

Archives Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breesse Street, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

Processor: Roy Grossnick (Updated May 2013) and originally processed by Mae C. Seaton (Aug 1973).

Thomas C. Hart Papers

COLL/147

Creator: Admiral Thomas C. Hart, USN

Extent: 21 boxes
7 cubic feet

Date Range: 1897-1963

Classification: Records reviewed and all are declassified in full.

Access: Open but collection needs more processing and preservation in boxes 10 through 21.

Scope and Content Notes

The initial collection of papers from Admiral Hart were transferred from him to the Naval History and Heritage Command (Historical Section) in 1969. Additional records were transferred at later dates.

Most of this material relates to his command of the Asiatic Fleet from 1939-1942, including some official reports, messages, correspondence, and two special files of communications with the Chief of Naval Operations.

The collection also includes the Admiral's official orders, starting with 1899; documentation on articles that he published or commented on; lectures given at the Naval War College; congratulatory letters received by the Admiral at various stages of his career; and a xerox copy of the Admiral's personal diary maintained from 1914-1960.

The Admiral's oral history is kept with NHC's Oral History Collections

The collection is arranged by subject headings that include: Personal Papers, Official Records; Official Correspondence, Personal Correspondence, Asiatic Fleet; Articles Authored, Lectures, Textbooks, Diaries, and miscellaneous items.

Biography

Thomas Charles Hart, son of Thomas M. Hart and Isabella Ramsey Hart, was born in Genessee County, Michigan, on 12 June 1877. He attended public schools in Davison and Flint, Michigan, prior to entering the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from his native state in May 1893. Graduated on 4 June 1897, he served the two years at sea, then required by law before

commissioning, and was commissioned Ensign in the U.S. Navy on 1 July 1899. He subsequently advanced to the rank of Admiral, to date from 25 July 1939. On 1 July 1942 he was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy in the rank of Admiral, in recognition of his "conspicuous and distinguished service in operations against the enemy in the Far East from 7 Dec 1941 until 14 February 1942."

After graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1897, he joined the recruit-training ship *Alliance*, in which he served for six months. In December of that year he was ordered to the USS *Massachusetts*, and was attached to that battleship and later to the yacht *Vixen* during the Spanish-American War period, participating in the Cuban Campaign and in the Battle of Santiago in July 1898. Detached from the *Vixen* in September 1898, he served briefly in the USS *Hist*, then reported on board the USS *Indiana*. After short periods of shore duty, he joined the USS *Hartford* in October 1899.

Between October 1902 and May 1904 he was an Instructor in the Department of Ordnance and gunnery at the Naval Academy, then had duty afloat as Watch and Division Officer of the USS *Missouri*. In December 1905 he assumed command of the torpedo boat destroyer, USS *Lawrence*, and remained in command until she was decommissioned in November 1906. He then commissioned and commanded the USS *Hull*. In June 1907, he began a tour of duty in the Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., and while serving there had additional duty from January to June 1909 as Aide to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

Returning to sea, he was Ordnance Officer of the USS *Virginia* until December 1909, and after assisting in fitting out the USS *North Dakota*, became her Gunnery Officer at the commissioning of that battleship on 11 April 1909. In October 1911 he reported for a tour of duty at the Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, Rhode Island. When detached in September 1914, he joined the USS *Minnesota* as Executive Officer, and in February 1916 assumed command of the Third Submarine Division, Pacific Torpedo Flotilla. He was relieved of that command in May 1917, after the United States entered World War I in April, and returned to the United States.

In July 1917 he was assigned duty as Commander Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, and there had additional duty in command of the USS *Chicago* and as Chief of Staff of the Commander Submarine Force, Atlantic Fleet. In August he was transferred to command of Submarine Division FOUR and FIVE, which, with the submarine tender *Bushnell* as flagship, operated in European waters during the war. In April 1918 he was given temporary additional duty at Queenstown, Ireland; London, Portsmouth and Harwich, England, and other places found necessary for visits and consultation with British authorities. He returned to the United States in June 1918, and the next month was assigned duty as Director of Submarines in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department.

After the Armistice was signed in November 1918, he continued duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations until July 1920. He was then designated Commander Submarine Flotilla THREE, of the Asiatic Fleet, with additional duty in command of the submarine tender *Beaver*. Between March and August 1921 he also had command of Submarine Division EIGHTEEN. Instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, and at the Army War College, Washington, D.C., was followed by a year's assignment to the Staff of the Army War College.

On 6 June 1925, he assumed command of the USS *Mississippi*, at Honolulu, T.H. After two years in that command he reported to Headquarters, Third Naval District, New York, N.Y., where he served briefly as Assistant Commandant, then as Supervisor of the New York Harbor. On October 4 of the same year he became Inspector of Ordnance in Charge, Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, and continued in that capacity until June 1929. He returned to sea a month later as Commander Submarine Divisions, Battle Fleet, the USS *Holland*, his flagship. In May 1930 he became Commander Control Force, U.S. Fleet, his flag in the USS *Camden*, and in January 1931 he was redesignated Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Fleet.

From 1 May 1931 until 18 June 1934, he served as Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy. He was then ordered to sea as Commander Cruiser Division SIX, Scouting Force, the USS *Louisville*, flagship. In April 1935 he was transferred to command of Cruiser, Scouting Force, with additional duty as Commander Cruiser Division FIVE. Relieved of that command in June 1936, he was named a member of the General Board, Navy Department, and in December of the same year became Chairman of that Board.

In April 1939 he was designated Commander in Chief, U.S. Asiatic fleet, and was serving in that command at the outbreak of World War II. In the early days of the war, except for the forces in the Philippines under General Douglas MacArthur, the American strength in the Western Pacific Area consisted chiefly of the Asiatic Fleet, a few aviation units and the garrisons of Marines at Guam and Wake. The small Asiatic Fleet included the heavy cruiser *Houston*, the light cruiser *Marblehead*, thirteen over-age destroyers, some twenty-nine submarines, two squadrons of Catalinas comprising Patrol Wing TEN, and a few gunboats and auxiliaries which could not be counted on for combat. This force (plus the light cruiser *Boise*, which happened to be in Asiatic waters when the war warning was received) undertook to delay the enemy's advance until such time as it could muster sufficient strength to put up any real resistance. In so far as completely stopping the advance, the campaign was foredoomed, but it nevertheless contributed materially to the ultimate check of the Japanese advance, and the energy and gallantry of the officers and men participating constituted a remarkable chapter in the history of naval warfare. It was just before the Battle of Makassar Strait that Admiral Hart gave his classic order to the Asiatic Fleet, "Submarines and surface ships will attack the enemy, and no vessel will leave the scene of action until it is sunk or all its ammunition exhausted."

He returned to the United States in May 1942 to receive from the President of the United States a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Distinguished Service Medal. The Asiatic fleet ceased to exist as such in June 1942, and Admiral Hart was detached as Commander in Chief. He was transferred to the Retired List of the U.S. Navy on 1 July 1942, but continued on active duty as Chairman of the Board of Awards, Navy Department. In August 1942 he was again assigned as a member of the General Board, with additional duty as Chairman of the Board of Awards until 31 October 1942. In February 1944 the Secretary of the Navy announced the appointment of Admiral Hart to hear and record the testimony of members of the Naval Service who had knowledge of facts pertinent to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941. This method was used because certain officers who had personal knowledge of facts relevant to the Pearl Harbor disaster were on dangerous assignments which might render them unavailable for testifying in any proceedings to be held, and it was desired to preclude the possibility of the loss of such

evidence. Admiral Hart traveled to the duty stations of the officers to be questioned so that their testimony could be preserved with a minimum amount of interference with their duties.

He returned to the United States from the Pacific Ocean area in April 1944, and continued his assignment as a member of the General Board. On 9 February 1945 he was relieved of all active duty to accept appointment as a United States Senator from the State of Connecticut. On 15 February he took the Oath of Office as a member of the U.S. Senate, succeeding Francis T. Maloney of Meriden, Connecticut, who died in January 1945. His term of office expired on 3 January 1947 and he did not seek reelection.

Admiral Hart then returned to his family home in Sharon, Connecticut, and died there on 4 July 1971

Admiral Hart's decorations included: Navy Distinguished Service Medal with Gold star for second award, Sampson Medal, Navy Spanish Campaign Medal, Mexican Service Medal, World War I Victory Medal, China Service Medal, American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, American Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal and Submarine Warfare insignia.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1

Asiatic Fleet: 1942-1943
Asiatic fleet: 1941-1945
Authorship
Authorship, 1942-1960
Correspondence: Commendatory 1929-1948
Correspondence: Congratulatory 1898-1934

Box 2

Congratulatory Letters: 1929
Congratulatory Letters: 1937-1946
Formal Orders: 1897-1945
USS Houston: 1945-1946
Java: 1942

Box 3

Java, personal: 1939-1942
Java: 1941-1942
Personal: 1939-1941
Navy Miscellaneous: 1898-1926
Navy Miscellaneous
Navy Miscellaneous: 1939-1949
Navy Miscellaneous: 1937-1963

Box 4

Stark, H.R.: 1939-1941
Stark and Hart: 1939-1944
Submarines: 1917-1965
War College Lectures: 1919-1925

Box 5

Textbooks: Beyer
Textbooks: Glennon
Textbooks: Copy Book
Textbooks: copy book
Textbooks: Copy book
Textbooks: Copy book

Box 6

Textbooks: Ingersoll
Textbooks: Meigs
Textbooks: Pornain
Textbooks: Walker

Box 7**Diaries (originals)**

Hart Diaries: 1 Jan 1914-31 Dec 1914
Hart Diaries: 1 Jan 1915-20 Nov 1915
Hart Diaries: 20 Nov 1915-29 Apr 1916
Hart Diaries: 1 Dec 1916-31 Aug 1918
Hart Diaries: 1 Sep 1918-5 Jul 1921
Hart Diaries: 6 Jul 1921-22 Oct 1923
Hart Diaries: 23 Oct 1923-30 Nov 1926
Hart Diaries: 1 Dec 1926-7 Mar 1929

Box 8**Diaries (originals)**

Hart Diaries: 28 Mar 1929-28 Apr 1931
Hart Diaries: 29 Apr 1931-12 Jan 1933
Hart Diaries: 13 Jan 1933-17 Jul 1934
Hart Diaries: 18 Jul 1934-19 Dec 1935
Hart Diaries: 20 Dec 1935-24 Jun 1937
Hart Diaries: 25 Jun 1937-4 Jun 1939
Hart Diaries: 5 Jun 1939-27 Jul 1940
Hart Diaries: 28 Jul 1940-12 Jun 1941
Hart Diaries: 13 Jun 1941-15 Jan 1942

Box 9**Diaries (originals)**

Hart Diaries: 16 Jan 1942-31 May 1942

Hart Diaries: 1 Jun 1942-8 Aug 1943
Hart Diaries: 9 Aug 1943-1 Jul 1945
Hart Diaries: 21 Jul 1945-12 Jun 1952 (a few entries for 12 Jun 1960)

Box 10

Diaries (copies)

Dec 1916-Dec 1920

Box 11

Diaries (copies)

Dec 1920-Dec 1930

Box 12

Diaries (copies)

Jan 1931-Dec 1938

Box 13

Diaries (copies)

Dec 1938-Jun 1960

Box 14

Private Diaries (copies)

Jan 1914-Nov 1916

Box 15

Personal Correspondence to Mrs. Hart

Personal Correspondence: Sep 1913
Personal Correspondence: Aug-Oct 1914
Personal Correspondence: Nov-Dec 1914
Personal Correspondence: 1915 (folder 1)
Personal Correspondence: 1915 (folder 2)
Personal Correspondence: 1916

Box 16

Personal correspondence to Mrs. Hart

Personal Correspondence: 1917
Personal Correspondence: 1918
Personal Correspondence: 1919
Personal Correspondence: 1920 (folder 1)
Personal Correspondence: 1920 (folder 2)

Box 17

Personal correspondence to Mrs. Hart

Personal Correspondence: 1921 (folder 1)
Personal Correspondence: 1921 (folder 2)
Personal Correspondence: 1921 (folder 3)

Personal Correspondence: 1921 (folder 4)
Personal Correspondence: 1921 (folder 5)

Box 18

Personal Correspondence to Mrs. Hart

Personal Correspondence: Jan-Feb 1922
Personal Correspondence: 1925 (folder 1)
Personal Correspondence: 1925 (folder 2)
Personal Correspondence: 1925 (folder 3)
Personal Correspondence: 1926 (folder 1)
Personal Correspondence: 1926 (folder 2)

Box 19

Personal Correspondence to Mrs. Hart

Needs processing

Box 20

Personal Correspondence to Mrs. Hart

Needs processing

Box 21

Personal Correspondence to Mrs. Hart

Needs processing