Guide to the H. A. Richardson Letter, 1862 March 27
MS0317

The Mariners' Museum Library
at
Christopher Newport University
DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository: The Mariners’ Museum Library
Title: H. A. Richardson Letter
Inclusive Dates: 1862 March 27
Catalog number: MS0317
Physical Characteristics: 1 4-page letter
Language: English
Creator: Richardson, H. A. (Henry A.), d. 1863

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Henry A. Richardson was born circa 1836 to George C. and Susan G. Richardson of Boston, MA. H. A. Richardson was the Acting Assistant Surgeon on board USS Cambridge (Screw steamer : 1861) in 1861-1862. He was a signatory to a November letter from the officers of the Cambridge to Flag Officer Louis M. Goldsborough, testifying to the good treatment of prisoners of the British schooner Luisa Agnes, taken as a prize on Sept. 9, 1861. His service in the Navy dates from Aug. 7, 1861, according to the Naval Historical Center. Navy records show that he muster ed out of the service on June 5, 1862. Massachusetts death records indicate that he died at age 27, on July 1, 1863, of consumption. No other information is available.

SCOPE AND CONTENT
This letter to Richardson’s friend Kittie is rich in observations about the war and specifically about US Steam Battery Monitor, which he visited on March 26, 1862. Richardson expresses confidence in General McClellan and is pleased that official censorship is keeping Union Army and Navy movements secret from the enemy. He notes that newspaper accounts lead him to believe that all women in the North knit “mittens with one finger” and stockings. He writes to Kittie that he hopes “that the Eastern part of your state may not be invaded at present!!”

Richardson devotes nearly half of his letter to describing Monitor. He notes that one cannot get an idea of her from the newspaper illustrations. He talks about her general appearance as a “cheese box on a raft,” which he attributes to the Confederates. He gives measurements of her freeboard and the rate of her turret’s revolutions per minute. He talks about the iron pendulums, which resemble the cover over a key-hole, and notes that the apartments are splendid and the air below decks “as cool as out doors.” He notes that the crew has every confidence in her.

The letter is organized into 1 folder.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Accession Number
unknown
Accession Date
2003

Restrictions
The collection is open to all researchers.

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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.

FILE GUIDE

BOX 1

Folder 1  Letter
March 27, 1862: USS Cambridge, Fort Monroe, VA
Letter from H. A. Richardson to his friend Kittie.

SOURCES CONSULTED
Register of the Commissioned, Warrant and Volunteer Officers of the Navy of the United States ... to January 1, 1863. Washington, DC: GPO, 1863.

SUBJECTS
Monitor (Ironclad : 1862)
United States-History-Civil War, 1861-1865-Personal narratives
Peninsular Campaign, 1862
Richardson, H. A. (Henry A.), d. 1863