Guide to the Fred J. Buenzle papers M1983

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Abstract: Manuscripts, scrapbooks, correspondence and photographs from Fred J. Buenzle (1872-1946), Chief Yeoman of the United States Navy.

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Scope and Contents
Frederick John Buenzle (1872-1946) enlisted in the United States Navy at the age of sixteen, and chronicled the transition of the Navy’s fleet from the sailing ships of the 19th century to steam-powered steel boats and the accompanying changes in sailors’ duties and culture. Training aboard the U.S.S. Portsmouth, Buenzle traveled around the Caribbean before assuming the job of stenographer, eventually working his way up to Chief Yeoman. Buenzle took shorthand for Rear Admiral William Sampson, acting Secretary of the Navy William McAdoo and even on occasion Theodore Roosevelt. He also ran the Yeoman School in Newport, Rhode Island for a time.

Buenzle was founder and editor of the first magazine for enlisted sailors, “The Bluejacket,” also the name of his 1939 memoir. While there are no copies of the newsletter in the collection, other shipboard newsletters are present. Buenzle also successfully filed a lawsuit fighting discrimination against uniformed servicemen.

Buenzle was stenographer for the Court of Inquiry concerning the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in 1898 (for which Sampson was Chief), and subsequently participated in the Spanish-American War aboard the U.S.S. New York. There are numerous photographs and documents concerning Cuba and the war.

After retiring in 1912 due to hearing loss, Buenzle moved around the country trying his hand at various occupations before settling in Los Gatos at his ranch, known as “Snug Harbor,” where he farmed, built model ships and continued to write until his death in 1946.

Acquisition Information
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Subjects and Indexing Terms
Military history
Naval history
Spanish-American War, 1898.
United States. Navy.

box 1, folder 1  Newport Navalog biographical profile 2192765 1967-07
"Apprenticeship Memories Revived -or- 4 Years in the U.S.N." bound manuscript 2192767 1889-1890

Scope and Contents
An account of Buenzle's training aboard the Portsmouth in the Caribbean. Includes souvenir postcards of Jamaica, two large albumen prints of St. Thomas, and newspaper clippings from the Newport Sentinel of letters Buenzle wrote to the paper.

"That Mutiny of Ours" bound typescript 2192769 c.1940s

Scope and Contents
A narrative of the 1842 alleged mutiny aboard the U.S.S. Somers in which three sailors were hanged without a legal trial.

"One Hundred Years Ago" typescript re: U.S.S. Somers incident 2192771 1942-09-10

Bluejacket: An Autobiography 2192773 1986

Scope and Contents
Reprint by the Naval Institute Press in their Classics of Naval Literature series. Originally published by W.W. Norton in 1939.

"Old Navy Men" typescript 2192775 circa 1940s

reprints, U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 2192777 1940, 1942

"Here Comes A Sailor" Chapter XIII excerpt about his brief interaction with future King George V of England 2192779

"Naval Casualties in Peacetime" typescript [published copy in scrapbook] 2192781

"Three Days in the Rice Fields of China" manuscript 2192783

Scope and Contents
After five years of service, in 1893 Buenzle left the Navy and lived in Shanghai. He became an officer in the Chinese military during the Sino-Japanese War, and "Three Days..." is a brief account of this experience.

untitled speech transcript, U.S. Veterans' Home, Napa, with clipping about event 2192785 1939

small notebook with addresses and accounts ; small unidentified Chinese book with illustrations 2192787

correspondence to King George V with form reply from King's Personal Secretary 2192789 1935-09

correspondence re: Somers incident manuscript 2192791 1944-1946

scrapbook of approximately 80 silver gelatin prints including images of Naval training in Guantanamo Bay and other images in and around Havana, Cuba 2192793 1898

Existence and Location of Copies
This scrapbook has been digitized by Stanford and is available for research.

correspondence re: Spanish-American War with souvenir pieces of flag removed from Spanish vessel 2192795 1940-02-20

bulletins, correspondence, memoranda and notes re: U.S.S. New York and Spanish-American War 2192797 1898

Scope and Contents
Field notes, "order of battle" memoranda, William T. Sampson communication, and other documents.

miscellaneous Navy correspondence, notes and other documents, including Buenzle's enlistment record 2192799 1894-1912

The Pelican, U.S.S. Louisiana newsletter 2192801 1906-07


notes re: U.S.S. Portsmouth 2192805

handwritten excerpt of review of Bluejacket 2192807 1944-06-30
unidentified Chinese manuscript- 3 leaves 2192809 c.1890s
photographs 2192811

scrapbook of several hundred annotated silver prints 2192813 c.1880-1939
Scope and Contents
Large scrapbook with decorated wooden cover, featuring the Buenzle family and residences in Newport, Rhode Island, Los Gatos, California, and elsewhere, as well as newspaper clippings of articles by or about Buenzle (many with no source or date). Boxes 3 and 4 contain loose pages, and Box 5 contains the enclosure.

Piece of the flag under which the Spanish Cruiser Cristobal Colon surrendered to the American fleet on July third, 1898. Framed, in glass.