



Independence Seaport Museum

Guide to the Gridley Collection

Creator: Charles Vernon Gridley (1844-1898) and other family members

Dates: 1860-1933 (bulk 1897-98)

Quantity: 1 box

Call Phrase: Gridley Collection

Provenance: Cruiser Olympia Association [via Mrs. Stuart D. Rose and Mrs. M. Clure Smith.]

Processed by: Shaun Kirkpatrick

Biographical note: Charles Vernon Gridley (1844-1898) is best known for serving as captain of the OLYMPIA during the battle of Manila Bay, May 1, 1898, and was the subject of Admiral George Dewey's famous directive, "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley."

Gridley's career in the Navy began in 1860, when he enrolled in the Naval Academy and trained on the frigate and schoolship CONSTITUTION. His early years are most noteworthy for his participation in the Civil War battle of Mobile Bay in 1864, as an ensign on the steamer ONEIDA.

Gridley was seriously ill at the time of the Battle of Manila Bay, and the strain of the battle may have contributed to his death on June 5, 1898, on the British steamer COPTIC, off the coast of Kobe, Japan. Gridley's body was cremated at the request of his wife Harriet, and on July 13 the ashes reached his hometown of Erie, Pa. The Reverend Frank Spaulding held a private service for the Gridley family. After a funeral procession, the ashes were buried in Erie's Lakeside Cemetery.

More information about Gridley's military service can be found in the biography by Maxwell P. Schoenfeld, *Charles Vernon Gridley: A Naval Career* (Erie, Pa.: Erie County Historical Society, 1983).

Scope and content: Correspondence, photographs, newspapers, and newspaper clippings owned by the Gridley family, relating to Charles Gridley's life, death, funeral, and memorialization.

The letterbook contains commissions, orders, and appointments received by Gridley from his entrance into the Naval Academy in 1860 to his assignment as captain of the cruiser OLYMPIA in 1897.

Other correspondence written or received by Gridley relates to his command of the steamship MARION or the OLYMPIA, 1892-98, including an invitation to attend the birthday ball of the Empress Dowager of China in 1897. Correspondence to his family are either condolences from 1898, or in relation to the unveiling of a Gridley monument in 1913.

Most photographs are from Gridley's naval career or of his funeral or burial site. Most photographs of Gridley are from 1897-98, as captain of the OLYMPIA. Others show Gridley as a midshipman in the early 1860s, at Pompeii, Italy, in 1881, and at Fuzhou, China, in the early 1890s. There are several photographs of Gridley's casket in 1898, and of the Gridley family burial plot in Hillsdale, Mich., circa 1970s. Additional photographs show Gridley's wife Harriet in 1865, at age 18, and his daughter Katherine in 1873, at 3 months. The collection also includes a few illustrated portraits of Gridley, his wife, and the OLYMPIA, often clipped from newspapers.

The full newspapers in the collection are 12 issues of the *TRENTON Herald*, a shipboard newspaper produced from 1880-81 on the steamship TRENTON, on which Gridley was an officer. The newspapers, edited by Edward Duffy, contain news about the ship and ports visited, announcements about the sailors, editorials, poems, and humor. The newspapers relate the TRENTON's journeys along the coast of Europe, usually France and Italy.

The scrapbook was primarily compiled by Harriet Gridley of newspaper clippings and telegrams relating to Gridley's service and death in the war. Most articles date from May to June 1898. In the back of the book there are several loose clippings, dated from 1898 to 1942. Some of these clips relate to Gridley's death and burial, while others are about other Gridley family members.

Individual newspaper clippings in the collection are from many different newspapers, but most are located in Erie, Pa., and date from 1896-1933. Most clippings are from 1898, and report on Gridley's death or funeral. Other articles quote Gridley, mention his family, or relate to later memorialization and remembrances of him in the early twentieth century.

Other materials include a eulogy of Gridley read at a tablet dedication, an 1898 "Victory" Christmas card with the images of Dewey and Gridley, a card with an illustration of OLYMPIA, and a list of "OLYMPIA men living in 1928."

Container list:

Box 1:

Letterbook of naval commissions and orders received, 1860-97

Folder 1: Correspondence, Gridley and family, 1892-1913

Folder 2: Photographs, Gridley and family, 1860s-1913

Folder 3: Press releases, programs, and other Gridley family papers, 1898-1931

Folder 4: *TRENTON Herald* shipboard newspaper, 1880-81

Folder 5: Scrapbook of Harriet Gridley, 1898-1942

Folder 6: Gridley family newspaper clippings, 1896-1933 and n.d.

Folder 7: Gridley commemorative and research material, c. 1930s-70s