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

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
URL: www.MarinersMuseum.org/library

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 Fulton
1860 Assigned to the USS Pocahontas – Norfolk address
1861 May Resigned the USN Navy and joined the CSN
July Assigned to the CSS Yorktown – renamed CSS Patrick Henry
Nov Promoted to 2nd Assistant Engineer
1862 May On the CSS Capitol in Greenwood, Mississippi
July On the CSS Patrick Henry
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July – Aug</td>
<td>Makes reports on machinery of James River Squadron vessels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>Assigned to the CSS <em>Richmond</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863 Jan</td>
<td>Passed exam for 2nd Assistant Engineer in 12th place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Writes to commander that they need more men on the CSS <em>Richmond</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Dec</td>
<td>On mission to Montreal/Lake Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864 April</td>
<td>On a torpedo mission against the USN <em>Minnesota</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>On the CSS <em>Richmond</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Promoted to Chief Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Examined <em>Drewry</em> and <em>Virginia II</em> machinery and boilers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>Chief Engineer on the CSS <em>Richmond</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov - Apr</td>
<td>Chief Engineer on the CSS <em>Virginia II</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865 April</td>
<td>During the fall of Richmond, the CSS <em>Virginia II</em> was blown up to prevent capture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

**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**

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

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
Order to report to the Secretary of the Navy on the 26th.

Folder 9
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
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.  

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.

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