

Commander Horace Elmer CollectionMS-6

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1864-1900

Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Revision Description

2023 Updated subject terms; updated notes (included language note concerning the Spanish/Portunhol materials). Revised by Elena Solé Rodríguez.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MS-6

Unit ID

/repositories/4/resources/50

Unit Date

1864-1900

Language

Collection materials are primarily in English with some German obituaries and a list of Spanish phrases included. The Spanish notes that are found in Commander Elmer's journal are a variant of Latin American Spanish, specifically from a region with a strong influence of Portuguese. Given some of the grammatical features of the short sentences and the vocabulary in the notes, it could be considered a form of Portuñol/Portunhol.

Abstract

This collection includes journals, scrapbooks, and photographs belonging to U. S. Naval Commander Horace Elmer (1846-98). He was an important naval figure who sailed on the USS Hartford's Asiatic mission, but significantly, the Monitor. This collection illustrates, through personal documentation, the experience of life at sea but also Elmer's immense skill and expertise in the US Navy in both mechanical and practical aspects. Information concerning his daughter, Edith Elmer Wood, a prominent progressive housing reformer, is also contained in the collection.

Creator

Horace, Elmer, Commander, 1846-1898

Creator

Elmer family

Extent

1 Linear Feet 2 archival boxes.

Extent

Generally in good condition. Journals are delicate and need to be handled with care; transcriptions of some of the material is available. Loose papers and photographs have been put in sleeves for protection. Metal dividers in the second scrapbook are holding but be aware of their delicate nature. Journal One & Two (October 1864-Dec 1866): Contemporary Red three-quarter morocco and marbled boards. Boards scuffed, rubbed at extremities. Around 10,000 & 30,000 words. Journal 3 (1872): Contemporary red half morocco and marbled boards. Boards scuffed, rubbed at extremities and head of spine worn. Around 10,000 words. Journal 4: A4 Contemporary blue half morocco and marbled boards. Morocco paper on front some chips especially on outside hem. Scrap Book 1 (1878-1879): A4 Contemporary black three-quarter morocco, with yellow/green marbled boards. Folio/ Scrap Book 2 (1898-1900): Forty-one interleaves, plus loose manuscript and printed materials. One Collection of Loose photographs (1870-1872): Ten loose photos One Photo Album (1890- 96): Forty-five photographs in A3 burgundy, rectangular album.

Repository

University of Richmond

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from The New Antiquarian - The Antiquarian Booksellers Association.

This collection was purchased with the Beverley Lyle Britton Fund.

Processing Information

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Preferred Citation

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Biographical / Historical

This collection includes journals, scrapbooks and photographs belonging to U. S. Naval Commander Horace Elmer (1846-98) that cover the important period of naval expansion from 1864 to 1900. His family created the collection, which follows his early naval career until his death, as evidenced through the newspaper clippings.

Elmer was an American Navy Commander, born in 1846. Having graduated from the Naval Academy in Annapolis in 1864 (aged 18), he began his naval career on the flagship for the East India Squadron, the U.S.S. Hartford, on which he sailed to the Pacific, via Cape Town (1865-69). He went on to have a successful career, serving on the U.S.S. Terror from 1870-1871; the U.S.S. Vandalia 1871; the U.S.S. Ossipee 1871-1873; and the U.S.S. Kearsarge 1878-82. In 1883 he was promoted to the rank of Commander and in 1886 he was awarded the head of the department of seamanship at the United States Naval Academy. His career, as the collection shows, gave him the opportunity to navigate across the world, visiting places such as South Africa, China, Peru, and San Domingo. The height of his career was when he was commissioned to organize and command the Mosquito Fleet in the Spanish - American War, March 1898. Unfortunately, he contracted a cold that turned into pneumonia and died one month later.

His journals reflect his time at the end of his career at the naval academy and important technical notes, but most significantly his time spent at sea. His writing style is casual and, because of the journal-like style, his personality as well as his cultural and geographical background shine through.

One of the photo albums was curated by Horace Elmer's daughter, Edith Elmer Wood, who was a healthcare and housing reformer during the progressive era into the mid twentieth century. Aged twenty-two, she married to Naval Officer Albert Norton Wood and she travelled with him to Puerto Rico around 1906. There, her interest in healthcare flourished, becoming the head of the Anti-Tuberculosis League. Some of her significant publications include: The Housing of the Unskilled Wage Earner, 1919, Housing Progress in Western Europe, 1923, Recent Trends in American Housing, 1931, Slums and Blighted Areas in the United States, (P.W.A. Housing Division Bulletin), 1935 and Introduction to Housing Facts and Principles, 1939.

Scope and Contents

The Horace Elmer Collection covers a short but important period in U.S. naval history from the end of the American Civil War to the beginning of the Spanish-American War at the eve of the twentieth century. Personal journals, scrapbooks, photo albums, and loose photographs are from the years 1864 to 1900.

Series I, Commander Horace Elmer, contains journals and materials relating directly to the life and career of Commander Elmer as described below.

1. "Private": October 1864-December 1866 The first journal, written chronologically but sporadically, illustrates a young Elmer's final years at the Naval Academy until his assignment on the U.S.S. Hartford. Notable entries include him witnessing Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent preacher and abolitionist, giving a sermon in Plymouth, 9 May 1865, and his 5 July 1865 entry where he describes the Fourth of July celebrations. Most significantly, this journal also includes his detailed sketching of the U.S.S. Monitor and engines of the U.S.S. Hartford, along with technical notes of how the student understood it. Personal and class notes show the kind of knowledge and naval procedures the academy required of its students.
2. "The Cruise of the Hartford": 17 July 1865-24 February 1866 The second journal details Elmer's time on the Asiatic mission for the East India Squadron from 17 July 1865 to 24 February 1866. At the back of the journal there is a table showing the periods he spent in each different country that they visited. While this list includes the years up to 1868, Elmer's entries in the diary end in 1866. Places include Brazil, Africa, China and Japan. As it is a diary, this journal is useful in depicting what life was like on board for Elmer and the kind of things he enjoyed but also the cultural and colonial opinions at the time. In February 1866, for example, he writes of the uncivilized and demoralizing nature of people he encountered in Hong Kong.
3. "Navigator's Notes Kept Aboard the U.S.S. Ossipee": 1872 Now risen to the rank of lieutenant commander and the navigator aboard the U.S.S. Ossipee, this volume contains Elmer's notes on navigation, surveying, and "memoranda" recounting the cruise of the U.S.S. Ossipee from Peru to New York. It also includes a section of notes labelled "miscellaneous," which is filled with random factoids, many of which relate to torpedoes or explosions.
4. "Watch, Quarter, and Station Bill" on the U.S.S. Ossipee and U.S.S. Colorado This book includes neat and detailed notes that Elmer, as Navigator, presumably had on board in both vessels to help handle different situations. These include roll calls, sea routines, forecasts, losing a sail, and navigation. It also includes a Miscellaneous section.
5. Scrapbook: 1878-1879. Contains clippings from many different periodicals relating to naval procedures and maritime subjects. These depict the mechanical and technical changes of the navy during these years, but also its growth. Some articles from the U.S. Army and Navy Journal from these years are included.
6. Obituary Scrapbook: 1898-1900. Presumably put together by Elmer's wife or daughter, this scrapbook contains periodical clippings pertaining to his last assignment on the Mosquito fleet, 1898. It also includes loose telegrams of condolence sent to her and her application to increase her pension. It is primarily composed of obituaries, each neatly labelled and organized by newspaper and date. Elmer caught pneumonia which was brought on by exposure while he was on duty. Each clipping pertains to the death of a great naval officer, and in some cases, the first loss of the Spanish-American War. (Evening Journal) Strong patriotic language is used, as well as great sadness of the passing of the "courageous" and "best known naval officers" is illustrated.
7. Collection of Nine Loose Photographs (mounted on card) 1870- 1891. Collection of photographs spanning twenty years, divided into Elmer's time in Santo Domingo and Edith's personal photos. The shots from Santo Domingo include a group shot of Commander Elmer with several other important men, including the President of Santo Domingo. Edith's photographs are primarily personal and family portraits, including a picture of Adele Wiley as a young woman, Edith Elmer Wood as a baby, and then another later shot of her as a young woman.

Series II, Edith Elmer Wood Scrapbook, contains a single album containing photographs from her daily life, including trips she made with her husband.

1. Photo Album Belonging to Edith Elmer Wood: 1890-1896. Edith Elmer Wood's photograph album contains two large photos of the U.S.S. Kearsarge, one being of the officers and another of the crew being inspected, both dated 1890; several snapshots of interiors of family residences, including one of her mother in a rocking chair, and a photo of Commander Elmer working at his desk in the Ordnance Office; ten photos, five quite large, of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893; and ten large photographs taken on the campus of the United States Naval Academy, two of them featuring Mrs. Wood and her husband. Other scenes from the Naval Academy include cadets being drilled and the Tripoli Monument.

Keywords

New York (N.Y.)

East Indies

Hong Kong (China)

Cape Town (South Africa)
Indonesia
Clippings
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Spanish-American War, 1898
Journals (Diaries)
School notebooks
Navigator
Naval Executive Officer
Horace, Elmer, Commander, 1846-1898
Wood, Edith Elmer, 1871-1945
Elmer, Adele Wiley, 1848-1917
Kearsarge (Battleship)
United States. Navy
United States. Navy Personnel Command

Arrangement

The collection is divided into two series:

Series I: Commander Horace Elmer Series II: Edith Elmer Wood's Scrapbook

Description of Subordinate Components

Series 1: Commander Horace Elmer

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5361

Unit Date 1864-1900

Language English Spanish; Castilian German

Private Journal

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5363

Unit Date 1864-1866

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language A selected number of pages of the journal appear to be in portunhol.

Torn out journal pages

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5364

Unit Date 1864-1866

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Cruise of Hartford Journal

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5365

Unit Date 1865-1866

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Navigator Notes on Ossippee

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5366

Unit Date 1872

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Watch Quarter and Station Bill

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5367

Unit Date 1872

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Naval Clippings scrapbook 1

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5368

Unit Date 1878-1879

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Obituary Scrapbook

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5369

Unit Date 1898-1900

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Language English German

From Obituary Scrapbook - Pension Increase

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5370

Unit Date 1899-1900

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Letters from Obituary scrapbook

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5371

Unit Date 1898-1899

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Condolence Telegrams from Obituary scrapbook

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5372

Unit Date 1898

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Photographs of time in San Domingo

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5373

Unit Date 1891-1892

Text 1 MS-5 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Series 2: Edith Elmer Wood Scrapbook

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5362

Unit Date 1890-1893

U.S.S. Kearsarge

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5374

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 1 (page)

Officers of the U.S.S. Kearsarge

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5375

Unit Date 1890

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 2 (page)

Sunday Morning Inspection on the Kearsarge

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5376

Unit Date 1890

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 3 (page)

Children, Metropolitan Museum, New York

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5377

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 4 (page)

Children, Metropolitan Museum, New York

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5378

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 4 (page)

9 small pictures of Easterbrook Cottage Radbury, N.J.

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5379

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 5 (page)

Parlor, 3 Fleshing Avenue, Navy Yard, Brooklyn

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5380

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 6 (page)

Library, 3 Fleshing, Navy Yard, Brooklyn and Office of the Ordinance Officer, Navy Yard, Brooklyn

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5381

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 7 (page)

Administration Building and Court of Honor, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5382

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 8 (page)

Peristyle and Court of Honor from the Administration Building, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5383

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 9 (page)

Machinery Hall, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5384

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 10 (page)

Fisheries Building, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5385

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 11 (page)

Manufacture's Building, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5386

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 12 (page)

Columbus Quadriga, Art Building, and Woman's Building, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5387

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 13 (page)

Golden Doorway, Transportation Building, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5388

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 14 (page)

Entrance of the Fisheries Building, World's Fair, Chicago

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5389

Unit Date 1893

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 15 (page)

Washington Monument, Washington, D.C. and White House, Washington D.C.

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5390

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 16 (page)

Pennsylvania Avenue and the Capitol, Washington, D.C. and The Capitol, Washington D.C.

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5391

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 17 (page)

Washington's Tomb, Mount Vernon

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5392

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 18 (page)

Mount Vernon, Virginia

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5393

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 19 (page)

6 Untitled (possible photo of Naval Base)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5394

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 20 (page)

Untitled (photo of a woman and a man sitting on a park bench)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5395

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 21 (page)

Untitled (photo of sailor's on row boats)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5396

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 22 (page)

Untitled (photo of a man and a woman in front of a cannon)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5397

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 23 (page)

Untitled (sailors in rows)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5398

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 24 (page)

3 Untitled (photos of rooms in a home)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5399

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 25 (page)

2 magazine pages of the Battleship Maine

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/5400

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 2 MS-5 (box)

Container 26 (page)