

M2089

SELECTED GERMAN DOCUMENTS FROM THE RECORDS OF THE
NAVAL RECORDS COLLECTION OF THE OFFICE OF NAVAL
RECORDS AND LIBRARY, 1897–1917

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and arranged these records for microfilming.

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INTRODUCTION

On the four rolls of this microfilm publication, M2089, are reproduced the contents of 34 logbooks and other bound volumes of original German Navy and merchant marine records located among the Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1897–1917, Record Group (RG) 45. The materials reproduced here constitute a part of those original German documents approved for restitution to the Bundesarchiv following the latter's request and subsequent negotiations with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For these German documents, microfilm publication M2089 represents the record copy retained by NARA.

BACKGROUND

President John Adams authorized the establishment of the Navy Department Library on March 31, 1800. Originally a component of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, the Navy Department Library was transferred by Navy Department General Order 292 on March 23, 1882, to the newly established Office of Naval Intelligence. There an unofficial adjunct staff to the Library, designated the Naval War Records Office, came into being in 1882 to compile for publication selected documents on naval aspects of the Civil War. On July 7, 1884, the Naval War Records Office and the Navy Department Library were formally consolidated by the Naval Appropriation Act (23 Stat. 185) into the Office of Library and Naval War Records. In October 1889 the Office was returned to the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, and assumed custody of the pre-1886 office files of the Secretary of the Navy. Separate legislation from 1904 to 1913 authorized the Office of Library and Naval War Records to collect older records of various bureaus of the Navy Department and records relating to naval personnel, vessels, and operations during the American Revolution. On March 4, 1915, the Office was redesignated the Office of Naval Records and Library by an omnibus appropriation act (38 Stat. 1025). A separate Historical Section, established within the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in July 1918 to collect records relating to U.S. Navy operations in World War I, was merged functionally into the Office of Naval Records and Library (ONRL) by order of the Secretary of the Navy, July 1, 1919, and consolidated legislatively by the Navy Appropriation Act (44 Stat. 595) on May 21, 1926. The new office, however, remained a component of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

During the interwar period the ONRL acquired many additional documents relating to American naval history from private and public sources. Due to the varied provenance of its holdings, the ONRL organized many of its records during the 1924–42 period into geographical (“Area”) and topical (“Subject”) files, each further arranged into chronological periods (1775–1910 and 1910–27). In November 1942 the ONRL transferred its Naval Records Collection to the National Archives.

A 2002 review of original German documents included among American-provenance record groups revealed a number of German Navy and merchant marine records, dated

1897–1917, located among the group of series collectively designated “Subject File, 1910–1927.” These materials had been maintained onboard German navy and merchant vessels interned in American waters prior to U.S. entry into the war and subsequently seized following the American declaration of war against Germany in April 1917. In 2003 the Bundesarchiv approached NARA regarding the possible return of these and a number of other German documents incorporated within American-provenance record groups. NARA reviewed the materials and in 2004 approved the return of these documents and others located in Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917–1923, RG 120, and Records of Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, United States Army, 1942–1945, RG 498.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The original German documents constitute the majority of a series of 39 numbered logbooks, journals, and navigation books of German and Dutch commercial and naval vessels, 1897–1918. In nearly all cases these records represent handwritten information (in ink or pencil) entered on printed standard form pages, often covering only a portion of the bound volume; blank form pages have not been microfilmed. These records furnish data on the movements, status, and meteorological observations of these vessels, but do not provide operational information.

Volumes 1–16 consist of logbooks for the German Navy unarmored cruiser S.M.S. (*Seiner Majestät Schiff*, His Majesty’s Ship) *Geier*, dated May 1912–February 1917 [incomplete], each of which provides approximately 100 double-sided pages of handwritten entries on standard form pages regarding the vessel’s status and administrative routine, navigational and meteorological data, ceremonial functions, disciplinary actions, and general remarks over a three-month period. The chronological arrangement of the logbooks, which was ignored in the sequential numbering of the volumes, and the corresponding volume number, are as follows:

- 12 May – 13 August 1912: Vol. 6
- 14 August – 16 November 1912: Vol. 5
- 17 November 1912 – 19 February 1913: Vol. 4
- 20 February – 8 June 1913: Vol. 3
- 9 June – 10 September 1913: Vol. 2
- 11 September – 16 December 1913: Vol. 1
- 17 December 1913 – 18 March 1914: Vol. 7
- 19 March – 21 June 1914: Vol. 8
- 22 June – 21 December 1914: missing, no information available
- 22 December 1914 – 26 March 1915: Vol. 9
- 26 March – 29 June 1915: Vol. 10

30 June – 31 August 1915: Vol. 11
1 September – 2 December 1915: Vol. 12
2 December 1915 – 3 March 1916: Vol. 13
4 March – 3 April 1916: missing, no information available
4 April – 5 July 1916: Vol. 14
6 July – 4 October 1916: Vol. 15
5 October 1916 – 4 February 1917: Vol. 16 (the log for 6 January –
3 February 1917 has been inserted after the entries for 5 January
1917)

S.M.S. *Geier*, launched at Wilhelmshaven on 18 October 1894 as a *kleiner Kreuzer* (“unarmored cruiser,” although sometimes referred to as a sloop or gunboat), performed duties with both the fleet and on foreign stations with the German Navy through most of her existence. In May 1912, *Korvettenkapitän* (Lt. Commander) Franz Halm served as her commanding officer; on 21 May 1913 he was replaced by *Korvettenkapitän* Karl Grasshoff. When World War I broke out, the *Geier* was in Indonesian waters en route to patrol Germany’s island possessions in the Central and South Pacific Ocean, designated the “Australia Station” by the German Navy. The warship traveled to German colonial possessions in the Bismarck Archipelago and then to the Marshall Islands in an unsuccessful attempt to join the *Kreuzergeschwader* (Cruiser Squadron) that departed the German colony at Tsingtao, China, in August 1914 and was virtually destroyed at the Battle of the Falklands in December 1914. The *Geier* then attempted to operate against British and Japanese shipping in the central Pacific, but engine problems compelled her to enter Honolulu, Hawaii, on 15 October 1914. The need for extended repairs and the arrival of Japanese warships on station outside the port led to the *Geier*’s internment on 7 November 1914. In February 1917 American forces seized the vessel in anticipation of a German scuttling attempt and apprehended the crew. Following the United States’ declaration of war on Germany on 6 April 1917, the vessel was repaired and refitted, and entered U.S. service as the U.S.S. *Schurz* on 15 September 1917. On 19 June 1918, while performing escort duty, the *Schurz* was accidentally rammed and sunk by the American freighter *Florida* off Cape Lookout, NC.

The logbooks document the *Geier*’s voyages in the eastern Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas (May 1912–January 1914), in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean (January–June 1914), and her internment at Honolulu, Hawaii, after November 1914. Each logbook page measures approximately 18 by 12 inches, some of which indicate water damage. At the beginning of each logbook are explanations of terms used, instructions for the categories of information to be entered, and a listing of the ship’s officers; at the end of each logbook is a listing of corrections (*Berichtigungsbuch*) to entries. Scattered among the log entries are occasional insertions with additional information, for example, listings of the names and ranks of the ship’s officers and crew inserted among the entries for 20 May 1913 and 19 May 1914.

Volumes 17–21 and 23–25 document various aspects of the German merchant ship *Liebfels* for the period 1910–1915; the *Liebfels*, a ship of the “Hansa” line based in Bremen, was interned at Charleston, SC, in August 1914 and eventually scuttled by her crew there on 1 February 1917. The vessel was subsequently raised by the U.S. Navy, refitted, and commissioned into service as transport *Houston (AK-1)* on 3 July 1917, serving thereafter as a supply ship before decommissioning at San Francisco, CA, 23 March 1922.

Volume 17 consists of a *Deviations-Buch*, a log of navigational deviations from the ship’s magnetic compass, 29 March 1913–30 March 1914 (omitting the period 28 October–14 November 1913). Volumes 18–21 and 23–25 comprise seven volumes of *Tagebücher*, logbooks of the navigational and administrative details of the vessel’s voyages and activities in port during the periods June 1910–July 1911, December 1912–May 1913, and October 1913–December 1915. Scattered among the *Tagebücher* are ship’s commissary inventory sheets and registers of births and deaths among the ship’s passengers and crew. Each entry page in these volumes measures approximately 14½ by 9 inches and consists of handwritten entries on standard form pages; printed instructions for entering data in the logbooks precede the entries.

Volume 22 consists of a bound collection of partly typed, partly handwritten correspondence and instructions regarding nautical surveys to be conducted by German naval vessels among Germany’s Pacific island possessions and islands of interest (e.g., Samoa, New Guinea, and the Marshall, Marianas, and Caroline Island groups), March 1912–July 1913. The surveys included measurements of water depths, locations of reefs, coastline observations, magnetic deviations, and other navigational data. Receipt stamps on the documents indicate these were received by the gunboat S.M.S. *Condor*, one of the vessels intended for this work. The correspondence and instructions constitute standard letter- and legal-size documents.

Volumes 31–37 actually constitute specific volumes (*Bände*) of a printed series of navigational observations and measurements entitled *Punkt-Verzeichnis Südsee* (“Index of Navigational Points, South Pacific Islands”), produced by nautical surveys of Germany’s Pacific island possessions by the German naval vessels S.M.S. *Planet*, S.M.S. *Möwe*, S.M.S. *Condor*, and S.M.S. *Cormoran* during the period 1897–1913. Each volume is subtitled for a specific region or group of islands and bears an Imperial German Navy archival designation on the inside cover (“Tit. A. No. 32”), indicating that these may have been removed from a central library collection for use on board a particular vessel, perhaps the survey vessel S.M.S. *Planet*. Each volume measures approximately 12 by 8½ inches and contains standard form pages with handwritten entries of data that detail longitude, latitude, and geographic descriptions of specific locations, as recorded by specific vessels at specific times.

The original S.M.S. *Cormoran*, an unarmored cruiser that operated in Asiatic and Chinese waters, was scuttled in the early stages of the Anglo-Japanese siege of the German colony at Tsingtao, China, but many of her crew and the ship’s armament were transferred to the captured Russian merchant ship *Riasan*, commissioned into German service in August 1914 as *Hilfskreuzer* (auxiliary cruiser) S.M.S. *Cormoran*

under the command of *Korvettenkapitän* Adalbert Zuckschwerdt. After escaping Tsingtao, the *Cormoran* in September 1914 recovered the crew of the German Navy survey ship S.M.S. *Planet*, which was scuttled at Yap Island to prevent capture by Japanese forces, and continued to operate against Allied shipping in the Pacific until fuel shortages compelled her internment at the American colony of Guam in December 1914. With the American declaration of war on Germany in April 1917, *Hilfskreuzer Cormoran* was scuttled and the crew taken prisoner by U.S. forces. It is likely that Volumes 31–38, and possibly Volume 22 as well, came into U.S. naval custody as a result of this action.

The correlation of the numbered *Bände* to Volumes 31–37, with corresponding data for specific survey vessels and dates, is as follows:

Band 1 *Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land mit den vorgelagerten Inseln* (Vol. 33), surveys of northeastern New Guinea and neighboring islands by S.M.S. *Möwe*, February 1897–July 1898, S.M.S. *Planet*, August–November 1910 and January–February 1913, and S.M.S. *Cormoran*, October 1909

Band 3 *Westlicher Bismarck-Archipel* (Vol. 31), surveys of the Admiralty and Purdy Islands in the western Bismarck Archipelago by S.M.S. *Planet*, September 1906, August–September 1908 and August–September 1911

Band 4 *Östlicher Bismarck-Archipel* (Vol. 37), surveys of “Neu Mecklenburg” (now New Ireland) and other islands in the eastern Bismarck Archipelago by S.M.S. *Möwe*, October–November 1902, October–December 1904, and April–June 1905, and by S.M.S. *Planet*, September 1906, October 1907, August 1908, March and July 1910, and March and July 1913

Band 6 *Marshall-Inseln und Nauru* (Vol. 36), a survey of Jaluit and Likiep Atolls in the Marshall Islands, apparently by S.M.S. *Planet*, no date

Band 7 *Ost-Karolinien* (Vol. 34), surveys of Ponape Island and Truk Atoll in the eastern Caroline Islands by S.M.S. *Planet*, January 1911, and S.M.S. *Condor*, October 1912 and February–March 1913

Band 8 *West-Karolinen und Marianen* (Vol. 32), nautical surveys of the Palau Islands, Saipan in the Marianas, and Yap Island in the western Caroline Islands by S.M.S. *Planet*, August 1909, and S.M.S. *Condor*, November 1912, and April 1913

Band 9 *Kiautschou* (Vol. 35), surveys of the coastal waters of Tsingtao and Kiachow Bay, China, by S.M.S. *Planet*, March 1912.

Volume 38, entitled *Pegelbuch Südsee* (“Hydrographic Data, South Pacific”), appears closely related to the preceding collection, as it provides tidal data and other hydrographic data recorded at various hydrographic stations (*Pegelstationen*) located among Germany’s Pacific island possessions. Included are some drawings and hydro-

graphic data for each station, as recorded by visiting German vessels S.M.S. *Planet*, S.M.S. *Condor*, and S.M.S. *Cormoran* during the periods May–October 1907 and January 1910–December 1913. Internal evidence indicates that the volume was regularly transferred among the German cruisers rotating on duty station.

Volume 39 consists of a *Tagebuch* (logbook) maintained onboard the North German Lloyd passenger liner *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, which was also converted into an auxiliary cruiser for the German Navy at Tsingtao in August 1914, under the command of *Korvettenkapitän* Max Thierichens. After sinking or capturing a number of Allied merchant ships in the Pacific and South Atlantic, the auxiliary cruiser interned herself due to fuel shortages at Newport News, VA, in March 1915, and was later moved to Philadelphia, PA. Seized by the U.S. Navy in April 1917, the ship was commissioned into American service as transport *DeKalb* on 12 May 1917 and served as a troopship for the remainder of the war. The logbook records navigational, meteorological, and administrative details of the liner's peacetime activities during the period 7 May–14 September 1913. The logbook measures approximately 16 by 10 inches and consists of handwritten entries on standard form pages, with instructions provided at the beginning of the logbook to indicate the types of information to be recorded; following the log entries is a list of crew members as of May 1913.

All materials are in the German language, and the extensive use of handwritten entries requires a familiarity with German handwriting of that period as well.

RELATED RECORDS

RECORDS OF THE NAVAL RECORDS COLLECTION OF THE OFFICE OF NAVAL RECORDS AND LIBRARY, RG 45

The Subject File of the U.S. Navy, 1910–1927 (identified as Entry 520 in Inventory 18, *Inventory of the Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library*, RG 45), includes additional documentation of the German vessels interned in U.S. waters and subsequently destroyed or seized by U.S. forces, located in file designation “JT – Enemy Naval Ships Other Than U-Boats,” thereunder arranged alphabetically by name of vessel. For S.M.S. *Geier*, there is a small volume of correspondence and reports relating to the American seizure of the warship in February 1917. Documentation for *Hilfskreuzer Cormoran* includes correspondence, orders and reports regarding the planned seizure of the vessel and her destruction by the German crew, February–April 1917; correspondence of the German commanding officer with U.S. naval authorities on Guam regarding an incident involving a German civilian, March 1916; personal accounts and condensed (translated) notes from private journals regarding the *Cormoran*'s history and operations, August–December 1914; and press clippings regarding the vessel's destruction. For the *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, an exten-

sive collection of materials includes press clippings of the vessel's wartime operations, December 1914–April 1915; a copy of the wartime German publication, *Kreuzerfahrten des 'Prinz Eitel Friedrichs'*; correspondence pertaining to the ship's internment and leave/passes granted to her crew, November 1915–August 1916; correspondence and reports relating to the vessel's transfer to Philadelphia Naval Yard and mechanical repairs, September 1916–May 1917; reports and copies of Executive Orders relating to the U.S. seizure of the ship, April–May 1917; and general information concerning the ship's operations in German service, prepared September 1919–January 1921.

The Subject File, 1910–1927, also contains documentation of these vessels' subsequent service in the U.S. Navy, located under the designation "U.S. Naval Vessels, OS -," arranged thereunder by the American name of the vessel. For the former S.M.S. *Geier*, information is located in "OS-Schurz"; for the former *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, information is located in "OS-DeKalb"; and for the former *Liebenfels*, extensive correspondence and reports can be found in "OS-Houston."

NATIONAL ARCHIVES COLLECTION OF FOREIGN RECORDS SEIZED, RG 242

National Archives Microfilm Publication T1022, *Records of the German Navy, 1850–1945, Received from the United States Naval History Division*, includes extensive documentation for several of the vessels described. For the unarmored cruiser S.M.S. *Geier*, reports of the vessels' activities prepared by her captain in July 1914 and July 1921 are reproduced on record item PG 62751 on roll 192, and a copy of her war diary is reproduced on roll 4313 (no PG record item number). Additional reports of the *Geier's* activities and internment, 1914–17, are located in record items PG 65131 and PG 65133, reproduced on roll 1395. Prewar documentation of the *Geier's* activities, October 1912–July 1913, is reproduced in record item PG 69078, roll 533, and scattered among the "Militärpolitische Berichte S.M. Schiffe" in record items PG 65122–125, rolls 1367–68, PG 65126, roll 1340, and PG 65127, roll 1339.

A collection of wartime and postwar reports documenting the activities of the auxiliary cruiser *Cormoran*, including a report on the activities and scuttling of the survey vessel S.M.S. *Planet*, is reproduced as record item PG 62758, roll 193. Examples of prewar reports of the *Planet* and of S.M.S. *Condor* are also located among the "Militärpolitische Berichte S.M. Schiffe" in record items PG 65112, roll 1338, PG 65113, roll 1340, and PG 65126, roll 1340. For the auxiliary cruiser *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, a summary report of her activities from 4 August 1914 to 10 March 1915, together with a detailed war diary and accompanying appendices for the period 31 July–31 October 1914, is reproduced as record item PG 63504 on roll 374. Additional documentation of the *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* during its internment in the United States, March 1915–January 1918, is located in record items PG 75162–163, roll 801.

A finding aid to Imperial German Navy records for the World War I period is in preparation.

GENERAL RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY, 1798–1947, RG 80

The general correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, July 1897–August 1926 (*PC 31 [46-20]*, Entry 19), divided into two chronological subseries (1897–1915 and 1916–1926), includes various correspondence, reports, and other materials pertaining to the activities and ultimate disposition of German vessels and their crews interned in American waters during World War I. In the case of the auxiliary cruiser *Cormoran*, virtually all documentation pertaining to the vessel's internment and scuttling at Guam is located in file number 9351–1395, in both subseries. For the S.M.S. *Geier*, however, information is located among file numbers 27715-29 through 27715-46 and 27914-46 through 27914-68, among others, while documentation pertaining to the vessel's U.S. Navy identity as the U.S.S. *Schurz* can be found in files 27980 and 26835-1017. Information relating to the *Liebenfels* is scattered among various files (e.g., 26395-439, 27711-72, and 39353-250), with additional documentation as the transport U.S.S. *Houston* in files 27973 and 28963-566, among others. A finding aid to this series, the *General and Special Indexes to the General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, July 1897–August 1926*, has been microfilmed as Microfilm Publication M1052.

RECORDS OF THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, RG 65

Additional World War I-era German records are located among the “Dr. Heinz F. Albert Papers” (A1, Entry 35). A collection of official and personal materials seized at the German consulate in New York in 1917, the series primarily documents the prewar and wartime trade, business, and financial activities of German consular representative Dr. Heinz Albert and his predecessor, Erich Hossfeldler. Incorporated among these, however, are a number of naval records apparently intended for transmission to Germany, including a copy of the war diary of the unarmored cruiser S.M.S. *Geier*, 1 August–15 October 1914, and the daily journal of the captain of the German passenger steamer *O.J.D. Ahlers*, 23 July–22 October 1914, documenting the latter vessel's service as a collier with the German Navy's Cruiser Squadron in the Pacific.

RECORDS OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL AND SPECIAL STAFFS, RG 165

The formerly security-classified correspondence and reports of the Military Intelligence Division (MID), 1917–1941 (*NM-84*, Entry 65), include the three-volume personal diary and many personal papers of *Korvettenkapitän* Karl Grasshoff, commanding officer of the S.M.S. *Geier*, for the 1913–17 period as part of record item MID 9605-4. The handwritten diary for 20 May 1913–16 June 1916 is accompanied by an English-language translation, American newspaper clippings, and U.S. military correspondence and commentaries pertaining to the papers.

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and 22 December 1914 – 5 July 1916 (seven volumes)
- 3 Logbooks of the unarmored cruiser S.M.S. *Geier*,
6 July 1916 – 4 February 1917 (two volumes)

Magnetic-Compass Deviations Book of the German merchant steamer
Liebenfels, 29 March – 27 October 1913 and 15 November 1913 –
30 March 1914

Logbooks of the German merchant steamer *Liebenfels*, 2 June 1910 –
8 July 1911 and 7 December 1912 – 5 May 1913 (four volumes)
- 4 Logbooks of the German merchant steamer *Liebenfels*, 29 October 1913 –
12 December 1915 (three volumes)

Bound collection of correspondence and instructions for nautical surveys,
S.M.S. *Condor*, March 1912 – July 1913

Published series of nautical surveys (*Punkt-Verzeichnis Südsee*) in the Pacific
(seven volumes):
 - Band 1, Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land mit den vorgelagerten Inseln* (1897–1913)
 - Band 3, Westlicher Bismarck-Archipel* (1906–11)
 - Band 4, Östlicher Bismarck-Archipel* (1902–13)
 - Band 6, Marshall-Inseln und Nauru* (no date)
 - Band 7, Ost-Karolinen* (1911–13)
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Bound collection (*Pegelbuch Südsee*) of hydrographic data recorded at
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Logbook of German merchant steamer *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, 7 May – 14
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