

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Edward C. Taintor

Papers, 1839-1879

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May 1990**

SUMMARY

- Main Entry:** Taintor, Edward C., 1842-1878
- Title:** Edward C. Taintor, Papers, 1839-1879 (bulk 1865-1870)
- Size:** .16 linear ft. (1/2 AB)
- Source:** Gift of Angela P. Suter, 1984; 1990
- Abstract:** Edward C. Taintor (1842-1878) was an American who served in the Chinese Customs Service. The collection consists chiefly of Taintor's letters to his brothers and sisters, 1865-1870, describing his trip to China, daily life there, his travels to various port cities, the local customs, and business affairs. Administrative Information Source
- Copyright:** Not to be published without consent of Angela P. Suter

Biographical Note

Edward C. Taintor was a recent graduate of Union College, Schenectady, New York, when he was selected as one of three exceptional young scholars to serve in the Chinese Customs Service. He arrived in China in 1865 and was stationed first in Peking and later in several port cities. While on duty in Formosa he contracted a disease which left him deaf. He obtained sick leave and returned to the U.S. in 1870. During his stay in America he married and had two children. Once he had regained his health he returned to China where he was put in charge of the Customs Service's Department of Statistics. In addition to his official duties, Taintor continued to pursue classical studies, Chinese language and literature, and research for the Royal Geographical Society of England. However, the stress and isolation produced by his deafness forced him to return to the U.S. once again in 1875. Taintor attempted to resume his duties in January of 1878, but frustration with his deafness and depression led him to commit suicide in May of that year.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists chiefly of Taintor's letters, 1865-1870, to his brothers and sister written while aboard the ship *Christian Mathias* en route to China and after his arrival. The letters describe life aboard ship, intermediate stops in Rio de Janeiro and Java, and provide detailed accounts of his daily life in China, travels to various port cities, local customs and business affairs. The letters are also available in the typed transcript, "An American Life in the Chinese Customs Service, 1865-1870" compiled by Lawrence Phillips, Angela Phillips Suter, and Angela Suter. In addition to the letters, the papers contain Taintor's published essay, *The Aborigines of Northern Formosa* (1874), a manuscript outline map of Peking (enclosed in his letter of January 31, 1866), clippings, Sabbath School certificates, obituaries, and two carte-de-visite photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

- Folder 1 **Letters, 1865-1870.**
- Folder 2 ***An American Life in the Chinese Customs Service, 1865-1870.***
 Compiled by Lawrence Phillips, Angela Phillips Suter, Angela Suter,
 with an introduction by Angela Suter.
 (Spiral-bound typescript of letters in folder 1).
- Folder 3 ***The aborigines of northern Formosa* :** a paper read before the North
 China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Shanghai, 18th June, 1874 /
 Edward C. Taintor.
- Folder 4 **Photographs, 1868-1869.** Two cartes-de-visite.
 Seated portrait of Taintor, 1868
 Group portrait of Baron de Méritens and guests (including
 Taintor), Christmas Day, 1869.
- Folder 5 **Miscellany**
- holograph poem entitled "To Esther May 18th 1839"
 - Sabbath School certificates, 1856-1856
 - two clippings from the *New York Times*: a review of Taintor's
 published lecture, *The Iliad and the Recent Discoveries at Troy*, and
 Taintor's obituary
 - S. Wells Williams. Holograph letter, [1878] July 6 to the *New York
 Times* memorializing Taintor