

Collection #
M 0220,
OM 0047,
OM 0158,
R 0655–0676

ADMIRAL ALBERT P. NIBLACK COLLECTION, 1843–1929

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Kathryn Wilmot
August 2007

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION:

Manuscript Materials: 3 document cases, 8 oversized
manuscript folders

Visual Materials: 2 OVC photograph folders

Artifacts: 22 artifacts

COLLECTION

1843–1929

DATES:

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Albert Parker Niblack, Washington, DC, January 1992

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: SC 2577 (Wm. E. Niblack letter)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1930.1201

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Ellis Niblack was born in Portersville, Dubois County, Indiana on 19 May 1822 to John Niblack and Martha (Patsy) Hargrave. He attended Indiana University at Bloomington and received his attorney's license for Dubois County, Indiana in 1843. That same year he was appointed county surveyor and received a notary public commission for Martin County. In 1845, Niblack began practicing law in Old Mount Pleasant, later moving to Vincennes, Indiana.

Niblack was elected member of the Indiana House of Representatives in 1849 and served in the Indiana Senate from 1850–53. He was appointed judge of the 3rd Judicial Circuit in 1854. From 1856–61 he served the Indiana Supreme Court as a Democrat representing the 1st Congressional District. Niblack went back to the House of Representatives for the years 1862–63, and was again elected to the Supreme Court from 1863–75. In 1876, Niblack became a judge of the Indiana Supreme Court and was re-elected in 1882.

Niblack married Malvina Reily in January 1848. After her death, Niblack married Elizabeth Ann Sherman on 4 October 1849 in Mount Pleasant, Indiana. Their children were: Martha (b. 29 June 1851), William Caldwell (b. 5 Sept. 1854), Mason Jenks (b. 14 April 1857), Albert Parker (b. 25 July 1859), Eliza Marie (b. 7 Dec. 1864), and Sarah Lydia (b. 15 April 1868). The couple moved to Indianapolis in 1889. Niblack died on 7 May 1893 and was buried at Crown Hill Cemetery.

Albert Parker Niblack was born in Vincennes, Knox County, Indiana on 25 July 1859, the son of William E. Niblack and Elizabeth Ann Sherman. Niblack enrolled in the Naval Academy in 1876 as a cadet midshipman, and was assigned to *Lackawanna* in 1880. He graduated and became a midshipman in the United States Navy in October 1882, receiving a promotion to ensign in 1884. Niblack surveyed and explored Alaska from 1884–87, and worked with the Smithsonian Institution.

In August 1892 Niblack was promoted to lieutenant junior grade. In February 1893 he was assigned to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey on *Patterson*. Later that year he went to Washington, D.C. to work at the Office of Naval Intelligence and then the Bureau of Navigation. In March 1894, Niblack served on USS *Dolphin*. Appointed naval attaché to the U.S. Embassies in Berlin and Rome, and the U.S. Legation in Vienna, Niblack went overseas in 1896. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1897.

During the Spanish-American War, Niblack served in the North Cuban blockading squadron on USS *Topeka*, participating in the Battle of Fort Niue. He also briefly commanded USTB *Winslow* [U.S. torpedo boat]. In October 1898, he went to Manila in the Philippine Islands to serve on USS *Olympia*, USS *Concord* and USS *Oregon*. Niblack participated in the Philippine-American War in Manila and Iloilo. In 1900, he was placed in charge of locating a site for a naval station in the Philippines. He also went to China from February–October 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion.

After these engagements, Niblack served on USS *Castine*, U.S. Flagship *Brooklyn*, and USS *Culgoa*. He was sent to New York in 1901 to work on the Olongapo Naval Station Board. In June 1902, Niblack was promoted to lieutenant commander. He served on USS *Iroquois* from 1904–06 and in the Pacific Squadron from 1906–07. In 1907 he became executive officer of USS *Chicago*, and later commanded USS *Tacoma*. He was promoted to commander in 1908. In 1910 he once again served as a naval attaché, this time to the American Embassy at Petropolis, Brazil, and the Legations at Buenos Aires, Argentina and Santiago, Chile. He was then transferred to perform the same duties in Berlin, Germany, receiving a promotion to captain in 1911.

From 1913–15 Niblack commanded USS *Michigan*. During the Mexican Revolution in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson directed *Michigan* to help settle the “Tampico Affair,” provoked by the arrest of several United States Navy personnel by General Victoriano Huerta’s forces in Tampico and Veracruz, Mexico. Niblack was also a member of the General Board during this time. In March 1917, he served as brigade commander at the inauguration of President Wilson. During World War I, Niblack commanded Division One, Battleship Force, Atlantic Fleet in charge of USS *Alabama*. He received a temporary appointment to Rear Admiral in August 1917, which became permanent in March 1918. In October 1917 he became commander of Squadron Two, Patrol Force, in charge of USS *Nashville*. Niblack moved to USS *Decatur* in December, and then to USS *Buffalo* in August 1918 as Commander of U.S. Patrol Squadrons Based on Gibraltar. In January 1919 he was sent to Venice, Italy to command the U.S. Naval Forces Operating in the Eastern Mediterranean onboard USS *Olympia*.

Niblack became Director of Naval Intelligence in March 1919 and naval attaché to London in 1920. He made Vice Admiral in January 1921, commanding USS *Pittsburgh*, USS *Utah*, and the U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters. Niblack then went back to the United States as Commandant of the 6th Naval District and Navy Yard at Charleston, South Carolina. He retired 25 July 1923.

During his career, Niblack authored several papers, lectured at the Naval War College, and wrote a book entitled *The Coast Indians of Alaska and Northern British Columbia*. He was particularly interested in signaling and tactics. Niblack married Mary Augusta Harrington (born 2 April 1869) on 24 November 1904 in San Francisco, CA. They had at least one child, a daughter named Sarah (Sade). Niblack died on 24 August 1929 in France. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. His wife Mary died 26 April 1949.

Sources:

Information in the collection

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress. Available online at:

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=N000083>

LDS Familysearch. Available at <http://www.familysearch.org>

Who Was Who in America. Indiana Historical Society reference collection [E176 .W64]

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Series 1: William E. Niblack Papers and Correspondence, 1843–1883 contains Niblack’s Dubois County attorney’s license; certification of membership in the American Legal Association; appointments to county surveyor, judge of the 3rd Judicial Circuit, representative of the 1st Congressional District, attorney and judge of the Supreme Court, and trustee of the Indiana State Normal School; and commission as a colonel in the 6th Regiment of the 1st Military District. The correspondence consists of three letters written by William Niblack, two of which were directed to United States Attorney General Jeremiah Black in 1857 and 1858 protesting the removal of Alvin P. Hovey as Indiana’s District Attorney.

Series 2: Alfred P. Niblack Papers and Correspondence, 1876–1927 contains orders issued to Niblack detailing his assignments and duties, various certificates, and commissions and promotions. The correspondence contains commendation letters regarding Niblack’s meritorious service in the Navy and his seamanship. A letter written by Niblack outlines suggested repairs for USS *Winslow*. Several other letters reveal Niblack’s dissatisfaction with shore duty as a naval attaché and his repeated requests for a battleship command.

Series 3: Publications and Speeches, 1891–1923 mainly contains papers written by Niblack on tactics, signaling, training, and physical exercise reprinted from the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings. There is a printed speech given by Niblack in Spalato (Split), Yugoslavia at a celebration honoring his role in the formation of that country after World War I.

Series 4: Newspaper Clippings, 1898–1921 provides information on the Spanish-American War, the Tampico Affair during the Mexican Revolution, and a visit from Emperor Hirohito to USS *Pittsburgh* in 1921. The clippings provide some biographical information on Niblack.

Series 5: Collected Publications, 1876–1918 consists of two historical publications, the *Fergus Historical Series* and *Manuscripts from the Burton Historical Collection*, likely collected by Niblack. These publications contain reprints of speeches, papers, directories, and lectures regarding the history of Chicago and Illinois. Subjects addressed include Native Americans, slavery, settlers, medicine, religion, politics, Fort Dearborn, and railroads.

Series 6: Photographs, 1915–ca. 1923 includes three photographs of Admiral Niblack in his various uniforms, and a photograph of the officers and crew of USS *Michigan*. The folder containing the photograph of USS *Michigan* also contains a letter written to Admiral Niblack from President Woodrow Wilson commending *Michigan* for achieving the highest marks in gunnery and engineering in the Navy’s battleship competition. Other photographs of Niblack appear in OM 0047, Folder 3 (diplomatic passport) and in M 0220, Box 1, Folder 4 (certificate of identification).

Series 7: Artifacts, ca. 1880–1929 contains numerous artifacts that belonged to Admiral Niblack, including gloves, hats, uniform coats, epaulets, pennants, and flags.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: William E. Niblack, Papers and Correspondence, 1843–1883

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
William E. Niblack certificates and commissions, 1843–72	Box 1, Folder 1
William E. Niblack certificates and commissions, 1850–73	OM 0047, Folder 1
William E. Niblack correspondence, 1854–58	Box 1, Folder 2
William E. Niblack certificates and commissions, 1876–83	OM 0047, Folder 2

Series 2: Alfred P. Niblack, Papers and Correspondence, 1876–1927

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Certificates and commissions, 1876–1893	OM 0158, Folder 1
Orders, 1880–98	Box 1, Folder 3

Certificates and commissions, 1882–1927	Box 1, Folder 4
Correspondence and commendations, 1887–1923	Box 1, Folder 5
Orders, 1889–1902	Box 1, Folder 6
Certificates and commissions, 1897–1910	OM 0158, Folder 2
Orders, 1910–16	Box 1, Folder 7
Certificates and commissions, 1911–30	OM 0158, Folder 3
Diplomatic passport, 19 Nov. 1917	OM 0047, Folder 3
Orders, 1917–19	Box 1, Folder 8
Orders, 1920–23	Box 1, Folder 9

Series 3: Publications and Speeches, 1891–1923

CONTENTS

The Enlistment, Training, and Organization of Crews For Our New Ships, 1891

Proposed Day, Night, and Fog Signals for the Navy with Brief Description of the Ardois Night System, ca. 1891

Naval Signaling, 1892

The Gun in Naval Warfare, ca. 1894

Annual Report of the Operations of the Naval Militia, 1895

The Tactics of Ships in the Line of Battle, 1896

Instructions to Blockading Vessels and Cruisers, 1898

The Jane Naval War Game in the Scientific American, ca. 1903

Operations of the Navy and Marine Corps in the Philippine Archipelago, 1898–1902, ca. 1903

The Tactics of the Gun, ca. 1903

Colliers and Coaling Stations, 1904

The Elements of Fleet Tactics, 1906

An Answer to Criticisms of 'The Elements of Fleet

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 10

Box 1, Folder 11

Box 1, Folder 12

Box 1, Folder 13

Box 1, Folder 14

Box 1, Folder 15

Box 1, Folder 16

Box 1, Folder 17

Box 1, Folder 18

Box 1, Folder 19

Box 1, Folder 20

Box 1, Folder 21

Box 2, Folder 1

<i>Tactics,</i> ca. 1906	
<i>Lieutenant Dewar's Papers on 'Speed in Naval Tactics' and 'Speed in Battleship Strategy,'</i> 1907	Box 2, Folder 2
"Criticism Which Should be Ignored," loose clipping removed from <i>Lieutenant Dewar's Papers</i> . . . n.d.	Box 2 Folder 3
<i>U.S. Naval Academy Order No. 45,</i> loose item removed from <i>The Elements of Fleet Tactics,</i> 1909	Box 2, Folder 4
<i>A Plea for Physical Training in the Navy,</i> 1909	Box 2, Folder 5
<i>The Swedish System, a Further Plea for Physical Training in the Navy,</i> 1911	Box 2, Folder 6
<i>The Letters of a Retired Rear Admiral to His Son in the Navy,</i> 1915	Box 2, Folder 7
<i>Speech Delivered by Vice Admiral A. P. Niblack, U.S. Navy,</i> 1921	Box 2, Folder 8
<i>Athletics, Beneficial or Otherwise,</i> 1923	Box 2, Folder 9

Series 4: Newspaper Clippings, 1898–1921

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Newspaper clippings, 1898–1921	Box 2, Folder 10
Newspaper clippings (photocopies), 1898–1914	OM 0158, Folder 4
Newspaper clippings (originals), 1898–1914	OM 0158, Folder 5

Series 5: Collected Publications, 1876–1918

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
<i>Fergus Historical Series,</i> issues 1–5, 1876	Box 2, Folder 11
<i>Fergus Historical Series,</i> issues 6–10, 1876–77	Box 2, Folder 12
<i>Fergus Historical Series,</i> issues 11–14, 1879–80	Box 2, Folder 13
<i>Fergus Historical Series,</i> issues 15–17, 1881–82	Box 2, Folder 14
<i>Fergus Historical Series,</i> issues 18–21, 1882	Box 2, Folder 15
<i>Fergus Historical Series,</i> issues 22–23, 1882–84	Box 3, Folder 1
<i>Fergus Historical Series,</i> issues 24–25, 1882–83	Box 3, Folder 2
<i>Manuscripts from the Burton Historical Collection,</i> numbers 1–3, Oct. 1916–Feb. 1917	Box 3, Folder 3

Manuscripts from the Burton Historical Collection,
numbers 4–6, July 1917–Jan. 1918

Box 3, Folder 4

Manuscripts from the Burton Historical Collection,
numbers 7–8, April–July 1918

Box 3, Folder 5

Series 6: Photographs, 1915–ca. 1923

CONTENTS

Officers and crew of USS *Michigan*, Sept. 1915

CONTAINER

OVC Photographs,
Folder 1

Commendation letter from President Woodrow
Wilson that accompanied *USS Michigan* photograph,
11 September 1915

Box 3, Folder 6

Admiral Albert P. Niblack, ca. 1917–23
[Three black-and-white photograph portraits]

OVC Photographs,
Folder 2

Series 7: Artifacts, ca. 1880–1929

CONTENTS

Gloves for service dress uniform [olive colored
suede, lined in beige leather], ca. 1880–1923

CONTAINER

Artifacts: R 0655

Gloves for military evening dress and full dress
uniform [white kid leather], ca. 1880–1923

Artifacts: R 0656

Admiral's cap [white canvas with black band and
brim], ca. 1880–1923

Artifacts: R 0657

Admiral's cap [black wool with woven black band
and black felt brim], ca. 1880–1923

Artifacts: R 0658

Admiral's bicorne hat [black felted beaver or seal
skin], ca. 1880–1923

Artifacts: R 0659

Vice Admiral's uniform coat [blue wool, double
breasted], ca. 1917–23

Artifacts: R 0660

Vice Admiral's navy dress blues tailcoat [blue wool,
double breasted], ca. 1917–23

Artifacts: R 0661

Vest from dress uniform [off white linen], ca. 1917–
29

Artifacts: R 0662

Uniform trousers [dark blue], ca. 1917–29

Artifacts: R 0663

Shoulder epaulets for dress uniform [two gold
epaulets], ca. 1917–23

Artifacts: R 0664–65

Commission pennant flown by Admiral Niblack
[white, red, and dark blue with seven stars], ca. 1898

Artifacts: R 0666

Shoulder marks for naval Captain [blue felt with silver eagle], ca. 1898–1917	Artifacts: R 0667–68
Shoulder marks for Rear Admiral [blue felt with two silver stars and gold decoration], ca. 1917–20	Artifacts: R 0669–70
Belt [brown canvas with black canvas trim], ca. 1917–20	Artifacts: R 0671
Attaché's aiguillette [braided gold and blue cords], ca. 1910–13	Artifacts: R 0672
Rear Admiral's flag [blue woven fabric with two white stars], ca. 1917–20	Artifacts: R 0673
Vice Admiral's flag [blue woven fabric with three white stars], ca. 1920–29	Artifacts: R 0674
American flag presented at Admiral Niblack's funeral [red, white, and blue with 48 stars], 1929	Artifacts: R 0675
Cape for dress uniform [blue wool lined in dark gray cotton], ca. 1917–29	Artifacts: R 0676

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0220).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.