

---

**ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

949 East Second Street  
Tucson, AZ 85719

Library and Archives  
(520) 617-1157

ahsref@azhs.gov

---

**MS 1136  
UNITED STATES CUSTOMS  
SERVICE, DISTRICT OF NOGALES  
Papers, 1892 - 1977**

**DESCRIPTION**

Correspondence, customs officer training lessons, reports, and conference notes from the United States Customs District of Nogales, Arizona largely between 1913 and 1949. Highlights include lesson plans for the training of customs agents assigned to border service and extensive correspondence from the Douglas office between 1913 and 1937 depicting smuggling activities, wanted individuals by the Treasury Department, and transportation of arms and ammunition to support the Mexican government during the revolutionary period.

11 Boxes, 5.5 linear feet

**ACQUISITION**

Gift from Frederick Lawrence and John L. Payne through several donations between 1988 and 1989.

**ACCESS**

There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

**COPYRIGHT**

Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Archives Department.

**PROCESSING**

The collection was processed by William D. Tackenberg in May 1999.

**ARRANGEMENT**

Collection arranged into five series: 1/Correspondence, 1913-1977; 2/Reports, 1931-1971; 3/Conferences and Meetings, 1938-1966; 4/Education of Custom Officers, 1935-1958; 5/Miscellaneous Manuals and Papers, 1892-1966.

**HISTORICAL NOTE**

The United States Customs Service traces its history back to the passage of the first Tariff Act of 1789 and the organization established for the collection of those customs duties. Customs officers have been assigned to the Mexican border area since 1845. The original administrative control was under the direction of the Collector of Customs, Caleb Sherman, located at Franklin, Texas with jurisdiction over the District of Paseo Del Norte (El Paso,

Texas) which included the Arizona area. The first customs collector in the Arizona area, G. D. Mercer, was assigned to Calabasas, Arizona in 1857. Under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, customs officers along the Mexican border collect import duties at designated customs ports, patrolled the international boundary, and apprehend smugglers.

In 1890 Congress established the Arizona Collection District, separate from both New Mexico and California with Nogales as the only Port of Entry. In 1895 Yuma was made a Subport of Entry followed by Douglas (1901) and Naco (1902). The District was reorganized in 1913. The first Collector of Customs in the District of Arizona was George Christ.

Initially border customs officials were almost exclusively concerned with agricultural and mining imports. Mining, farming, and ranching interests in northern Mexico exported many of their products to the United States, including gold and silver bullion, common salt, poultry, vegetables, and cattle. Customs inspectors examined imports, assessed values, and collected customs duties in cooperation with customs collectors.

In 1910, events began in Mexico which were to severely test the personnel and resources of the Nogales border area. Revolution in Mexico increased the smuggling of arms, ammunition, and other war supplies across the border. To protect the border areas Camp Little, Camp Newell, and Camp Jones were established at Nogales, Naco, and Douglas for military personnel. A series of revolutions shook Mexico and provided border unrest through the 1920s.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection reflects activities of the United States Customs District of Nogales, Arizona for the period 1913 through 1940. Correspondence highlights communications between the Treasury Department and border Customs offices on areas of concern including smuggling activities, shipments of weapons, and information on wanted individuals. Education of Customs officers is entailed with instructional lessons for classes conducted between 1930 and 1945. Reports and conference meetings reflect areas of concern to officials of the Custom Service and intelligence reports of suspicious activities observed between 1931 and 1971. Manuals on customs regulations and guidelines for Customs officers are also included.

The correspondence section provides the most significant information for the collection. Communication with the Treasury Department and the Douglas Customs office provide a rich view of activities, concerns, and day-to-day activities. The period of the correspondence at the Douglas office is from 1913 to 1937. The first portion of this period was a turbulent period for Mexico and the Mexican-American border area. A significant amount of correspondence reflects transportation of arms and weapons of war for support of the Mexican government traveling from the United States to Mexico. Some letters also express concern over large quantities of explosives delivered to mining operations in Mexico, sometimes consisting of hundreds of cases of dynamite, fuses, and caps. Later correspondence contains information on wanted persons who were attempting to cross the border or were involved in crime in the Southwest. Wanted posters on many of these persons are including with one on Arthur Flegenheimer (alias Dutch Schultz). Customs Service activities against the smuggling of opium, cigarettes and other tobacco products, and alcohol are also present.

Annual reports to the Nogales, Arizona District are present for two years. Activity reports reflect significant events at the San Luis, Arizona location from 1949 to 1971. Seizure reports and intelligence letters contain information passed from one Treasury Department office and authority to another on suspicious individuals or persons actually wanted for law violations. Meeting and conference folders highlight areas of concern and discussion between Customs officials at three different locations. Agendas including discussion of topics including administrative issues regarding seizure of property, shortage of custom officers, entry procedures for handling merchandise and duty assessments.

The education series highlights some of the training and education for Custom officers provided by the Treasury Department. A School of Instruction for Custom Officers was conducted in both 1940 and 1958. Outlines of classes taught and notes are present in the collection. A manual for instruction of inspectors is also present. Included in this section are sixteen class outlines for presentation to Custom officers in the period 1936 to 1945 outlining duties and responsibilities.

The last section of the collection contains manuals with information and regulations for use by the Custom Service. A copy of *Downings' Customs Tariff* and *Gauger's Weighing Manual* are present. In addition, a copy of the *Customs Sampling Guide* and *Regulations For Weights, Gauges, and Measurers* are also present. A manuscript, "Border Memoirs" by Fred Valenzuela provides interesting stories near the Naco, Arizona border location in the late 1920s and 1930s. Biographical information on Matthew Egnell, Customs Inspector of Nogales, Arizona, is included.

## BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

### Box 1

#### Series 1: Customs Service Correspondence, 1913 - 1977

Folder 1: Communications with Department of Treasury	1946-1977
f.2 Trip/Inspection Reports from Nogales, AZ	1939-1967
f.3 Controlling Livestock	1962-1969
f.4-9 Douglas Arizona Office Communication	1913-1914

### Box 2

f.10-17 Douglas Arizona Office Communication	1914-1915
--	-----------

### Box 3

f.18-25 Douglas Arizona Office Communication	1915-1916
--	-----------

### Box 4

f.26-36 Douglas Arizona Office Communication	1916
--	------

### Box 5

f.37-48 Douglas Arizona Office Communication	1917-1924
--	-----------

### Box 6

f.49-56 Douglas Arizona Office Communication	1925-1937
--	-----------

### Box 7

#### Series 2: Reports, 1931-1971

f.57 Annual Reports – Nogales, Arizona	1968/1969
f.58 Activity Reports – Nogales, Arizona	1949-1971
f.59-61 Seizure Reports	1931-1951
f.62-64 Intelligence Letters	1937-1965
f.65 INTERPOL Notices	1949
f.66 Sworn Depositions	1938/1939

### Box 8

#### Series 3: Conferences and Meetings, 1938 - 1966

f.67 San Diego, CA	1938
f.68 Laredo, TX	1964
f.69 Los Angeles, CA	1966
f.70 Speeches at Conferences	1940/1958/1959

#### Series 4: Education of Customs Officers, 1935 - 1958

f.71	Correspondence School	1935
f.72	School of Instruction for Customs Officers	1940
f.73	School of Instruction for Customs Officers – School Notes	1940
f.74	School of Instruction for Customs Officers	1958
f.75	Manual for Instruction of Inspectors	ND
f.76	U.S. Customs Service Manual – Draft	ND
f.77	Personnel In Customs Service	1941-1943
f.78	Local Classes at Douglas and Naco, AZ	1940-1941
f.79	Historical Background of Service	1937-1939

#### Box 9

f.80	Customs Collection Districts and Ports of Entry – Lesson #1	1936/1939
f.81	Border Work – Lesson #6	1944
f.82	Entry Work – Lesson #8	1936/1943
f.83	Bonds and Related Papers – Lesson #9	1937-1939
f.84	Importation By Mail – Lesson #10	1937
f.85	Merchandise Conditionally Free or Subject to Reduced Rate of Duty – Lesson #11	1943/1944
f.86	Passenger's Baggage – Lesson #12	1938-1942
f.87	Packing and Stamping – Lesson #13	1938
f.88	Marking – Lesson #14	1936-1943
f.89	Examination and Appraisalment – Lesson #19	1936-1941
f.90	Dumping – Lesson #20	1941

#### Box 10

f.91	Relief From Duty – Lesson #22	1943-1944
f.92	Liquidation of Duties – Lesson #23	1941-1942
f.93	Protests – Lesson #25	1939/1943
f.94	Transportation In Bond – Lesson #27	1943-1944
f.95	Enforcement – Lesson #31	1943
f.96	Financial and Accounting Procedure – Lesson #32	1942-1945

#### Series 5: Miscellaneous, 1892 - 1966

f.97	Manuscript – “Border Memoirs” by Fred Valenzuela	1929/1964/1966
f.98	Matthew Egnell – Customs Inspector	1950-1963
f.99	U.S. Customs Stamps	1933
f.100	Manual for Customs Inspectors	1946
	Herbert Chatham's Memo Book on Customs Regulations	1919

#### Box 11

f.101	2 Photos (unidentified)	
f.102	Two Customs Manuals – <i>Downings' U.S. Customs Tariff</i>	1897
	<i>Gauger's Weighting Manual</i>	1911
f.103	<i>Customs Sampling Guide</i>	1938
	<i>Regulations For Weighers, Gauges, &amp; Measurers</i>	1892/1908