

**Guide to the Henry X. Wright Papers, circa 1849-1924
MS0072**

**The Mariners' Museum Library
at
Christopher Newport University**

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Processed in 2006

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners' Museum Library

Title: Henry X. Wright Papers

Inclusive Dates: circa 1849-1924

Catalog number: MS0072

Physical Characteristics: 49 items, including passports, sketches, correspondence, orders (military records), sales records, bookkeeping records, letterheads, postcards, and resolutions (administrative records).

Language: English

Creator(s): Wright, Henry X., b. 1835

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Biographical information is limited for Henry X. Wright. A Virginian, he was born in 1835. The collection's earliest document places him on the USN *Fulton* as an assistant engineer at age 24. The outbreak of the Civil War finds him aboard the USS *Pocahontas*. In April 1861 Wright tendered his resignation from the United States Navy, which was accepted on May 6, 1861. On May 22, 1861 he was accepted into the Confederate States Navy, with orders to report for duty.

Wright was one of the officers on a highly secretive mission to Lake Erie for the purpose of stealing Confederate prisoners from Johnson's Island in the fall of 1863. Wright went as 1st Assistant Engineer. Only a few officers knew the true mission of the voyage when it began, most believing they were headed to England. John Wilkinson was in command of the complex mission, which was foiled by betrayal and not carried out.

Wright and other officers were commended in a report by Hunter Davidson to Secretary Mallory for their part in torpedo mission against the USS *Minnesota* off Newport News, VA on April 9, 1864.

A member of the James River Squadron, Wright served aboard the CSS *Richmond* and later the *Virginia II*. He was promoted to Chief Engineer in June 1864, shortly afterwards he examined the *Drewry* and recommended that she be sent for repairs in Richmond. Very likely he participated in the destruction of the CSS *Virginia II* when Richmond fell to Union forces in April 1865.

Timeline for Henry X. Wright

1835	Born
1859	Assistant Engineer on the USS <i>Fulton</i>
1860	Assigned to the USS <i>Pocahontas</i> – Norfolk address
1861	Resigned the USN Navy and joined the CSN
May	Assigned to the CSS <i>Yorktown</i> – renamed CSS <i>Patrick Henry</i>
July	Promoted to 2nd Assistant Engineer
Nov	
1862	On the CSS <i>Capitol</i> in Greenwood, Mississippi
May	
July	On the CSS <i>Patrick Henry</i>

	July – Aug	Makes reports on machinery of James River Squadron vessels
	Aug	Assigned to the CSS <i>Richmond</i>
1863	Jan	Passed exam for 2nd Assistant Engineer in 12th place
	Jan	Writes to commander that they need more men on the CSS <i>Richmond</i>
	Oct-Dec	On mission to Montreal/Lake Erie
1864	April	On a torpedo mission against the USN <i>Minnesota</i>
	May	On the CSS <i>Richmond</i>
	June	Promoted to Chief Engineer
	July	Examined <i>Drewry</i> and <i>Virginia II</i> machinery and boilers
	Oct	Chief Engineer on the CSS <i>Richmond</i>
	Nov - Apr	Chief Engineer on the CSS <i>Virginia II</i>
1865	April	During the fall of Richmond, the CSS <i>Virginia II</i> was blown up to prevent capture.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection relates to Henry X. Wright's naval career between 1859 and 1864. It contains mostly military orders, a couple of letters of recommendation, travel invoices and vouchers, two passports, and a page of engineering sketches. The collection begins with Wright as a 3rd Assistant Engineer on the USS *Fulton* in 1859. In May 1861 he resigned the United States Navy and joined the Confederate States Navy. The bulk of the papers document his advancement from 3rd Assistant Engineer to Chief Engineer in the Confederate States Navy. Other relevant papers include engineering reports he wrote on various Confederate vessels in 1862. Among the post-war documents are two passports for issued to him in 1866 and 1874 and forms soliciting information on naval veterans from the Navy Department, United Confederate Veterans c. 1924.

The collection organized into a single series: Papers.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Accession number

CK128

Accession date

1994

Restrictions

Collection is open to all researchers.

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Preferred Citation

Henry X. Wright Papers, circa 1849-1924, MS0072, The Mariners' Museum Library

Note to Users

Due to the fragile and rare nature of the collection, researchers are requested to handle the materials with caution and in accordance with prescribed archival practices. When using these materials, please preserve the original order of the collection.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Series 1: Papers (circa 1849-1924)

The series organized into folders and is arranged alphabetically by type and there under in ascending chronological order.

FILE GUIDE

BOX 1

Folder 1 Finding Aid/Background

SERIES 1: Papers

Folder 2 Military Documents: Correspondence

December 7, 1859: Navy Yard, Warrington Fl.

S. W. Alexander, Sr. Engineer USS *Fulton* to H. X. Wright, 3rd Asst. Engineer, USS *Pensacola*. Letter of praise

Folder 3 Military Documents: General Orders: 1849

May 25, 1849

Navy Department. Regulations for Admission and Promotion in the Engineer Corps. Typeset document on embossed paper.

Folder 4 Military Documents: Orders (USN): 1859

March 14, 1859

Orders to report for examination for appointment as Assistant Engineer in the US Navy. Indication written along side of paper that he was examined April 29th.

June 9, 1859

Assigned to the USS *Fulton*.

October 28, 1859

Detached from the USS *Fulton*. Permission granted to take passage on the *Pensacola* to Norfolk, VA.

Folder 5 Military Documents: Orders (USN): 1860

February 3, 1860

Assigned to the USS *Pocahontas*. Postmarked envelope addressed to 3rd Asst. Engineer H. X. Wright U. S. Navy, Norfolk, VA.

Folder 6 Military Documents: Orders (USN): 1861

May 1, 1861

To Henry X. Wright from Gideon Welles. Detached from the USS *Pocahontas* and regarded as awaiting orders.

May 6, 1861

To Henry X. Wright from Gideon Welles. Letter of the 29th tendering resignation received and his name stricken from the rolls of the U.S. Navy. Also postmarked envelope addressed to H.X. Wright, Norfolk VA.

Folder 7 Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1861

- May 22, 1861
Office of Naval Detail & Equipment
Orders to report to Flag Officer Forrest for duty. Has postmarked envelope.
- Folder 8** Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1861
June 11, 1861
Secretary Mallory to Henry X. Wright. Appointment as 3rd Assistant Engineer.
June 20, 1861
- Folder 9** Order to report to the Secretary of the Navy on the 26th.
Military Documents: Orders & Correspondence (CSN): 1861
July 1, 1861
Orders to report to Captain Barron, Chief of Bureau for orders and details.
July 11, 1861
Captain Barron to H. X. Wright. Assignment to CSS *Yorktown*.
August 12, 1861
Secretary Mallory to Henry X. Wright. Response to inquiry about examinations, says that exams will be held in due time.
- Folder 10** Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1861
September 28, 1861
J. R. Tucker to H. X. Wright. Proceed to Richmond on duty connected with the *Patrick Henry* and then report back.
November 16, 1861
To 3rd Assist. Engineer Henry Wright on the Steamer *Patrick Henry*
Order denying leave of absence request. Fragment of letter, bottom portion missing.
November 25, 1861
Secretary Mallory to Henry X. Wright aboard the CSS *Patrick Henry*.
Appointment as 2nd Assistant Engineer
- Folder 11** Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1862
July 29, 1862
S. S. Lee to Hugh Clark and H. X. Wright. Order to survey boilers and machinery of all steamers under Lee's command and report in writing the recommendations.
July 29, 1862
Hugh Clark and H. X. Wright to S. S. Lee, Drewry's Bluff. Report on the boilers and machinery of the CSS *Raleigh*. Recommend sending her to Richmond for repairs.
July 29, 1862
Hugh Clark and H. X. Wright to S. S. Lee, Drewry's Bluff. Report on the boilers and machinery of the CSS *Hampton*. She is in good working order and repairs can be made by a mechanic in a couple of days.
July 31, 1862
Hugh Clark and H. X. Wright to S. S. Lee, Drewry's Bluff. Report on the boilers and machinery of the CSS *Patrick Henry*. For service on the

River, few repairs needed, but if needed for more active duty, the engines will need overhauling. The boilers in fair condition.

August 4, 1862

Hugh Clark and H. X. Wright to S. S. Lee, Drewry's Bluff. Report on the boilers and machinery of the CSS *Beaufort*. Report her in good working order but recommend she be put upon the "Ways" for an examination of her propellers.

Folder 12 Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1862

August 4, 1862

F. Forrest to Henry X. Wright. Orders detaching from *Patrick Henry* and assignment to *Richmond* on blue paper.

August 4, 1862

Copy of orders detaching from *Patrick Henry* and assigning to *Richmond* on white paper

Folder 13 Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1863

January 23, 1863

Secretary Mallory to Henry X. Wright. Informs Wright that he passed the examination for Second Assistant Engineer.

January 28, 1863

Henry Wright to Commander R. B. Pegram, requests more men to operate the vessel *Richmond*.

Folder 14 Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1863

April 21, 1863

F. Forrest, Flag Officer, James River Squadron. Order to wear prescribed uniform as prescribed by the Secretary of the Navy. Handwritten copy on blue stationary.

June 29, 1863

Commandant's Office. Copy of a General Order indicating that all requisitions for repair to machinery and boilers must be signed by the Chief Engineer of the Squadron and that the Chief Engineer is to inspect all the vessels weekly.

Folder 15 Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1863

August 15, 1863

Secretary Mallory to Wright. Appointment as Acting 1st Assistant Engineer.

Folder 16 Military Documents: Correspondence: 1863

September 25, 1863

R. B. Pegram to Henry Wright. Letter informing him that he will soon be ordered from the CSS *Richmond* where they have served together since Nov. 12, 1862 and offers him praise.

Folder 17 Military Documents: Orders (CSN): 1864

June 10, 1864

- Secretary Mallory to Wright. Appointment as Chief Engineer.
- Folder 18** Military Documents: Regulations, Uniform
No date. Handwritten copy of official uniform regulations for the C.S Navy. Begins with Chief Engineer. 2-sided 11"x14" white paper.
- Folder 19** Military Documents: Travel: Invoices: ND
Not dated
C. S. Navy Dept to H. X. Wright, 3rd Asst. Engineer.
Travel costs owed from Upper Brandon to Richmond, 70 miles on Sept 28th and from Richmond to [illegible] 100 miles on Oct 3rd.
- Folder 20** Military Documents: Travel Voucher 1861
Quarter Master's Dept, C. S. A. letterhead dated July 2, 1861 giving Henry X. Wright passage on the York River Railroad from Richmond to West Point on official business.
- Folder 21** Military Documents: Travel: Invoices: 1863
October 21, 1863
Receipt for three dollars written in French from Quebec on 3"x5" sheet of paper.
November 3, 1863
Invoice for Oct 13 to Nov 3rd, 1863 trip to Montreal. Itemizes costs for travel and subsistence, the amount totaling \$86.72. Pen on 11x14 blue paper.
Nov 17, 1863
Receipt for clothing bought H. Wright of R. Wilson Gentlemen's Haberdasher on Francois Xavier Street in Montreal.
December 28, 1863
CS Navy to Henry Wright, Hamilton Island, Bermuda
Itemized invoice for travel expenses for dates between December 8th to January 1st.
- Folder 22** Miscellaneous
Financial scrap: 8x 12" blue stationary. Lists 4 "Daily Expenses" and 6 "Incidental Expenses"
Financial scrap: 5.5 x 12" strip of white stationary folded in fourths.
Assorted accounts written in pencil.
Letterhead: US Navy Yard, Richmond, Va. August 29, 1862. Unwritten letter.
- Folder 23** Veteran's Organizations
ca 1924
Postcard with preprinted Richmond address for the Virginia Headquarters of the Navy Department, United Confederate Veterans (U.C.V.). Postcard has photograph identified as Admiral A. O. Wright, of Jacksonville, Fl. Second side asks "Did you ever know of a Confederate sailor?" and has lines to fill in name, rank, and ship.
Resolution endorsing Admiral A. O. Wright's efforts to rescue the records of Confederate sailors. Agreed to by the (VA?) Senate and the House of Delegates in 1924. Signed by the Clerk of Senate and the Clerk of House. Reverse of resolution has form for furnishing information about former

Confederate sailors.

SERIES 1: Papers [Oversize]

FILE DRAWER A31:B2

Folder 5 Certificates: Passports

July 9, 1866

An official document declaring Henry H. Wright a full United States citizen. It provides a physical description. Age 31 years, 5'6" tall, blue eyes, brown hair, fair complexion, oval face, straight nose, and high forehead.

June 24, 1874

A similar official document to the one above. It gives the same physical description, although the age is 39 years.

Folder 5 Drawings

No Date. 2-sided sheet of paper with 4 pencil sketches of boilers used on vessels. One says "Return Flue Boiler such as used on the "Powhatan.""

SOURCES CONSULTED

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion.

Washington : G.P.O., 1894-1922.

SUBJECTS

Patrick Henry (Ship : 1861-1865)

Richmond (Ironclad : 1862)

Virginia II (Ironclad : 1864)

United States-History-Civil War, 1861-1865-Personal narratives

Confederate States of America. Navy-Appointments and retirements

Confederate States of America. Navy-Regulations