Guide to the Robert Weir Papers, 1862-1864, 1898
MS0007

The Mariners' Museum Library

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners’ Museum Library
Title: Robert Weir Papers
Inclusive Dates: 1862-1864, 1898
Bulk Dates: 1862-1864
Catalog number: MS0007

Physical Characteristics: 91 items, including correspondence, cartoons (humorous images), photographs, drawings (visual works), sketches, orders (military records), and discharges
Language: English
Creator: Weir, Robert, 1836-1905

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Robert Weir (1836-1905) was the son of Robert Walter Weir, a professional painter and a professor of drawing at West Point. The younger Robert Weir ran away to sea at a young age and sailed on several whaling cruises, including the Clarabell from 1855-1858. He enlisted in the Union Navy in 1862 and served as third assistant engineer and second assistant engineer on the USS Richmond. Richmond was part of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, serving under the command of David G. Farragut. Weir was commended for his role in the attack of the batteries along Port Hudson, LA in March 1863 and painted a watercolor of the Battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864.

Throughout this time at sea, Weir continued to sketch images and scenes from everyday life on board a ship. He also kept a journal and wrote short stories, some of which have survived today. In addition to these personal outlets, Weir also illustrated a book, titled “Uncle Samuel’s Whistle and What it Costs”. Privately published, the book’s text is largely attributed to Weir as well as the illustrations.

Weir’s illustrations appeared in Harper’s Weekly during and after the war. Weir died at his home in Montclair, New Jersey on January 17, 1905.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection is comprised of drawings by Robert Weir and four photographs, three letters, two orders (military records), and one military discharge. Except for one letter dated 1898, the entire collection dates between 1862 and 1864. One watercolor, in black and white, shows an exceptional three mile scene along the Mississippi River riverbank at Port Hudson.

This collection contains sketches made when Weir was on board the U.S. sloop-of-war Richmond. Subjects are fleets of sailing vessels and steamships, men on board ship working, a map of Mobile Bay, and cartoons with satires of Jefferson Davis, Abraham Lincoln, and navy life in general. Black-and-white photos are unidentified except a signed photo of Rear Admiral David Glasgow Farragut. There are also two letters to Weir, one from Farragut, October 1864, aboard the U.S. flagship Hartford, West Gulf Squadron in Mobile Bay, and one from Colby M. Chester, April 1898, aboard the U.S.S. Cincinnati in Key West, Florida. The collection also contains a letter from Farragut to Captain Thornton Alexander Jenkins, dated May 1864.
The collection is organized into three boxes, arranged by size and material type, then chronologically. Box 3 contains one specially housed oversize item which is stored with Collections Management.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

**Accession number**
CK52

**Accession date**
1945

**Restrictions**
Collection is open to all researchers.

**Publication Rights**
Copies of any materials may not be reproduced, published, or distributed, in any form without written permission from The Mariners’ Museum.

**Preferred Citation**
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**Note to Users**
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 MATERIAL**
Some of Robert Weir’s writings, including a journal, war recollections, and drafts of stories, as well as some pencil sketches, can be found at Mystic Seaport: The Museum of America and the Sea. The Robert Weir papers are located in Collection 245.

The New Bedford Whaling Museum has four paintings, a print, and an unbound book illustrated by Weir.

The Pearce Museum at Navarro College has thirty letters from Weir to his wife dating between 1862 and 1865. These letters are a part of the Pearce Civil War Collection and are cataloged as 2005.186.00.

**BOX 1**

**Folder 1** Finding Aid

**Folder 2** Background Information

**Folder 3** Correspondence, 1864
May 22, 1864: USS Hartford, Mobile Bay
D. Farragut to Capt. Jenkins, USS *Richmond*. 1 page. Requests that Jenkin send Weir aboard to discuss Weir’s torpedo plan. “Altho I look upon the whole torpedo business as a cowardly and unmanly way of making war, still we must fight the devil with fire, that is my doctrine.” [MS 0007.01.03.01]

August 30, 1864: USS *Hartford*, Mobile Bay

D. G. Farragut to Robert Weir. 2 sides. Envelope also. Farragut thanks Weir for his sketch and encloses a photograph of himself in appreciation. [MS 0007.01.03.02]

**Folder 4**

Correspondence, 1898

April 18, 1898: USS *Cincinnati*, Key West, FL

C. M. Chester to Robert Weir. 2 sides in blue ink. Reminisces about the war. [MS0007.01.04.01]

**Folder 5**

Drawings: Mobile Bay: 1863

Fleet scene (recto), Cannon sketch (verso). Pencil on bond paper, 14.5 x 8 cm [MS 0007.01.05.01]

Monitor-type vessel. Pencil on yellow paper, 14.5 x 6.5 cm [MS 0007.01.05.02]

Map sketch. Ink on bond paper, 10.5 x 17 cm [MS 0007.01.05.03]

Fleet scene. Ink on bond paper, 20 x 12.5 cm [MS 0007.01.05.04]

**Folder 6**

Drawings: Preliminary Sketches [1863-1864]

Vessel (Sidewheel steamer). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15 cm [MS 0007.01.06.01]

Vessel (recto); Sketch and MS markings (verso). Pencil on paper. 14.5 x 15.5 cm [MS 0007.01.06.02]

Cannon (recto); Ft. Morgan (verso). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15.25 cm [MS 0007.01.06.03]

Men in rowboat; vessel; ship’s deck (recto); Vessel deck arrangements and outboard profile (verso). Pencil on lined notebook paper. 15.5 x 20.5 cm [MS 0007.01.06.04]

monitor “Chickasaw” (recto); a “Blakely rifle” (verso). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15.5 cm [MS 0007.01.06.05]
Cannon; shore view (recto); “Lackawanna” (verso). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15 cm
[MS 0007.01.06.06]

Vessel; names (recto); calculations (verso). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15.5 cm
[MS 0007.01.06.07]

Unidentified side wheel steamer (recto); calculations (verso). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15 cm
[MS 0007.01.06.08]

Vessels; men (recto); list of engineer’s day (verso). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15 cm
[MS 0007.01.06.09]

Fleet (recto); three men (verso) [verso is a preliminary sketch for the ink drawing MS 0007.01.07.03]. Pencil on paper. 15 x 15 cm
[MS 0007.01.06.10]

**Folder 7**
Drawings: Satirical: [1863-1864] U.S. Navy
“The way mails are sorted for our squadron” Ink on yellow paper. 15 x 15.5 cm
[MS 0007.01.07.01]

“Splendid ships manned and commanded by women and boys” Ink on yellow paper. 23 x 15 cm
[MS 0007.01.07.02]

“…Let me ask what good have they [monitors] done in this war except to empty the treasury.” Ink on lined paper. 14 x 18 cm
[MS 0007.01.07.03]

Three men and a huge cannon. Ink on lined paper. 18 x 15 cm
[MS 0007.01.07.04]

**Folder 8**
Drawings: Satirical: 1864 U.S. Elections
Abraham Lincoln and John C. Fremont. Ink on lined paper. 14.5 x 15 cm
[MS 0007.01.08.01]

**Folder 9**
Drawings: Satirical: [1865] Jefferson Davis
Jefferson Davis. Ink on paper. 11 x 14 cm
[MS 0007.01.09.01]

**Folder 10**
“7in Rifle double banded Brooks C.S.A.” Ink on lined paper. 12.5 x 17 cm
Preliminary sketches of 7 inch Brooks Rifle. (recto and verso). Pencil on paper. 15 x 15.5 cm

Folder 11
Drawings: “Turreted Monsters”: [1863]
Man straddled between two large cannons. Ink on paper. 20.5 x 13 cm

Folder 12
Sidewheel steamer “USS Bio Bio”. Pencil on lined paper. 10.5 x 5 cm

Folder 13
Drawings: USS Manhattan: [1863]
The monitor “Manhattan.” Ink on lined paper. 12.5 x 13 cm

Folder 14
Drawings: USS Richmond: 1863
Vessel on heavy seas. Ink on lined paper. 15 x 10 cm

Vessels in battle. Genesee, Richmond, Monongahela, Kineo, Mississippi, Mortar Boats, Essex, Albatross, Hartford. Ink on lined paper. 26 x 10 cm

“Five rebel batteries. 6 mortar schooners, 10th May”. Ink on bond paper. 17.5 x 14.5 cm

Fifteen men firing a cannon (recto); Seven names on verso. Ink on bond paper. 20.5 x 12.5 cm

Folder 15
Drawings: USS Richmond: [1863] Crew
A battle on deck. “Pikemen Away/ Repelling Boarders”. Ink on bond paper. 17.5 x 14.5 cm

A battle on deck. “Down Hammicks”. Ink on bond paper. 17.5 x 14.5 cm

“Fire quarters.” Ink on yellow paper. 14 x 15 cm

Folder 16
Drawings: USS Richmond: [1863] Crew
“Cleaning boilers.” Ink on lined paper. 17.5 x 12.5 cm  
[MS 0007.01.16.01]

“Starting the machine.” Pencil on cardstock. 13 x 15 cm  
[MS 0007.01.16.02]

Ten men react to explosion. Ink on bond paper. 20 x 12.5 cm  
[MS 0007.01.16.03]

**Folder 17**  
Drawings: USS Richmond: [1863] Crew  
“Down oil creek,” four men in a small boat. Ink on bond paper. 18 x 11.5 cm  
[MS 0007.01.17.01]

Two sailors. Ink on lined paper. 10.5 x 11 cm  
[MS 0007.01.17.02]

“Broadsword Exercise.” Ink on bond paper. 8.5 x 13 cm  
[MS 0007.01.17.03]

**Folder 18**  
Drawings: USS Richmond: [1863] Crew  
“Our two pets,” men firing a 100 pounder Parrott rifle. Ink on bond paper. 12.5 x 10 cm  
[MS 0007.01.18.01]

Crewman kneeling behind cannon. Ink on bond paper. 11.5 x 7.5 cm  
[MS 0007.01.18.02]

Cannon blasting on ship deck. “Skouce-Kettle”. Ink on bond paper. 12.5 x 10 cm  
[MS 0007.01.18.03]

**Folder 19**  
Drawings: USS Richmond: 1863 “Off Mobile Bay”  
Vessel in choppy water (recto) Lighthouse and calculations (verso). Pencil on lined paper. 15.5 x 20.5 cm  
[MS 0007.01.19.01]

Vessel in choppy water. “Steam Sloop of War Richmond Off Mobile Bay December 1863” in ink on verso. Ink on bond paper. 25 x 19.5 cm  
[MS 0007.01.19.02]

**Folder 20**  
Drawings: USS Richmond: [1863] Propeller  
Study of a propeller. Pencil on card stock. 18 x 12.5 cm  
[MS 0007.01.20.01]

Propeller. Pencil on card stock. 16 x 13 cm  
[MS 0007.01.20.02]
Folder 21 Drawings: USS Richmond: 1864  
United States flag on mast (recto); mechanical drawings (verso). Ink on paper.  
10 x 12 cm  
[MS 0007.01.21.01]

Folder 22 Drawings: USS Richmond: [1864] “At Anchor Off New Orleans”  
Side view of USS Richmond. Pencil on bond paper. 20 x 13 cm  
[MS 0007.01.22.01]

Folder 23 Drawings: USS Richmond: 1864 “Guard Boat On Picket Duty At Night”  
[MS 0007.01.23.01]

Folder 24 Military Documents: Orders: 1865  
July 11, 1865: Orders detaching Robert Weir from the USS Richmond.  
[MS 0007.01.24.01]

Folder 25 Photographs: Remsen Street, Cohoes, New York.  
Street scene, written in pencil at bottom is “Remsen Street, Cohoes” 15 x 12.5 cm  
[MS 0007.004]

Folder 26 Photographs:  
Cannonball pyramid and tree-lined road on a military base. 24 x 19.5 cm  
[MS 0007.003]

Unidentified Steamer at dock. 15.5 x 20.5 cm  
[MS 0007.002]

David G. Farragut, Carte-de-Visite “with the compliments of Rear Admiral D. G. Farragut U.S. Navy” written on verso  
[MS 0007.0001]

BOX 2

Folder 1 Drawings: Preliminary Sketches: Pensacola Navy Yard: “From Woolsey Ruins” Vessels at dock. Pencil on paper, 35.5 x 20 cm.  
[MS 0007.02.01.01]
Folder 2  Drawings: Vessels along shore. Ink on yellow paper, 51 x18 cm 
[MS 0007.02.02.01]

Folder 3  Military Documents: Certificates: 1862- 1864
August 25, 1862: Certificate granting Robert Weir warrant as Third Assistant 
Engineer in the Navy. [MS 0007.02.03.01]

Folder 4  May 2, 1864: Certificate granting Robert Weir warrant as Second Assistant 
Engineer in the Navy. [MS 0007.02.04.01]

BOX 3 (stored in collections management, 0027/196/G)
Drawings: Port Hudson: 1864 
Landscape. “3 Mile Line of Batteries of Port Hudson Miss.” Ink on yellow paper, 155 x 10.5 cm 
[MS 0007.03.01.01]

SOURCES CONSULTED
Coll. 245, Manuscripts Collection, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport Museum.

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refno=++642772&image=1.

http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-
free/pdf?res=9A03EFD9163DE733A2575BC1A9679C946497D6CF.

Williford, James. Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities, 

SUBJECTS
Weir, Robert, 1836-1905 
Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889—Caricatures and cartoons 
Farragut, David Glasgow, 1801-1870—Portraits 
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865—Caricatures and cartoons 
United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865—Caricatures and cartoons 
Armored vessels—Drawings 
Military sketching 
Ships—Pictorial works
United States. Navy—Caricatures and cartoons
Mobile Bay (Ala.)—Maps
Albatross (Screw steamer : 1861)
Chickasaw (Ironclad : 1864)
Cincinnati (Cruiser : No. 7)
Essex (Ironclad steamer : 1856)
Genesee (Side wheel steamer : 1862)
Hartford (Screw sloop-of-war : 1859)
Kineo (Gunboat : 1862)
Lackawanna (Screw sloop-of-war : 1863)
Manhattan (Ironclad : 1864)
Mississippi (Side wheel steamer : 1841)
Monongahela (Screw sloop-of-war : 1863)
Richmond (Steam sloop : 1860)