What does it mean for someone to be "documented"? This talk will consider an approach to archival investigation that considers the material histories of documents themselves, as objects with prehistories, afterlives, and significance to the people who issued and held them. It focuses on people's circulation to and from Cuba to illuminate conflicts during the nineteenth century about when and where documents should be held and who should possess them. This presentation considers the opportunities and limitations of seeing questions about travel papers as at least in part about struggles over the authority of documents. Doing so can help reframe historians’ encounters with those very documents and with the fraught institutional and cultural politics that inform contemporary critiques of the archive.