

**Guide to the Seth Ledyard Phelps Papers, 1856-1873
MS0033**

**The Mariners' Museum Library
at
Christopher Newport University**

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners' Museum Library

Title: Seth Ledyard Phelps Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1856-1873

Catalog number: MS0033

Physical Characteristics: 16 items, consisting of military and private correspondence, envelopes, orders (military records), telegrams, photographs, testimonies, 1 roster

Language: English

Creator: Phelps, Seth Ledyard, d. 1885

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL SKETCH

Seth Ledyard Phelps, (1824-1885), a native of Ohio, served as midshipman and junior officer in the Navy, sailing off the coasts of Africa, and in the Mediterranean and Caribbean. One of his first assignments was on a scientific expedition to Chile under Lt. James M. Gilliss from 1849 to 1852. While on the US *Susquehanna*, (1856-1858), he weathered a severe yellow fever epidemic and spoke before the U.S. Senate about it. During the Civil War, he was active in the Western Rivers. He resigned from the Navy in 1864, worked as an agent for the Pacific Mail Steamship, and became the U.S. Minister to Peru from 1883 until his death in 1885.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This is a small collection of documents and one photograph relating to Seth Ledyard Phelps dating from 1856 to 1873. The photograph, although undated, is of a young Phelps in his uniform. Military orders, a senate report and a couple of envelopes date from the 1850s. A crew list from the USS *Conestoga*, a telegram and one envelope are from the Civil War period. The only non-military document is the 1873 letter related to Phelps' position as vice president of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.

The papers are organized into 8 folders. They are arranged by genre, then by date.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Accession number

CK 148

Accession date

unknown

Restrictions

Collection is open to all researchers.

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Preferred Citation

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Note to Users

Researchers are requested to handle the materials with caution and in accordance with prescribed archival practices. When using these materials, please preserve the original order of the collection.

RELATED MATERIALS

Other sources with more of Phelps papers include, the Missouri Historical Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia. To search the Missouri Historical Society archives, go to <http://archon.mohistory.org/> and search for Seth Ledyard Phelps. The Library Company of Philadelphia has Phelps's letters of 1850 and 1851 touching on his experiences in Chile.

FILE GUIDE

Folder 1 Finding Aid

Folder 2 Correspondence, Military: 1858-1862

October 8, 1858: Naval Station, Sackett's Harbor, NY

S. L. Phelps to George M. Dallas, United States Minister, London. 2 pages.

Introduces Dr. Frederick Rose, the doctor who came aboard the USS *Susquehanna* during the yellow fever epidemic.

April 27, 1858: Navy Yard, Marc Island

Dr. J. S. Missensmithe to S. L. Phelps. 2 pages. Responds that he treated Phelps in Mexico when he was on the *Bonita*.

January 31, 1859: Washington, Navy Department

Isaac Toucey to S. L. Phelps. 2 pages. Responds to Phelps's claim for traveling expenses and deems it not necessary to refer the matter to the Attorney General.

Three envelopes:

1) 1858 addressed to Phelps, U. S. Navy

2) 1859 addressed to Phelps, USS *St. Mary's*

3) postmarked 1862, addressed to Mrs. Charles Bradley, Washington D.C.

Folder 3 Correspondence, Private: 1873

March 28, 1873: Leith, Scotland

Donald R. Margreger to Capt. Jacobsen, S.S. *Margregor*. 1 page. Places Capt. Phelps, 2nd Vice President of the Pacific Mail SteamShip Co., in command of Jacobsen's steamer.

Folder 4 List, Officers and Crew

Names of Officers and Crew on the U.S. Gun-boat "Conestoga" at the time of the Capture of the "Confederate Forts" of Fort Henry and Fort Donaldson in the latter part of December 1861 and early in January 1862. 4 pages (one missing). Lists name, rank and status (dead or alive), and address.

- Folder 5** Orders, 1856
March 31, 1856: Washington, Navy Department
J. C. Dobbin to S. L. Phelps. 1 page. Orders detaching Phelps from Gilliss's command and sending him to the U.S. *Susquehanna*.
- April 11, 1856: Washington, Navy Department
J. C. Dobbin to S. L. Phelps. 1 page. Permission granted to delay reporting to U.S. *Susquehanna* by three days.
- April 26, 1856: Philadelphia, PA
S. L. Phelps to J.C. Dobbin. 1 page. Notice he reported for duty as directed.
- Folder 6** Orders: 1858-1863
June 30, 1858: Chardon, OH
S. L. Phelps to Isaac Toucey, Secretary of the Navy. 1 sentence. Acknowledgment of orders.
- November 4, 1858: Washington, Navy Department
Isaac Toucey to S. L. Phelps. 1 page. Orders detaching Phelps from duty at Sackett's Harbor and sending him to Panama for duty on board the *St. Mary's*.
- June 4, 1863: Telegram
To Capt Jessen Goudy from Phelps
- Folder 7** Photograph
Undated: Seth Ledyard Phelps in uniform
- Folder 8** Reports
U.S. Congress, Senate. Senator Mason's report to accompany Joint Resolution S. 33 (Report on the U. S. Ship *Susquehanna*.) 35th Cong., 1st sess., Rep. Com. no. 212, 1858. 8 pages. Details the events and correspondence regarding a yellow fever outbreak aboard the US *Susquehanna*.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Williams, Paul Kelsey. "Scenes from the Past..." *The InTowner*, November 2005, pp. 12-13.
Slagle, Jay. *Ironclad Captain: Seth Ledyard Phelps and the U.S. Navy, 1841-1864*. Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1996.

SUBJECTS

Phelps, Seth Ledyard, d. 1885
Susquehanna (Sidewheel steamer : 1850)
United States. Navy-Medical care.
Epidemics.
Yellow fever.