

**Guide to the James M. Duncan Family Papers, 1860-1988
MS0079**

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

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners' Museum Library

Title: James Duncan Family Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1860-1988

Catalog number: MS0079

Physical Characteristics: 21 items, including research notes, letters, photocopies, discharges, certificates, marriage records

Language: English

Creator: James M. Duncan family

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Marshall Duncan was a Scottish seaman. He was born in 1842 to James Duncan and Mary Marshall and lived his early life in Partick, Scotland. He had at least one brother, Laurence, with whose son William he served in the Confederate Navy on board CSS *Virginia* (family history is confusing on this point, as to whether Laurence is James Marshall Duncan's brother or uncle). He married Janet Stewart in 1860 in Partick.

James Marshall Duncan signed on with the Confederate Navy into Captain Kevill's Artillery Company in March of 1862. He served, for the most part, at Drewry's Bluff, a Confederate stronghold on the James River south of Richmond, Virginia. Near the war's end in February of 1865, Mr. Duncan was discharged, along with a Peter McGill, from the British blockade runner *Lizzie* (Steamship : 1864) by the British consul at Tampico. It is within the boundaries of possibility, but not proven by the material in this collection, that Mr. Duncan was active in blockade-running expeditions of that era. Papers from the National Archives suggest that Duncan was among those who surrendered with Lee to Union General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse. It may be presumed that shortly thereafter, he took passage aboard a vessel sailing to Europe and returned to his wife and home in Lanark, Scotland. He worked as a riveter in Scotland and eventually returned to the United States where he worked in a steel mill, earning enough money by 1873 to acquire passage to the United States for his entire family. When his first wife died in childbirth, he married Mary Lillian Follin McDaniel. The family moved to Oderick's Corner in Fairfax County, Virginia, to farm. He inherited a small portion of nearby Wolf Trap Farm from his wife's father, and also farmed that land. He remained in his adopted country until his death in January of 1911.

Elsie May Westenhaver (1917-1998) was James Duncan's granddaughter. Her grandmother was James Marshall Duncan's second wife, Mary Lillian. Her mother was the daughter of James M. Duncan and Mary Lillian McDaniel Duncan, Edna Elsie Duncan.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection of items—original and copied—from the second half of the nineteenth century focuses on both the civilian and military careers of James M. Duncan. Featuring a variety of certificates, letters, tickets, and records, this collection reflects Mr. Duncan's work aboard numerous steamships in Europe as well as his service in the Confederate Navy during the American Civil War. Of interest is the fact that, although serving in the Confederate States of America military, Mr. Duncan was a Scottish citizen who did not formally immigrate to the United States until 1873.

The papers are organized into 7 file folders. They are arranged by genre, then chronologically.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Accession Number

CC79

Accession Date

1995

Restrictions

The collection is open to all researchers.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

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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.

RELATED MATERIALS

A photograph of James Marshall Duncan is located in the Library, catalogued as PP2395. The photograph was a prior gift to the Library by the collection's donor, Elsie May Westenhaver.

The original military records of the photocopies in Folder 8 are located at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109.

FILE GUIDE

BOX 1

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|-----------------|--|
| Folder 1 | Finding aid |
| Folder 2 | Background material
Five (5) miscellaneous documents concerning the life of James Duncan, before, during, and after his service in the Confederate Navy. Said documents also contain information regarding his descendants. |
| Folder 3 | Certificates |

- Folder 4** One (1) Certificate of Discharge from London, England, dated March 9, 1860, issued to James Duncan from the vessel *James* (Steamship : 1839).
Certificates
One (1) Certificate of Character/ Certificate of Discharge from London, England, dated December 16, 1861, issued to Mr. Duncan from the vessel *Rokeby* (Steamship : 1859).
One (1) Certificate of Character/ Certificate of Discharge from London, England, dated April 5, 1862, issued to Mr. Duncan from the vessel *Giants Causeway* (Steamship : 1864).
- Folder 5** Certificates
One (1) Letter of Discharge, dated February 10, 1865, for Mr. Duncan and Peter McGill from the steamship *Lizzie*.
- Folder 6** Certificates
One (1) Certificate of Recognition, dated October 2, 1871, from the Loyal Orange Institution of Lanark, Scotland, issued to Mr. Duncan.
- Folder 7** Certificates
1981 copy of marriage record for Mr. Duncan and Janet Steward; the original being entered upon their union on October 10, 1860, in Lanark, Scotland.
- Folder 8** Military Records
Receipt rolls for clothing: five between December 1863 and March 1864. James Duncan is listed as a private in Captain Thos. Kevill Company, Artillery, Va.
Muster roll / Service records, confirming Duncan's release on temporary duty to the Confederate Navy.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Wise, Stephen R. *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.

SUBJECTS

Duncan, James M. (James Marshall), 1842-1911

Merchant marine-Great Britain-Records and correspondence.

Merchant mariners-Great Britain.

Confederate States of America. Army of Northern Virginia. Corps, 3rd-Pay, allowances, etc.

United States-History-Civil War, 1861-1865-Blockades.