and related material includes Porter's letters to his mother recounting his apprentice and journeyman years in the navy. Later correspondence provides information on his service during the Mexican and Civil wars and on his chairmanship of the Naval Board of Inspection. A group of correspondence, photographs, and sketches identified as memorials includes letters written by Porter to Gwinn Harris Heap between 1856 and 1863 which provide detailed and often humorous accounts of his activities during that period. Photographs and watercolor sketches of steamships and several photographs of Porter are also included among the memorials. The [Family Papers](#) series contains many of Porter's writings, including a large number of poems and short stories.

Porter's Civil War service is documented through correspondence, reports, writings, financial records, photographs, and sketches and bound journals and letterbooks located in the [David D. Porter Papers](#) series. Letters to Porter provide information on many aspects of the Union's naval strategy, while Porter's own account of the war is contained in a journal compiled shortly after the war as well as in his unpublished memoir, reports, and other writings. Correspondence, reports, and miscellaneous writings from the 1870s and 1880s while Porter served as an advisor to the secretary of the navy and chairman of the Naval Board of Inspection record his thoughts on the need for naval reform. Prominent correspondents include Charles A. Boutelle, David Glasgow Farragut, Gustavus Vasa Fox, George M. Robeson, William T. Sherman, and Gideon Welles.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in four series:

- [Family Papers, 1799-1899, n.d.](#)
- [David Porter Papers, 1798-1839](#)
- [David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897, n.d.](#)
- [Oversize, 1810-1891, n.d.](#)

Description of Series

Container

Series

BOX 1-14

Family Papers, 1799-1899, n.d.

Correspondence, reports, memoranda, orders, maps, writings, photographs, sketches, and printed matter chiefly pertaining to David Porter; his wife, Evelina Anderson Porter; and their son, David D. Porter.

Organized in three groupings: correspondence and related material, writings, and memorials.

Correspondence and memorials are arranged chronologically; writings are sorted alphabetically.

BOX 15-16

David Porter Papers, 1798-1839

Correspondence, letterbooks, and a ship's logbook supplementing material relating to David Porter in the [Family Papers](#) series.

Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.

BOX 17-33

David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897, n.d.

Correspondence, letterbooks, journals, reports, speeches and writings, financial records, certificates, patents, scrapbook, photographs and sketches, newspaper clippings, and other printed matter augmenting material pertaining to David D. Porter in the [Family Papers](#) series.

Arranged alphabetically by type of material.

BOX OV 1

Oversize, 1810-1891, n.d.

Oversize material consisting of correspondence, certificates, an engraving, sketches, and patents.

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

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-14	Family Papers, 1799-1899, n.d. Correspondence, reports, memoranda, orders, maps, writings, photographs, sketches, and printed matter chiefly pertaining to David Porter; his wife, Evelina Anderson Porter; and their son, David D. Porter. Organized in three groupings: correspondence and related material, writings, and memorials. Correspondence and memorials are arranged chronologically; writings are sorted alphabetically.
BOX 1	Correspondence and related material 1799-1810
BOX 2	1810-1823
BOX 3	1823-1826
BOX 4	1826-1829
BOX 5	1829-1842
BOX 6	1842-1864
BOX 7	1864-1888
BOX 8	1890-1899, n.d.
BOX 9	Writings <i>See also Containers 32-33, Fiction</i> A-C
BOX 10	D-E
BOX 11	F-O
BOX 12	P-R
BOX 13	S-W
BOX 14	Memorials, 1814-1866 <i>See also Oversize</i>
BOX 15-16	David Porter Papers, 1798-1839 Correspondence, letterbooks, and a ship's logbook supplementing material relating to David Porter in the Family Papers series. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.
BOX 15	General correspondence and related material, 1798-1830 <i>See also Oversize</i>
BOX 16	Letterbooks 1805-1808, correspondence and orders 1807-1808, general correspondence 1838-1839, correspondence re pension claim Logbook, <i>Enterprise</i> (schooner), 1805-1806
BOX 17-33	David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897, n.d. Correspondence, letterbooks, journals, reports, speeches and writings, financial records, certificates, patents, scrapbook, photographs and sketches, newspaper clippings, and other printed matter augmenting material pertaining to David D. Porter in the Family Papers series. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 17	General correspondence

David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897, n.d.

Container

Contents

	1852-1863
BOX 18	1864-1873
BOX 19	1874-1884
BOX 20	1885-1897, n.d.
BOX 21	Journals 1846
BOX 22	1860-1865
BOX 23	Letterbooks, 1869-1880 Miscellany Appointments, 1852-1874 Certificates, 1847, 1891 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 24	Financial records and legal documents
BOX 25	George Washington centennial celebrations Naval documents, 1847-1868, n.d. <i>See also Container 33, Naval and military topics</i> Newspaper clippings Patents and stocks <i>See also Oversize</i> Photographs and sketches <i>See also Oversize</i>
BOX 26	Printed matter Scrapbook Transcripts concerning David Porter's command of the Mexican navy and land grant claims, 1823-1879
BOX 27	Reports 1846-1877
BOX 28	1878-1888, n.d. Speeches and writings Articles, n.d.
BOX 29	Books Memoir
	(16 folders)
BOX 30	(15 folders)
BOX 31	(14 folders)
BOX 32	(6 folders) <i>The Naval History of the Civil War</i> Fiction <i>See also Containers 9-13, Writings</i>
	(9 folders)
BOX 33	(2 folders) Miscellaneous "An Ancient City," n.d. Biographical, 1884, n.d. Cuba, n.d. "Grammar of the <i>Iliad</i> ," 1875 Naval and military topics, 1852-1889, n.d. (4 folders) <i>See also Container 25, Naval documents</i> Unidentified, 1875, n.d.

David D. Porter Papers, 1823-1897, n.d.

Container

Contents

Speeches, 1870

BOX OV 1

Oversize, 1810-1891, n.d.

Oversize material consisting of correspondence, certificates, an engraving, sketches, and patents. Organized and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

BOX OV 1

Family Papers

Memorials, 1863-1866 ([Container 14](#))

David Porter Papers

General correspondence and related material, 1810 ([Container 15](#))

David D. Porter Papers

Certificates, 1847, 1891 ([Container 23](#))

Patents and stocks, 1881, n.d. ([Container 25](#))

Photographs and sketches, n.d. ([Container 25](#))