

The documents reproduced in these microfilms date from an era in which diplomats necessarily operated with much greater autonomy from their central governments than they would once instantaneous communication and rapid transportation became available in the 20th century. The bulk of these collections deal with US relations with Great Britain, France, Russia, and Spain.

Finding aids: These microfilms were produced by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which offers extensive sets of online research tools and finding aids – see especially <[http://www.archives.gov/publications/microfilm\\_catalogs/diplomatic/diplomatic.html](http://www.archives.gov/publications/microfilm_catalogs/diplomatic/diplomatic.html)> – keyed to each collection’s “microcopy” number. For additional finding aids to these collections, consult the “registers” at the beginning of each collection and (in many but not all cases) a print finding aid. In the many cases in which Virginia Tech owns only portions of these NARA collections; dates covered by Tech’s holdings are marked here in brackets. **Bruce Pencek** <<mailto:bpencek@vt.edu>> is the subject librarian for these resources.

For additional diplomatic documents in microform, including the “unclassified fiche” holdings, consult the microforms card catalog: look under the name of the country.

### Instructions to US Diplomats, 1784-1906

#### ***Domestic Letters of the Department of State [1784-1792]***

Microfilm JX 233 A54 1943

These reels (also called *American Letters* and constituting a portion of the *Papers of Continental Congress* [microfilm J10 D743 1958]) contain copies of both incoming and outgoing correspondence of the Department of State with United States government officials in the country, representatives of foreign states in the United States, and private citizens. From August 1790 the series contains copies of outgoing letters only. NARA microcopy M40.

#### ***Foreign Letters of the Continental Congress and Department of State [1785-1790]***

Microfilm J10 D85

Instructions addressed to American ministers and consuls abroad by Secretaries of State John Jay and Thomas Jefferson. The letters deal with a wide variety of subjects: diplomatic relations with foreign governments (Holland, Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and Morocco), American loans abroad, commerce, shipping, slavery, and relations between the Congress and individual states of the Union. NARA microcopy M61.

**Finding aid:** The *Foreign Letters* are indexed along with other materials relating to the Continental Congress in *The Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (stacks J10 B87 1971).

#### ***Diplomatic and Consular Instructions of the Department of State [1791-1801]***

Microfilm. Unclassed film no. 547

Continuation of the *Foreign Letters*. “Instructions” consist chiefly of record copies of communications addressed by the Department of State to diplomatic and quasi-diplomatic representatives of the United States assigned to service abroad; some copies of letters from foreign diplomats and rulers and other miscellaneous correspondents are included. The general order of the letters is chronological. Following the overall introduction on reel 1 is a list of communications to officials of the Department of State classified alphabetically according to diplomatic and consular posts, followed by an alphabetical list of the persons addressed. NARA microcopy M28.

#### ***Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906***

Microfilm. Unclassed film no. 544

Similar to the preceding collection. “All-countries” arrangement is chronological until 1829. Thereafter, reels are for France [1829-94], Great Britain [1829-1906], and Russia [1833-1906]. NARA microcopy M77.

**Finding aid:** *Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906*. Ref Room E183.7 U54 1965

### “Despatches” from United States Diplomats, 1791-1906

State Department “despatches,” comprise reports and related enclosures to the Department of State from its diplomatic representatives in foreign countries. Relating to all aspects of US diplomacy, these despatches reply to State Department instructions and report on economic, political, and social conditions; treaties and arrangements; the protection of US citizens and interests abroad; natural disasters; and activities of US citizens or officials. Among the related enclosures are newspaper clippings, copies of notes to and from the foreign offices of various countries, publications, and ceremonial letters.

**Finding aids:** Individual guides for several sets of despatches are shelved in Ref Room with call numbers corresponding to the films.

### **Consular Despatches [1791-1906]**

Microfilm E 183.3 B35 – E 183.3 T7 *or* JX 233 C45 – JX233 S63 *or* JX 1706 A58, depending on consul's location  
Nearly 30 consulates are represented in these collections, which range from one reel to a dozen. For complete holdings, search Addison for the title, *Despatches from United States Consuls in \_\_\_\_\_*, and scroll to the city or country.

### **Despatches from United States Ministers [1789-1906]**

“Minister” is the older term for ambassador.

- **Minister to Argentina [1881-1906]:** Microfilm E183.8 A7 U53 [NARA microcopy M69]
- **Minister to France, 1789-1851:** Microfilm JX 233 F739 [NARA microcopy M34 ]
- **Minister to Great Britain, 1791-1906:** Microfilm E183.8 G7 U54 [NARA microcopy M30]. Finding aid in Ref Room, same call number.
- **Minister to Mexico [1822-1806]:** Microfilm E183.8 M6 U53 1950 [NARA microcopy M ]
- **Minister to Russia, 1808-1906:** Microfilm JX 233 R9 [NARA microcopy M35]
- **Minister to Spain [1792-1820; 1897-1902]:** Microfilm E 183.8 S7 U54 [NARA microcopy M31]. Finding aid in Ref Room, same call number.

### **“Notes” with Foreign Legations 1774-1906**

Official correspondence between the United States and US-based representatives of foreign governments. Most of the letters are either requests for information and policy clarification on matters of interest to the US or State Department responses to similar requests from the representatives of other nations. Some of the letters are ceremonial, including those sent as official recognition of a particular envoy's diplomatic credentials, as well as invitations to meetings, ceremonies, funerals, and other events. A few are "circulars" sent to several or all foreign legations or consulates simultaneously, outlining important US policies, decrees, and initiatives.

### **Notes from Foreign Legations in the United States**

- **British Legation [1791-1825]:** Microfilm E 183.8 G7 A3x [NARA microcopy M50]
- **French Legation [1789-1817]:** Microfilm JX 233 F73 [NARA microcopy M53]
- **Russian Legation [1809-26]:** Unclassed microfilm no. 549 [NARA microcopy M39]
- **Spanish Legation [1774-1824]:** Microfilm JX 233 S63 (reels 1, 11) and unclassified film no. 552 (reels 2-10) [NARA microcopy M59]

### **Notes to Foreign Legations in the United States [1834-1906]**

Microfilm. Unclassed film no. 555

Includes notes to legations from France [1858-1906], Great Britain [1834-1906], Russia [1870-1906], and Spain [1893-1906]. NARA microcopy M99.

### **Letters between the Secretary of the Navy and Naval Officers, 1802-14**

These “letters” are in many respects the naval counterpart to the State Department communications described above. They deal not only with the operation of naval vessels and aspects of naval life that somehow warranted official notice, but also with diplomacy and foreign intelligence gathering. Finding aids specifically to these collections are largely unavailable.

### **Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Captains [1807-14] [“Captains' Letters”]**

Microfilm. Unclassed film no. 541

NARA microcopy M125.

### **Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commissioned Officers Below the Rank of Commander [1802-1814] [“Officers' Letters”]**

Microfilm VB255 U54 [reels 1, 13] and unclassified film no. 558 [reels 2-12]

NARA microcopy M148

### **Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers [1800-14]**

Microfilm VB255 U54 U54 [reels 4, 11] and unclassified film no. 559 [reels 5-10]

NARA microcopy M149.

### **Related materials**

This is a selective guide to microform resources at Virginia Tech. To view the wider range of related materials, begin by searching Addison for the following subjects (which have various further “subdivisions”):

- United States -- Foreign relations
- United States – Relations – *region or country* [e.g., United States -- Relations -- Africa, North; United States -- Relations – Great Britain]
- *Country* – Foreign relations – United States [e.g., France -- Foreign relations -- United States -- Sources]