John Gwinn Papers

A Finding Aid to the Papers in the Naval Historical Foundation Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2010

Contact information: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm70054205

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010027

Prepared by Ruth S. Nicholson

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2009

Collection Summary

Title: John Gwinn Papers
Span Dates: 1815-1864
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1825-1849)
ID No.: MSS54205
Creator: Gwinn, John, 1791-1849
Extent: 900 items
Extent: 3 containers
Extent: 2 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm70054205
Summary: Naval officer. Official and general correspondence, personal journals, commissions, printed matter, and miscellaneous material documenting Gwinn's career in the Navy before the Civil War.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
Bainbridge, William, 1774-1833.
Bancroft, George, 1800-1891.
Biddle, James, 1783-1848.
Bolton, William Compton, d. 1849.
Conner, David, 1792-1856.
Crane, William Montgomery, 1784-1846.
Crowninshield, Benjamin Williams, 1772-1851.
Gwinn, John, 1791-1849.
Mackenzie, Alexander Slidell, 1803-1848.
Mason, John Y. (John Young), 1799-1859.
Preston, William Ballard, 1805-1862.
Southard, Samuel L. (Samuel Lewis), 1787-1842.
Thompson, Smith, 1768-1843.
Todd, Alexander.
Winthrop, William.

Subjects
Courts-martial and courts of inquiry.

Occupations
Naval officers.

Provenance

The papers of John Gwinn, naval officer, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1964 and converted to a gift in 1998.

Processing History

The papers of John Gwinn were arranged and described in 1974. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Gwinn is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Gwinn are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John Gwinn Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1791, June 11	Born, Taneytown, Maryland
1809	Appointed midshipman Duty in *John Adams* (frigate)
1814	Duty in *Frolic* (sloop of war), West India Squadron Prisoner of war, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1815	Duty in *Boxer* (brig), Mediterranean Squadron
1817	Duty in *Hornet* (sloop of war), European Squadron
1819	Duty in *Independence* (ship of the line)
1823	Married Caroline S. Lynch
1823-1825	Duty at United States Navy Yard, Charlestown, Mass.
1826	Duty in *Macedonian* (frigate), Brazil Station
1829-1832	Executive officer, United States Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pa.
1837	Commanded *Vandalia* (sloop of war), Home Squadron
1839-1842	Master commandant, United States Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pa.
1842	Promoted to captain
1844-1845	Commanded *Potomac* (frigate), Home Squadron
1848	Commanded *Constitution* (frigate), Mediterranean Squadron
1849, Sept. 4	Died, Palermo, Sicily

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Gwinn (1791-1849) span the years 1815 to 1864, with the bulk of the material falling between the years 1825 and 1849. The collection consists of personal journals, official and general correspondence, commissions, and miscellaneous material.

The official correspondence includes orders to duty, general orders, circulars, and regulations, as well as letters received and drafts of letters sent. The correspondence documents the navy's peacetime mission of protecting American interests and commerce at home as well as abroad. Gwinn commanded the *Vandalia* (sloop of war) and the *Potomac* (frigate), Home Squadron, at the naval base in Pensacola, Fla. Among his duties was the protection of American commerce from aggression and piratical acts. Abroad he commanded the *Constitution* (frigate), Mediterranean Squadron, which had been sent to that region to protect American interests. Because of political unrest in Italy, American consuls wrote Gwinn asking for protection of American citizens and their interests.

Among Gwinn's correspondents are William Bainbridge, George Bancroft, James Biddle, William C. Bolton, David Conner, William Montgomery Crane, Benjamin Williams Crowninshield, John Y. Mason, William Ballard Preston, Samuel L. Southard, Smith Thompson, Alexander Todd, and William Winthrop. The general correspondence file contains Gwinn's correspondence with his wife, Caroline Lynch Gwinn, and their children, John and Elizabeth; letters to his wife from William Ledyard Hodge; and some papers of his brother-in-law, William Lynch.

Of interest in a miscellany file is material concerning the mutiny on the *Somers* (brig), commanded by Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, who was subsequently charged with murder, oppression, and conduct unbecoming an officer by Secretary of the Navy Abel P. Upshur. Gwinn served in Mackenzie's court-martial.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged by type of material.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Memorandum book, *Mississippi* (steamer), circa 1842
BOX 1	Personal journal, *Constitution* (frigate), 1848
BOX 1	Official correspondence
BOX 1	1815-1844
	(8 folders)
BOX 2	1845-1851
	(10 folders)
BOX 3	General correspondence, 1823-1849
	(3 folders)
BOX 3	Biographical file, undated
BOX 3	Commissions, 1816-1842
BOX 3	Printed matter, 1837-1847
BOX 3	Sketches, undated
BOX 3	*Somers* (brig) mutiny investigation, 1843
BOX 3	Gwinn, Caroline S. Lynch, administration of estate, 1864
BOX 3	Lynch, William, correspondence, silhouettes, and clippings, 1817-1825
BOX 3	Notebook, William C. Bolton, postage account, 1849