

John Bigelow Papers

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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff
Revised by Melinda K. Friend

Collection Summary

Title: John Bigelow Papers

Span Dates: 1492-1936

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1866-1936)

ID No.: MSS12724

Creator: Bigelow, John, 1854-1936

Extent: 25,000 items ; 76 containers plus 2 oversize ; 30.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English with French, German, Italian, and Spanish

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

Summary: Army officer, professor, and author. Correspondence, research notes, manuscripts of articles and books, photostatic copies of manuscripts in foreign archives, bibliographical material, photographs, drawings, maps, clippings, card files, and printed matter relating largely to canals especially, the Panama and Suez canals, along with the early history of Latin America, and also including material on the American Revolution, Civil War, Robert E. Lee, Monroe Doctrine, military education, and American foreign policy.

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

Bigelow, John, 1817-1911. John Bigelow abstract of diary. 1886-1911.

Bigelow, John, 1854-1936.

Lee, Robert E. (Robert Edward), 1807-1870.

Organizations

Isthmian Canal Commission (U.S.) Isthmian Canal Commission (U.S.) records.

Massachusetts. Militia.

United States. Constitution--Juvenile literature.

Subjects

Canals--Rates and tolls.

Canals.

History, Ancient.

International law.

Military education.

Military history.

Military policy.

Monroe doctrine.

Saratoga Campaign, N.Y., 1777.

World War, 1914-1918.

Places

Eastern Hemisphere--Maps.

Egypt--History.

Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.

Latin America--History.

New York (State)--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.

Nicaragua Canal (Nicaragua)

Panama Canal (Panama)

Panama--History--To 1903.

Saint Lawrence Seaway.

Suez Canal (Egypt)

Tehuantepec Canal (Mexico)

United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--Foreign relations.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Campaigns.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.
United States--Territorial expansion.
Western Hemisphere--Maps.

Occupations

Army officers.
Authors.
Educators.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of John Bigelow, army officer, professor, and author, were given to the Library of Congress by Mrs. John Bigelow in 1942 and by Mrs. Thomas H. Ellett from 1949 to 1951.

Processing History

The collection was processed circa 1951. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Additional Guides

The Bigelow Papers are described in *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1943*: 126, 132-133.

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 John Bigelow is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Bigelow 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 Bigelow Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1854, May 12	Born, New York, N.Y.
1877	Graduated United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1877-circa 1891	Served with Ninth and Tenth Cavalry regiments in the American West

1883	Married Mary Braxton Dallam (died circa 1941)
1884	Published <i>Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte</i> . Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office
1891	Published <i>Principles of Strategy: Illustrated Mainly from American Campaigns</i> . London: T. Fisher Unwin
1894-1898	Professor of military science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.
1896	Published "The Tenth Regiment of Cavalry" in <i>The Army of the United States; Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief</i> . New York: Maynard, Merrill & Co.
1898-1903	Served in the Spanish-American War with Tenth Cavalry Regiment; wounded four times in attack on San Juan Hill and awarded Silver Star during Spanish-American War; later investigated Spanish war claims
1899	Published <i>Reminiscences of the Santiago Campaign</i> . New York: Harper & Brothers
1904	Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, California Retired from army
1905-1910	Professor of French, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
1906-1909	Served in Adjutant General's Office, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia
1910	Published <i>The Campaign at Chancellorsville</i> . New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press
1914	Published <i>American Policy: The Western Hemisphere in Its Relation to the Eastern</i> . New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
1915	Published <i>World Peace: How War Cannot Be Abolished; How It May Be Abolished</i> . New York: Mitchell Kennerley
1917	Published <i>Breaches of Anglo-American Treaties</i> . New York: Sturgis & Walton
1917-1918	Professor of military science, Rutgers College, New Brunswick, N.J.
1918-1919	Recalled to active duty and assigned to history branch of general staff, War Department, Washington, D.C.
1919	Retired from army
1936, Feb. 29	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Bigelow (1854-1936) span the years 1492-1936, with the bulk of the collection dating from 1866 to 1936. The collection was organized as received and material relating to a single topic is dispersed throughout the papers. Many items in the collection, including notes taken by Bigelow, are in French, German, Italian, and Spanish as well as in English. The papers are organized into the following series: [Series I](#), [Series II](#), [Series III](#), and [Oversize](#).

[Series I](#) contains material on the Panama and Suez canals mostly under subheadings that Bigelow titled "Panama Canal file" and "Suez Canal file." Both files are organized into an alphabetical subject file filled with notes, books, pamphlets, photostatic copies of manuscripts in foreign archives, clippings, and maps, and a chronological correspondence file containing copies of historical letters as well as research letters sent and received. There is also a large number of maps of the Old and New Worlds. Other topics of interest include the choice of routes for the Panama Canal, tolls, the Nicaraguan Canal and Tehuantepec Canal, and the minutes of the Isthmian Canal Commission. Material relating to the early history of civilization, the Panama Canal, and other canals is supplemented by card files in [Series II](#).

A manuscript copy of Bigelow's "Suez Canal-Panama Canal" appears in Series I with a second manuscript containing appendices appearing in [Series II](#). Also relating to Panama is an abstract from the diary of Bigelow's father and diplomat, John Bigelow (1817-1911). Bigelow's article, "The So-called Bartholomew Columbus Map of 1506," is also split between [Series I](#) and [Series II](#). Correspondence relating to his book *Principles of Strategy: Illustrated Mainly from American Campaigns* appears in both [Series I](#) and [Series III](#), while correspondence relating to *Breaches of Anglo-American Treaties* is in [Series I](#).

[Series I](#) also contains research material on American subjects such as the Saratoga Campaign in New York during the Revolutionary War, the Constitution, the Civil War, relations with Great Britain, the Monroe Doctrine, and westward expansion. Other topics include Egypt, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and international law. A card file related to the Saratoga Campaign is located in [Series III](#).

[Series II](#) contains correspondence, manuscripts, and notes related to Bigelow's writings including *The Campaign at Chancellorsville*, "The Russo-German War: A Military Sketch," "How Theodore Roosevelt Took Panama," and "Alabama Claims." Included also are subject files on Central America, international law, origin of the name America, and World War I. Also of interest is the correspondence of the Nicaraguan Canal Commission.

[Series III](#) contains manuscripts, correspondence, and notes regarding Bigelow's work on Robert E. Lee, his book *Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte*, and a proposed biography of St. Christopher. Also of interest are the bibliographies of Panama Canal records from 1857 to 1932, an index to the maps collected by Bigelow, bibliographies on other topics, and papers and correspondence relating to Bigelow's service in the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Series I, 1775-1934](#)
- [Series II, 1492-1914](#)
- [Series III, 1775-1933](#)
- [Oversize, 1823-1907](#)

Description of Series

Container

Series

BOX 1-53

Series I, 1775-1934

Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, maps, clippings, photographs, drawings, diary abstract, and printed matter.

Arranged as received.

BOX 54-65

Series II, 1492-1914

Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, card files, maps, clippings, and printed matter.

Arranged as received

BOX 66-76

Series III, 1775-1936

Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, card file, maps, clippings, printed matter, and bibliographical material.

Arranged as received.

BOX OV1-OV2

Oversize, 1823-1907

Maps.

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

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-53	Series I, 1775-1934 Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, maps, clippings, photographs, drawings, diary abstract, and printed matter. Arranged as received.
BOX 1	"Suez Canal-Panama Canal," manuscript
BOX 2	"The So-called Bartholomew Columbus Map of 1506" Background information, undated (6 folders) Manuscripts, 1935 (2 folders) Maps, 1895-1907 <i>See also Oversize</i> Memoranda, 1931 Saratoga Campaign, New York Notes
BOX 3	Manuscript (Parts 1 and 2) Woodrow Wilson and canal tolls <i>Breaches of Anglo-American Treaties</i> and <i>Principles of Strategy</i> , correspondence
BOX 4	Saratoga Campaign, New York, letters, 1775
BOX 5	Maps, photostatic copies and blueprints of maps, and notes Columbus, Christopher (8 folders) Photostatic copies Pleitos (lawsuit) corrections Old World (5 folders)
BOX 6	(6 folders) Old and New World (3 folders)
BOX 7	(7 folders)
BOX 8	(8 folders)
BOX 9	(5 folders)
BOX 10	Panama Canal file Alexander VI-Cartography Central America Contracts for transportation
BOX 11	Description-Diplomatic history Chagres River-Darien route
BOX 12	Demarcation line-Honduras
BOX 13	Humboldt, Alexander von-Martyr, Peter (1457-1526)
BOX 14	Medina, Pedro de-New York Nicaragua

Series I, 1775-1934

Container

Contents

	Canal-Chronology
	Correspondence
	1849
	Apr. 30-July 31
	(2 folders)
BOX 15	Aug. 1-Dec. 31
	1850-1857
	(4 vols.)
BOX 16	1858-1904
	(6 folders)
	Geography-United States
	North America-Ojeda, Alonso de
BOX 17	Panama and Monroe Doctrine
	Panama Canal and international law
	Panama Canal, construction-views
	Panama Canal Bill-Panama Canal Zone
	Panama City, Panama
	Panama
	Commerce
	Correspondence
	1841-1843
	(2 folders)
BOX 18	1844-1884
	(6 folders)
	1885
	Jan.-Feb.
BOX 19	Mar.-Dec.
	(5 folders)
	1886-1889
BOX 20	1900-1902
	(3 folders)
	1903
	Jan.-Oct.
	(3 folders)
BOX 21	Nov.-Dec.
	(5 folders)
	1904
	Jan.-Mar.
	(2 folders)
BOX 22	Apr.-Dec.
	1905-1931
	(2 folders)
	Geography-Revolution
BOX 23	Ríos, Pedro de los-Traffic
	Paterson, William-San Blas Coast
BOX 24	Solís, Juan Díaz de-Yucatán (Mexico)
BOX 25	Suez Canal (Egypt) file

Series I, 1775-1934

Container

Contents

	Abyssinia-Constantinople
BOX 26	Degree-Europe
BOX 27	Florence, Italy-Imperialism
	India
BOX 28	India
	Indian Ocean-Mediterranean
BOX 29	Mensuration-Neutralization
	Nile River
BOX 30	Nile River
	Ophir-Silk
BOX 31	Suez
	Correspondence, 1863-1931 (6 folders)
	Cost-Utility
	Suez and Panama canals-Xerxes Canal
BOX 32	Ancient religion
	Early history of civilization
	Ancient Egypt
	General
	Geography
	Egypt
	General, 1923
	Photographs of boats
	Egypt and France, 1882
	Evolution, collective
	Greeks, ancient Alexandrians, and early Egyptians
	The Negro
	North Africa
	Orientation of the mihrāb in mosques
	Population(human geography)
BOX 33	Kharga Oasis, Egypt
	China-Tibet
	(2 vols.)
	China I & II
	(2 vols.)
	<i>Navigazione nei Porti del Regno</i> , 1877
	<i>Tenativo dei Navigatori e Scopritori Genovesi per riuscire all' India lunghesso la Costa Occidentale dell' Africa . . .</i> , 1881
	<i>Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana</i> , Feb. 1880
	France
	British empire
	British constitution
BOX 34	British policy
	Canada and U.S.
	Canadian government
	Disarmament on the Great Lakes
	French and others in Mexico

	Great Lakes to Atlantic Ocean passage
	St. Lawrence Seaway
	1932-1934
BOX 35	1846-1898
	Mexico and U.S., 1849, 1890
	(2 folders)
	Church and state, Mexico
	Texas and U.S., 1899
	Italy
BOX 36	Church and state
	Clippings, circa 1930-circa 1931
	Pamphlets, circa 1900-circa 1901
	International law, 1909-1910
	(2 folders)
	International right
	Neutrality
	Roman Catholic doctrines
BOX 37	America before Columbus
	Bigelow, John (1817-1911), diary abstract regarding Panama, 1886-1911
	Exploration and discovery
	Greece, Italy, Spain, and Arabia
	Naval architecture
	Neutral rights at sea
	Ribero, Diego (died 1533)
	Spain, law and government
	Strategy.
	Tidal and upland waters
	Tides
BOX 38	Anthropology
	European waterways
	Maritime history and insurance
	Suez Canal (Egypt), neutralization, 1854-1906
	United States inland waterways, 1807-
BOX 39	<i>Le Canal de Suez</i> , bulletin, 1922
	Clédat, Jean, pamphlets on Suez Canal, 1909-1924
	Interoceanic Canal, 1892-1897
	Isthmian Canal Commission, 1906
	Suez Canal (Egypt), various notes and pamphlets
BOX 40	Canals, navigation, and irrigation, 1886-1908
	Nicaraguan Canal, 1887-1889, 1902-1932
	Tehuantepec Canal, 1869-circa 1884
BOX 41	Caribbean Sea, 1875-circa 1934
	Hydrography
	Nicaragua, 1840-1859
	Nicaraguan Canal, 1929
	Turkey

Series I, 1775-1934

Container

Contents

BOX 42	Colombia, reparation I, circa 1903-1915 II, 1916-circa 1921 "Interoceanic Ship Canal Discussion," <i>American Geographic Society Bulletin</i> , 1879 Panama, 1903-1924 (2 folders) Polar exploration Proto-America Travels and voyages
BOX 43	Atlantic and Pacific Canal Co. Choice of route, 1879-1893 Junction of Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, 1839-1843 Menocal route (prism) Isthmian Canal Commission, minutes, 1905 Panama Canal, 1905-1909
BOX 44	<i>Canal Inter-Océanique par le Nicaragua</i> , 1875, 1879 Clipping, 1885 <i>Les États-Unis et le Canal Interocéanique</i> , 1904-1905 Nicaragua, 1860-1886 Nicaraguan Canal, 1899-1901 (3 folders) Senate hearings on S. 428, 1910 (2 folders) Tehuantepec Canal, 1857, 1885-1913
BOX 45	Nicaragua, 1892-1894 Nicaraguan Canal Board of Engineers, 1895 Cost, 1898 General, 1888-1891 Hydrography, 1898 Report Panama General, 1879-1884 Pamphlets and clippings, 1915, 1926 San Blas Coast, 1857-1858
BOX 46	<i>Annuaire des Valeurs Admises à la Cote Officielle</i> , 1926-1927 <i>Diplomatic History of the Panama Canal</i> , 1914 "Historical notes relative to the Universal Interoceanic Canal Company (1880-1894) until the organization of the new Company" House of Representatives hearings, 1899 "Memorial of Wm. H. Aspinwall, John L. Stephens, and Henry Chauncey in Reference to the Construction of a Railroad Across the Isthmus of Panama," 1848 Panama, 1899 Panama Canal, 1878-1894 Choice of route, 1902 (2 folders)
BOX 47	(1 folder)

-
- "El Canal de Panama en 1886," *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid*, 1887
 Colombia, separation, circa 1903-circa 1916
 General Ulysses S. Grant and the Panama Canal, 1879
 Miscellany
 Panama, 1885-1886, 1904-1911
 (5 vols.)
- BOX 48** Interoceanic Canal, Panama, 1885-1886
 Johnson, Emory R., *Panama Traffic and Tolls*, statement, 1912
 Panama, 1850-1880, 1898, 1906
 (3 vols.)
 Panama Canal, 1912-1913
The Panama Canal and Our Relations with Colombia, 1914
 Panama Canal tolls, 1931
Political Relations of the United States of America and the Republic of Columbia [sic] to the Panama Canal, under the Treaty of 1846-8, and the Concessions to the New Panama Canal Company, undated
Special Message of the President of the United States concerning the Panama Canal, 1906
 Taylor, Hannis, *Why the Pending Treaty with Colombia Should Be Ratified*, 1914
- BOX 49** Pan America, 1911-1916
 United States history
 Colonial
 Miscellaneous, 1822-1934
 Monroe Doctrine
 United States revolution
 Vol. I
 Vol. II
- BOX 50** Civil War
 Expansion-U.S., Louisiana
 Party doctrines, 1896-1920
 United States and Great Britain
 1780-1855
 1856-1868
 1869
 1870
 United States Constitution
 Article I
 Article II
 Clippings
 Pamphlets
- BOX 51** Bryce, James, *The Predictions of Hamilton and De Tocqueville*, 1887
 Expansion-U.S., Texas
 Monroe Doctrine
 Prohibition and the U.S. Constitution
 (2 vols.)
 Smith-Marshall question (Roman Catholicism and politics)
 United States foreign policy
 Vol. I

Series I, 1775-1934

Container

Contents

BOX 52	Vol. II <i>Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field</i> , 1863, 1898, 1902 Panama Canal, <i>Congressional Record</i> , 1913-1914, 1921 (2 folders)
BOX 53	Miscellaneous clippings, pamphlets, and printed matter
BOX 54-65	Series II, 1492-1914 Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, card files, maps, clippings, and printed matter. Arranged as received
BOX 54	<i>The Campaign at Chancellorsville</i> , correspondence and notes, circa 1906-circa 1912 (4 folders) Franco-German War (1870-1871) Laws of war "The Russo-German War: A Military Sketch," 1914 World peace
BOX 55	World War I A-G (3 folders)
BOX 56	I-R (5 folders)
BOX 57	S-W (4 folders)
BOX 58	"How Theodore Roosevelt Took Panama," manuscript and notes "The So-called Bartholomew Columbus Map of 1506," background information, circa 1492-circa 1538 Central America 1838-1841
BOX 59	1842-1911 Name origin of America
BOX 60	"Suez Canal-Panama Canal," manuscript and appendix (2 folders)
BOX 61	Alphabetical file
BOX 62	"Alabama Claims," manuscript and notes Correspondence, 1862-1865 "Naval Scouting, 1903-1904," manuscript and notes Notebook of editorial corrections Tyler, Julia Gardiner, "Reply to the Duchess of Sutherland and the Ladies of England," 1853, Jan. 24 (handwritten copy)
BOX 63	Alphabetical file, "General" (E-S) International law, alphabetical file Nicaraguan Canal Commission, correspondence, 1897
BOX 64	Card file Early history of civilization and Panama Canal

Series II, 1492-1914

Container

Contents

BOX 65	Canals
BOX 66-76	Series III, 1775-1936 Correspondence, research notes, photostatic copies of manuscripts from various archives throughout Europe, manuscripts of books and articles, card file, maps, clippings, printed matter, and bibliographical material. Arranged as received.
BOX 66	Index of maps Ptolemy, Claudius Article and book regarding Research notes and photostatic copies (8 folders)
BOX 67	(1 folder) <i>Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte</i> Lecture notes Notes and correspondence Text St. Christopher, notes and photographs for a biography
BOX 68	Lee, Robert E. Manuscripts, circa 1936 (3 folders) Research notes Chronological, 1775-1935 (6 folders)
BOX 69	Miscellaneous Army regulations
BOX 70	<i>Principles of Strategy</i> , correspondence, 1890-1892 (2 folders) Miscellaneous notes and correspondence Civil War El Alish and Convention of Cintra Falkland Islands Military education Revolutionary War records Western posts
BOX 71	<i>Di Alcuni Lavori Ed Acquisti Della Biblioteca Vaticana</i> , 1892 Miscellaneous book lists and notes Notebook
BOX 72	Bibliographies of Panama Canal records, 1857-1932 (2 folders) <i>Bulletin du Canal Interocéanique</i> , 1888 Landings in Panama, 1848-1904 Notes regarding books
BOX 73	Panama Canal Clippings and notes Printed matter

Series III, 1775-1936

Container

Contents

BOX 74	Bigelow, Jane Poultney, correspondence, 1913 Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, correspondence and papers, 1906-1909 Miscellaneous material Clippings, notes, and printed matter, circa 1896-circa 1935 Maps and notes Notes on army regulations Paper money from Italy Photographs and postcards, circa 1913 Unpublished essays
BOX 75	Card file, Saratoga Campaign catalogue
BOX 76	Civil War, correspondence and papers, 1862-1863 Panama Canal, correspondence, 1931 World War I Miscellaneous material Map of New York state, 1823 <i>See Oversize</i> Notes on books Photostatic copies Saratoga Campaign clippings
BOX OV1-OV2	Oversize, 1823-1907 Maps. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Series I <i>Mappamondo Catalano della Estense</i> , 1907 (Container 2)
BOX OV 2	Series III Map of New York state, 1823 (Container 76)