

M2135

REGISTER OF COURTS OF INQUIRY,
BOARDS OF INVESTIGATION, AND
BOARDS OF INQUEST OF THE NAVY DEPARTMENT,
1861–1917

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INTRODUCTION

On the single roll of this microfilm publication, M2135, is reproduced a register of courts of inquiry, boards of investigation, and boards of inquest, November 1861–March 1917 (ARC Identifier 2322965).^{*} These records are part of Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Navy), Record Group (RG) 125.

BACKGROUND

The Office of the Judge Advocate General (Navy) administers military justice, enforces court-martial sentences, and manages other legal matters. Those duties were handled by the Office of the Secretary of the Navy until the Solicitor and Naval Judge Advocate General was established by an act of March 2, 1865 (13 Stat. 468). That officer was then renamed Naval Solicitor and transferred to the Department of Justice by the act creating that department on June 22, 1870 (16 Stat. 174), but was abolished by the appropriation act of June 19, 1878 (20 Stat. 205). The new position of Naval Solicitor and Judge Advocate General of the Navy (JAG) was created by a Navy Department circular dated March 14, 1877, and then the title was changed to Acting Judge Advocate by Navy Department circular on July 2, 1878. The position of Judge Advocate General of the Navy was authorized by an act of June 8, 1880 (21 Stat. 164). The Office of the Solicitor of the Navy was established by an appropriation act on May 22, 1908 (35 Stat. 218), to handle civil matters. It was merged into the Office of the Judge Advocate General by order of the Secretary of the Navy on September 1, 1921.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication consist of a single oversize bound volume that is partially paginated and partially unpaginated.

Title page. The first unnumbered page of this volume, titled “Index to Vol. of Investigations,” contains a list of 10 matters (spanning 1841–1865) without additional elaboration. This list may have been written here by JAG staff for quick reference.

Index. For each case, the following information is usually recorded in this order:

- Date.
- Vessel or personal name. If the investigation involves a person not attached to a vessel, such as a navy surveyor, the person’s name is listed in this column, such as W.F. Arnold, surveyor, Case No. 4953 (1901).
- Reason for the case, such as “grounding,” “collision,” “shortage [of] clothing [and] small stores,” and so forth.
- Case number
- Volume in which the complete case is recorded.

^{*} The Archival Research Catalog (ARC) is available for research online at www.archives.gov.

The index lacks pagination but is arranged in rough alphabetical order. Cases for 1861–1911 are normally arranged in rough alphabetical order by the first letter of the vessel name, then numerically by case number. Cases for 1912 to mid-1913 are arranged in rough alphabetical order by the first letter of relevant personal names or subjects, then numerically by case number. For example, “Accident to air pump on Pueblo,” Case 5731 (1913), is listed under “A” for accident and/or air pump, and “P” for Pueblo. “Accident to Mrs. A. Muller on Vicksburg while visiting,” Case 5637 (1912), is listed under “A” for accident, “M” for Muller, and “V” for Vicksburg. The reason for the case and the volume in which action on the case is recorded are given.

Cases for approximately mid-1913 to March 1917 are not listed in this index, but are included in the case summaries.

Case summaries. The pages are numbered from 1 to 427. The pagination accidentally skips from 154 (Case No. 5077) to 157 (Case No. 5078) without loss of information. Case summaries are arranged numerically from 3101 to 6787. Each summary names the person or subject before the court or board, and usually includes identification of the officer or order that caused the court or board to convene, the date and place of the proceedings, and findings or results. Full membership of the court or board is named until approximately Case No. 4837 (July 1892), after which only the senior member is normally indicated by name until Case No. 5216 (April 1910), after which the membership is not given. Cases numbered 5653 (December 1912) and later give reference to related file numbers, such as 26835-562:2.

This volume was filmed by the National Archives in 1973 in response to a customer reproduction order (NNG74-683). The National Archives retained a negative copy of the film, which was assigned the number M2135 in 2009 in order to issue it as a National Archives Microfilm Publication.

RELATED RECORDS

Case records for 1861–March 6, 1867 (Case No. 4577) have been reproduced on rolls 97–198 of National Archives Microfilm Publication M273, *Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799–1867* (198 rolls). That publication also contains records of earlier courts of inquiry and related indexes.