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Processor: Roy Grossnick (Updated January 2013) and originally processed by Bobbie Posner (March 2009).

William W. Phelps Papers

COLL/601

Creator: Rear Admiral William W. Phelps, USN

Extent: 2 boxes
.7 cubic feet

Date Range: 1885-1938 and 2001-2005

Classification: Unclassified

Access: Open

Scope and Content Notes

Despite RADM Phelps' long naval career, the Collection is small and highlights only a few of the Admiral's assignments, a small portion of a long naval career.

The material is arranged chronologically and then separated by type – manuscript, addresses books and other ephemera and finally, photographs. Materials relate to Phelps' assignments as the Executive Officer for the USS *Mayflower*, President T. Roosevelt's presidential yacht, USS *Delaware* during the coronation of King George V of England, in 1911, command of the transport USS *Leviathan*, ferrying troops home; Commander of the Yangtze Patrol, China, 1922-24, as well as assignments as the Commandant at the Navy Yard at Portsmouth, NH and Brooklyn, NY.

Photographs include those of ships taken by the Admiral's son, Southwick, in China (1923) and San Pedro, CA (1927).

Biography

Rear Admiral William W. Phelps was born in Baltimore, MD, on November 26, 1868. He was appointed to the Naval Academy from the 4th district of Maryland in 1885. Phelps was commissioned as an Ensign on July 1, 1891 and promoted to Lieutenant (JG) December 9, 1898; to Lieutenant March 3, 1899; to Lieutenant Commander July 1, 1905; to Commander on September 16, 1910; Captain on August 13, 1918, and to Rear Admiral on December 31, 1921.

Phelps was assigned to the USS *Bancroft* during the Spanish American War, and served as the Executive Officer on the USS *Mayflower*, from 1905-1906. After completing the course of instruction at the Naval War College in 1916, he took command of the USS *Louisiana*. Phelps

was given command of the USS *Great Northern* troopship in 1917; in 1918 he was took command of the transport USS *Leviathan*. For his service on the USS *Great Northern* and the USS *Leviathan*, Phelps was given the Navy Cross with the following citation:

For distinguished service in the line of his profession as Commanding Officer of the USS *Great Northern* and later the USS *Leviathan*, engaged in the important, exacting, and hazardous duty of transporting and escorting troops and supplies to European ports through waters infested with enemy submarines and mines.

In 1919, he returned to the Naval War College. After a brief command of the battleship *Arizona*, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the Naval War College in August, 1921. In June, 1922 he assumed command of the U.S. Yangtze Patrol Force. In March, 1924 he was ordered to duty as a member of the Navy's General Board. Phelps took command of the Fleet Base Force in 1926. He became Commandant of the Navy Yard Portsmouth, NH in 1928. From 1931-1933, he was Commandant of the Naval District and Navy Yard, Brooklyn, NY.

Admiral Phelps retired from the Navy on July 1, 1933. He died on May 12, 1938, in New York City. He was survived by his wife Susie Southwick Phelps and their son, Southwick Phelps.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1

1. U.S. Naval Academy
2. "Making a Man-O-War's Man," NY Herald, January 17, 1904
3. USS *Mayflower*: Treaty of Portsmouth, Aug – Sept, 1905
4. USS *Delaware*: Coronation of King George V, June, 1911
5. Record of Service: 1885-1910, 1912-1917
6. USS *Leviathan*: 1918-1919
7. Guestbook: USS *Leviathan*, USS *Arizona*, USS *Isabel*
8. USS *Isabel*: Yangtze Patrol Force, China, 1922-1924
9. Portsmouth Navy Yard, 1928-1931
10. Brooklyn Navy Yard, 1931-1933
11. "Billions for Philippine Independence," US Naval Institute Proceedings, Mar 1938
12. Letters of Condolence
13. Memorial Service/Internment
14. Obituaries
15. Woodward Phelps, 1901-1930
16. News Clippings, 1900-
17. Address book/Expense books
18. Ephemera
19. Ocean Liner Museum & Seamen's Church Institute Catalog, 2001-2002
20. Treaty of Portsmouth 100th Anniversary Celebration, Jul-Oct 2005
21. Photographs/Portraits: RADM Phelps
22. Photographs: Early years

Box 2

1. Photographs: China, 1923 (Yangtze Patrol)
2. Photographs: San Pedro, CA, 1927
3. Photographs: Ships