

# Guide to the David Bushnell Papers

MS 1107



compiled by Staff of Manuscripts and Archives

April 1980

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1107

**CREATOR:** Bushnell, David, 1740-

**TITLE:** David Bushnell papers

**DATES:** 1783-1956

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Miscellaneous papers by and about Bushnell. Only two items are in his hand: a letter (1787) claiming land due him as a result of his service in the American Revolution, and a description of a model for a sailing torpedo [1824?]. Papers on his inventions include a letter by Ezra Lee (1815) with an account of Bushnell's submarine and Lee's operation of it in August 1787 in New York harbor. Also three letters by Joel Abbot (1825) to Bushnell (then known as David Bush) on his attempts to promote Bushnell's naval warning device. Correspondence (1826-1827) between his executor and his heirs, Ezra and Nehemiah Bushnell of Saybrook, Connecticut, includes a final accounting of Bushnell's estate. In the later papers (1881-1956) are four letters to Anson Phelps Stokes with biographical information on Bushnell and publications on his submarine.

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1107>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Conditions Governing Use

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### Preferred Citation

David Bushnell Papers (MS 1107). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

David Bushnell: inventor of the submarine mine and the submarine; in 1779 captain of sapping and mining company in the Revolutionary Army; in 1783 placed in command of the Corps of Engineers; in 1795 taught in private schools and several years later began practicing medicine in Warrenton, Georgia.

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## Scope and Contents

The David Bushnell Papers consist of miscellaneous papers by and about the inventor David Bushnell. Only two items are in his hand: a letter (1787) claiming land due to him as a result of his service in the American Revolution, and a description of a model for a sailing torpedo [1824?]. Papers on his inventions include a letter by Ezra Lee (1815) with an account of Bushnell's submarine and Lee's operation of it in August 1787 in New York harbor. Also included are three letters by Joel Abbot (1825) to Bushnell (then known as David Bush) on his attempts to promote Bushnell's naval warning device. Correspondence (1826-1827) between his executor and his heirs, Ezra and Nehemiah Bushnell of Saybrook, Connecticut, includes a final accounting of Bushnell's estate. In the later papers (1881-1956) are four letters to Anson Phelps Stokes with biographical information on Bushnell and publications on his submarine.

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## Collection Contents

### Personal Papers

b. 1, f. 1	Abbot, Joel. 3 ALS to David Bush with enclosure to Secretary of the Navy. Re: Bushnell's "device for drawing off the invading foes of our country..."	1825 January 19, February 28, undated
Bushnell, David		
b. 1, f. 2	2 signed receipts (photostatic copies) for rations	1783 July 4, 11
b. 1, f. 3	ALS to Captain Thomas Machin. [Re: Land due him as a result of his military service during the American Revolution]	1787 December 14
b. 1, f. 4	Description of a model of a sailing torpedo	[ca. 1824?]
Estate		
b. 1, f. 5	Bushnell, Nehemiah. Correspondence re: estate	1827 May 16, 27
b. 1, f. 6	Griswold, Charles. ALS to Ezra or Nehemiah Bushnell	1826 March 27
Hargraves, George		
b. 1, f. 7	3 ALS to Ezra Bushnell re: Estate of "David Bush"	1826 January 26, March 17, August 16
b. 1, f. 8	2 ALS to Ezra Bushnell re: Estate of "David Bush" with enclosure showing the accounts for the estate of David Bush A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1827 February 25, April 10
Legal Documents:		
b. 1, f. 9	Will (copy)	1820
b. 1, f. 9	Indemnifying bond	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Receipt	1826
Writings about David Bushnell		
b. 1, f. 10	<a href="#">Abbot, Henry L. "The beginning of Modern Submarine Warfare." N.Y., Battalion Press of the U.S. Corp of Engineers. 196p. [2 copies]</a>	1881
Lee, Ezra		
b. 1, f. 11	ALS to David Humphreys. [Describing his operation of the Bushnell submarine in August of 1776. With a printed biographical note on Humphreys] A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1815 February 20
b. 1, f. 12	Biographical note, including information on the Lee letter in folder 11	undated

b. 1, f. 12	Newman, Louis I. "Sergeant Ezra Lee and his 'American Turtle'" (Poem)	undated
b. 1, f. 13	Miscellaneous letters to Anson Phelps Stokes re: David Bushnell A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1911-1914
b. 1, f. 14	Miscellaneous printed matter re: David Bushnell A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1867, 1875 January 2, undated
b. 1, f. 15	Schieffelin, Edward Loomis. "David Bushnell and the First American Submarine" [student paper]	1956

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Science  
Submarines (Ships)  
Submarine warfare  
Torpedoes

### **Geographic Names**

United States -- History -- Revolution,  
1775-1783

### **Occupations**

Inventors

### **Names**

Abbot, Henry L.  
Bushnell, David, 1740-  
Lee, Ezra, 1749-1821  
Schieffelin, Edward, 1847-1897