

**Guide to the Continental Works Checks, 1860s  
MS0351**

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

Contact Information:  
**The Mariners' Museum Library**  
**100 Museum Drive**  
**Newport News, VA 23606**  
**Phone: (757) 591-7782**  
**Fax: (757) 591-7310**  
**Email: [library@MarinersMuseum.org](mailto:library@MarinersMuseum.org)**  
**URL: [www.MarinersMuseum.org/library](http://www.MarinersMuseum.org/library)**

Processed by Jay Moore, 2012

## DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

**Repository:** The Mariners' Museum Library

**Title:** Continental Works Checks

**Inclusive Dates:** 1860s

**Catalog number:** MS0351

**Physical Characteristics:** 1 sheet of 6 unwritten checks (bank checks)

**Language:** English

**Creator:** Continental Works (Brooklyn, N.Y.)

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Continental Works of Greenpoint (now Brooklyn), NY is the successor to Samuel Sneden & Company, which was owned in partnership by Sneden and his talented young engineer Thomas Fitch Rowland. In less than a year after its formation, the partnership was dissolved and Rowland acquired the plant and business. He was a native of Connecticut, born in 1831 at New Haven, and after leaving school had been employed by the New York and New Haven Railroad. Rowland had also practiced engineering and mechanics and had done drafting and designing work. When he became proprietor of the Continental Works, he built the water pipe across High Bridge in New York and did other important iron work. When, in 1861, John Ericsson won the contract from the US Navy to design a floating battery with a revolving turret, an invention that would revolutionize the art of naval warfare and demonstrate the value of armored vessels, he chose Rowland to build it. *Monitor*, the first such vessel ever completed, was built in the yard of the Continental Works in a little more than three months, and was launched January 30, 1862. Other turreted ironclad warships built at the yard for the United States Navy were *Montauk*, *Passaic*, *Catskill*, *Onondaga*, *Cohoes*, *Puritan*, and *Monadnock*, each successive vessel containing some improvement suggested to Mr. Ericsson by the experience of its predecessors.

After the war, the works were engaged in building ferryboats for the Union Ferry Company and several other vessels. However, the general decline of shipbuilding in New York after the Civil War led the company to embark in other branches of iron works for which the plant was adapted.

In 1887 the business was incorporated as the Continental Iron Works, with Thomas F. Rowland as president and Warren E. Hill, who had for some years associated with Mr. Rowland, as vice-president of the company. The company made a specialty of building and installing municipal gas works, which work it did for cities and towns in all the eastern part of the country. Willis F. Taplin, the father of the donor of this collection, was Continental Iron Works' chief accountant for many years until the company closed in 1949.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection consists of a single oversize sheet of 6 blank bank checks for the Continental Works, drawing on its account at the Farmers and Citizens National Bank of Brooklyn, E.D. (Eastern District). The checks bear along the left side a small engraving

with a horizontal orientation of USS *Onondaga* at sea, distinguishable by its two turrets with a single pilot house on the forward turret. The words “T.F. Rowland Continental Works” are arranged along the top of the design. The engraving is oriented vertically along the left edge. Each check bears the name of the printer, Nathan Lane at 69 Wall and 91 Beaver Sts., NY, along the bottom margin. The checks have a long left margin that is sectioned off in red ink and appears destined to serve as a check stub. The checks bear the preprinted date 186\_, indicating the decade in which they were intended to serve. The sheet appears to have been torn from a check ledger.

The sheet is organized into 1 folder.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

### **Accession Number**

A2004.16

### **Accession Date**

2004

### **Restrictions**

The collection is open to all researchers.

### **Publication Rights**

Copies of any materials may not be reproduced, published, or distributed in any form without the expressed permission of The Mariners’ Museum.

### **Preferred Citation**

Continental Works Checks, 1860s, MS0351, 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.

## **RELATED MATERIALS**

The Library has several archival collections directly related to the building of Civil War ironclads at the Continental Works: Battery Associates Records on *Monitor* Design and Construction, MS0335; Thomas F. Rowland Collection, MS0376; and the Warren E. Hill Specifications Book and Plans, MS0423.

The materials from the donor included a Continental Iron Works banner currently managed and stored by the Collections Management department of the Museum. The banner is separately accessioned into the museum collection as accession number 2004.0032.000001.

## **FILE GUIDE**

### **BOX 1**

**Folder 1**      Bank checks  
                  1 sheet of 6 unwritten bank checks.

## **SOURCES CONSULTED**

“The Continental Iron Works.” MarineLink.com: *Maritime Reporter* and *Marine News* Magazines Online. <http://www.marinelink.com/history/the-continental-iron-works> (accessed Apr. 19, 2012).

“Continental Iron Works.” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/continental.htm> (accessed Apr. 20, 2012).

## **SUBJECTS**

Onondaga (Ironclad : 1864)-Pictorial works  
Continental Works (Brooklyn, N.Y.)-History