George W. Storer Brazil Squadron Papers, 1817-1868: Finding Aid

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| **Repository:**     | Princeton University Library. Special Collections. Manuscripts Division  
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| **Abstract:**       | George W. Storer (1789-1864) served in the United States Navy for more than fifty years, including a term as commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron from 1847 to 1850, which, in part, was responsible for preventing American ships from transporting enslaved Africans. This collection documents much of George Washington Storer's long career in the United States Navy as captain, lieutenant, and commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron, and also offers a wide-ranging look at the role of the United States Navy, primarily during the 1830s and 1840s, as a peacekeeper and a deterrent to the slave trade. |
| **Location:**       | This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library. |
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George W. Storer (1789-1864) served in the United States Navy for more than fifty years, including a term as commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron from 1847 to 1850, which, in part, had the goal of preventing American ships from transporting enslaved Africans.

Born in 1789 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, George Washington Storer was the son of Samuel and Mary Storer. Legend has it that George Washington visited when he was a baby and stated that he hoped that Storer would be a better man than his namesake. Storer began his naval career in 1809 as a midshipman, but rose in rank to lieutenant in 1813, master-commandant in 1828, captain in 1837, and commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron in 1847, serving in that capacity until 1850. He commanded a ship named the U.S.S. Brandywine for over three years in the waters around Rio de Janeiro. Following his service in the Brazil Squadron, Storer was on leave of absence from 1851 to 1854, and then, from 1855 to 1857, served as governor of the Philadelphia Naval Asylum, the first government-funded hospital and home for elderly and destitute United States sailors. In 1857 he served as president of the Naval Court of Inquiry #3, which followed an 1855 act of Congress amending "An Act to Promote the Efficiency of the Navy," under which more than 200 naval officers were dismissed from duty. Storer retired from the Navy in 1862, and died two years later, in 1864.

Storer was appointed a captain in the Brazil Squadron in 1837 which tended to a variety of American interests in the South Atlantic relating to diplomacy with Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, as well as playing an important role in enforcing the long-standing ban on American participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Because Brazil was the last nation which permitted the importation of enslaved people, Rio de Janeiro was a stop for ships transporting captives from Africa. During Storer's tenure as commander of the Brazil Squadron, from 1847 to 1850, the fleet, frequently working with the British Navy, captured four slave ships. Storer, as Commander in Chief of the Brazil Squadron, served under three secretaries of the Navy: John Y. Mason, William B. Preston, and William A. Graham.

Storer married Mary Leah Blunt (1798-1868) in 1819, and they were the parents of Samuel Storer (1820/1-1898), Robert Blunt Storer (1825-1847), Jacob Jones Storer (1826-1902), Lincoln Lear Storer (1828-1849), and Mary Washington Storer (born 1830). Storer's occupation became a tradition in the family: both Robert and Lincoln worked on the water and died at sea; and Samuel and his wife, Sarah Parker Rice Goodwin (1832-1867), had a daughter Mabel (1861-1926) who married Lieutenant Stephen Decatur (1855-1934) in 1884.

This collection documents much of George Washington Storer's long career in the United States Navy as captain, lieutenant, and commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron. It also offers a wide-ranging look at American naval operations in South America in the mid-19th century and, in particular, the role of the United States Navy, primarily during the 1830s and 1840s, as a peacekeeper and a deterrent to the trade in enslaved Africans.

Materials documenting Storer's naval service as a lieutenant and captain from 1817 to 1845 consist of correspondence, ship information, and records pertaining to his service. Similar materials from 1847 to 1851 document Storer's duties as commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron and its role in suppressing the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the South Atlantic. Additional orders, court
martials, correspondence, and records pertain to Storer's service as Governor of the Naval Asylum at Philadelphia and President of Court of Inquiry #3 from 1852 to 1858 during the later years of his naval career. There is also a small amount of personal and family papers of George W. Storer, Jacob J. Storer, Robert Storer, and Samuel Storer, which provide insights into the domestic aspects of Storer's life.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into four primary file groups corresponding to Storer's various roles.

Naval Service as Lieutenant and Captain, 1817-1845
Naval Service as Commander-in-Chief of the Brazil Squadron, 1847-1851
Naval Service as Governor of the Naval Asylum at Philadelphia and President of Court of Inquiry #3, 1852-1858
Personal and Family Papers, 1842-1868

Access and Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

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Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition

The majority of the papers were purchased at auction with support of the Kenneth R. Maxwell Fund in 2012 (AM 2013-29).

An additional letter book documenting Storer's role as commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron, which had been separated from the papers, was purchased in 2018 (AM 2018-94).

Appraisal

No appraisal information is available.

Related Materials
Related Archival Material

Rice University: Letters Concerning the Slave Trade and the USS John Adams, 1842-1849 (MS083)

Processing and Other Information

Preferred Citation

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Encoding

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Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

· Mason, John Y. (John Young), 1799-1859 -- Correspondence.
· United States. Naval Asylum -- History -- Sources.
· United States. Navy -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
· United States. Navy -- Officers -- Correspondence.
· United States. Navy. South Atlantic Squadron -- History -- Sources.
· Courts-martial and courts of inquiry -- United States -- History -- 19th century
· Diplomats -- United States -- Correspondence.
· Slave trade -- Africa -- History -- 19th century
· Slave trade -- United States -- History -- 19th century--Sources
· Brazil -- Foreign relations -- United States -- 19th century.
· Correspondence -- 19th century
· Military records -- 19th century.
· Ships' papers -- 19th century.
· American history/Early national
Naval Service as Lieutenant and Captain, 1817-1845

Description: Materials documenting Storer's naval service as a lieutenant and captain from 1817 to 1845 include correspondence; ship information; and official United States Navy records, such as circulars, orders, and regulations. As an officer rising in rank within the United States Navy, Storer corresponded with many naval officers, including James Biddle, John Downes, Lawrence Kearny, Charles Morris, and J.K. Paulding (Secretary of the Navy). He also corresponded with American consuls, R.M. Hamilton (Montevideo) and Alexander Lyler (Bahia). It appears that Storer took great pride in his work in the Navy, creating records documenting his own service as well as those who served with him. For several ships on which he served and the Portsmouth Navy Yard, there are lists of officers and crew, and orders.

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by genre of material.

- Correspondence, James Biddle (Commander) to Storer, 1830-1832
  Box: 1 Folder: 1
- Correspondence, John Branch to James Biddle, 1830-1831
  Box: 1 Folder: 2
- Correspondence, Isaac Chauncey to John Downes (Commander) and Storer, 1830-1838
  Box: 1 Folder: 3
- Correspondence, William Hamilton (United States Consul to Montevideo) to Storer, 1842
  Box: 1 Folder: 4
- Correspondence, Alexander Lyler (United States Consul to Bahia) to Storer, 1842
  Box: 1 Folder: 5
- Correspondence, Charles Morris (Commander of United States Squadron in the Brazil Station) to John Downes, 1840-1842
  Box: 1 Folder: 6
- Correspondence, J.K. Paulding (Secretary of the Navy) to John Downes and Storer, 1840
  Box: 1 Folder: 7
- Correspondence, George W. Storer to D.J. Pearce and Miss Otis, 1840-1841
  Box: 1 Folder: 8
- Correspondence, Miscellaneous, 1817-1842
  Box: 1 Folder: 9
  Description: Correspondents include Theodore Bailey, Commander [W. Boerman], Lieutenant Colonel G. Bomford, Robert [Herketh], Dr. Horner, William Johnson, Lawrence Kearny, J.Y. Mason, Sam Pearce, Joseph Taverner, and Lemuel Wells.
- Correspondence, Invitations and Responses, 1830-1842
  Box: 1 Folder: 10
- Portsmouth Navy Yard (New Hampshire), Muster Book and Report of Work Completed, 1843-1845
  Box: 1 Folder: 11
- Ship Information for Ships Columbus, Concord, Decatur, Delaware, and Maleck Adhel, Invoice, Lists of Officers and Sailors, and Recruit Information, 1839-1842
  Box: 1 Folder: 12
Naval Service as Commander-in-Chief of the Brazil Squadron, 1847-1851

Description: Materials documenting Storer’s naval service as commander-in-chief of the Brazil Squadron from 1847 to 1851 document the many facets of the duties of the Brazil Squadron. Although its primary task was "protecting American interests and trade," (Canney, page 111), the Brazil Squadron tended to a variety of American interests including diplomacy with Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina; and increasingly, after 1847, the enforcement of the long-standing ban on the American participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. There is correspondence with prominent naval officers and diplomats, information regarding ships (both United States Navy ships and slave ships), and a few official United States Navy records. In regards to diplomacy, Storer corresponded with H.H. Cocke, R.M. Hamilton, W.A. Harris, Thomas J. Morgan, and David Tod, all of whom were American diplomats in South America. In addition, Storer became involved in a case of a British youth who stowed away on one of his ships; a mob which attacked American citizens on the Brazilian island of Santa Catarina; and the ongoing Siege of Montevideo. There is also a letter book containing drafts of Storer's outgoing correspondence from July 1847 to July 1849 regarding naval operations in South America and, in particular, those of his ship, the U.S.S. Brandywine.

This material also includes numerous documents which relate directly to the efforts against the slave trade. Storer's 1847 initial orders from the Secretary of the Navy, John Y. Mason, include a mandate for "the repression of the slave trade," to "use every effort to arrest and bring to well merited punishment all persons who on the open seas may disgrace the American flag by making it in any way subservient to the pursuit or protection of this most nefarious commerce." Most dramatic is a long November 1848 letter from John I. Taylor reporting on the discovery of a slave trading port at Cabo Frio, Brazil. Several letters describe ships that were searched or impounded by the Americans or British, often drawing lengthy protests from the Brazilians, including files relating to the successful capture of the slaver Laurens by the USS Onkahye on January 23, 1848 and correspondence and reports relating to suspected, and on occasion, actual slave ships Casco, Flora, Imogen, Kingston, and Paulina.

Works Cited:

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by genre of material.
| Correspondence, B.F. Bache (Fleet Surgeon) to Storer, 1848-1850 | Box: 2 Folder: 1 |
| Correspondence, Otway Berryman (Lieutenant Commander) to Storer, 1848 | Box: 2 Folder: 2 |
| Correspondence, James Biddle (Commander) to Storer, 1848 | Box: 2 Folder: 3 |
| Correspondence, H.H. Cocke (United States Consul in Brazil) to Storer, 1849 | Box: 2 Folder: 4 |
| Correspondence, Alex Fraser (Captain) to Storer, 1849 | Box: 2 Folder: 5 |
| Correspondence, William A. Graham (Secretary of the Navy) to Storer, 1850-1851 | Box: 2 Folder: 6 |
| Correspondence, R.M. Hamilton (United States Consul to Montevideo) to Captain Charles Brasman and Storer, dates not examined | Box: 2 Folder: 7 |
| Correspondence, W.A. Harris (Chargé d'Affaires of Buenos Aires) to Storer, 1848 | Box: 2 Folder: 8 |
| Correspondence, John W. Mason (Secretary of Navy) to Storer containing Orders for More Aggressive Actions Against the Slave Trade, 1847 August 18 | Box: 2 Folder: 9 |
| Correspondence, John Y. Mason (Secretary of the Navy) to Samuel Barron, Lawrence Rousseau, and Storer, 1847 | Box: 2 Folder: 10 |
| Correspondence, John Y. Mason (Secretary of the Navy) to H.H. Cocke, Commander Crowninshield, James Ferguson, William Hunter, A. Sinclair, Storer, and George Wells, 1848-1894 | Box: 2 Folder: 11 |
| Description: Included in this folder is a letter, dated February 12, 1849, from Mason to Storer regarding the capture of a slave vessel by the ship Perry under Storer's command: "Your dispatch ... in relation to the American Barque Ann D. Richardson ... has been received. Burn's letter to his friend in Rio Janeiro has been opened and read, and contains the strongest evidence of his guilt. Your course in the premises, as indicated in your dispatch, is approved by the Department." | |
| Correspondence, Thomas J. Morgan (United States Secretary of Legation at Rio de Janeiro) to Storer, 1848-1849 | Box: 2 Folder: 12 |
| Correspondence, William Ogden (Lieutenant Commander of USS Dolphin) to Storer, 1848 | Box: 2 Folder: 13 |
| Correspondence, William B. Preston (Secretary of the Navy) to James Ferguson, John K. Mitchell, S.M Powell, and Storer, 1849-1850 | Box: 2 Folder: 14 |
| Description: Included is a letter by Preston to Storer, dated April 16, 1849, stating, "the Department ... exhorts you to exercise continued diligence and watchfulness in the suppression of the slave trade. Additional force, of the character requested by you, will be dispatched to join your command." | |
| Correspondence, William Reynolds (Rear Admiral) to Storer, 1850 | Box: 2 Folder: 15 |
| Correspondence, Herbert Schomberg (Commander) to Storer, 1850 | Box: 2 Folder: 16 |
Description: Included is a letter by Schomberg, Commander in the British Navy, to Storer concerning John Murray, the American captain of the Paulina, detained by the British on suspicion of slaving. The letter, dated January 21, 1850, describes at length how Schomberg's men searched Murray's vessel and found "her slave deck and fittings complete, and a set of Brazilian papers ... obtained, of course, by false representations."

Correspondence, [G.W. Terry] to Storer, Including a Letter regarding Coverage of Storer in the Press in relation to the Slave Trade, 1849
Box: 2 Folder: 17

Correspondence, David Tod (Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Brazil) to and from Storer, 1848-1850
Box: 2 Folder: 18

Correspondence, E. Wakeman (of Steamer New World, which was Mistaken for a Slave Ship) to Storer, 1850
Box: 2 Folder: 19

Correspondence, Miscellaneous, 1847-1851
Box: 2 Folder: 20


The letter from John I. Taylor reports of the discovery of a slave trading port at Cape Frio (Cabo Frio), Brazil, and is dated November 9, 1848.

Correspondence and Contracts regarding Coal, 1848-1849
Box: 3 Folder: 1

Correspondence regarding the Re-interment of the Bodies of George Rodgers and Thomas Morgan, 1848-1850
Box: 3 Folder: 2

Correspondence regarding the Santa Catarina Mob Incident in which 45 Citizens were Assaulted in Street, 1849
Box: 3 Folder: 3

Correspondence regarding the Siege of Montevideo and Related Claims, 1849-1850
Box: 3 Folder: 4

Correspondence regarding the Case of John Sampson, Stow Away on Board the USS St. Louis, 1850
Box: 3 Folder: 5

Court Martial Proceedings (Bound Volume), 1848 January-June
Box: 5 Folder: 1

Court Martial Proceedings (Bound Volume), 1848 October-1849 September
Box: 5 Folder: 2

Extracts and Documents, Largely Relating to the Slave Trade, 1847-1849
Box: 3 Folder: 6

Description: Includes a summary of comments of Captain Thomas Patrick of the Barque Kingston upon being searched by a British vessel investigating the slave trade, dated April 8, 1850; an undated extract from Wilson's Recollections on the West Coast of Africa on slave trader practices; and a copy of undated testimony of Samuel R. Appleton regarding the Brig Imogen which was suspected of slaving. Some materials are undated.
Description: Of particular note are Storer's mentions of his ship's encounters with other vessels believed to be engaging in the slave trade. Storer's letter of May 27, 1848, instructs the commander of the U.S. steamer Allegheny to follow a ship suspected of carrying enslaved Africans: "...the Barque 'Louisa'... cleared this day for the coast of Africa with a cargo consisting of various articles, and in sufficient quantities, to be deemed suspicious." In a letter and order dated September 5, 1848, Storer spells out the problem in clear language to John A. Davis, the commander of the U.S.S. Perry: "I have reasons for believing that vessels engaged in the slave trade under the American flag, sometimes land their cargos on the coast between Cape Frio and the latitude of St. Salvadore. You will therefore cruise with the U.S. Brig Perry under your command along that part of the coast outside the Abrolhos Banks for two weeks, keeping a good look out for suspicious looking vessels under American Colors...." He then relates specific instructions for search and seizure of such vessels, careful to make sure that such activities do not violate the jurisdiction of Brazil. Storer tells Davis to "use every effort to arrest, bring to well merited punishment all persons who on the open seas may disgrace the American flag by making it in any way subservient to the pursuit and protection of this most nefarious commerce."

The front flyleaf contains the ownership inscription of David Tod, U.S. Ambassador when the Brazilian-American Claims Treaty was signed on January 27, 1849. The inscription reads: "David Tod, esquire / Envoy Extraordinary / and Minister Plenipotentiary / of the United States / Rio de Janeiro." Indeed, David Tod was the American representative who signed the claims document along with the Emperor of Brazil. The United States received 530,000 milreis to cover indemnifications against American interests which in dollar equivalents of 1850 was over one million dollars at the time. This ledger was likely used as evidence and then returned to Storer. While the entries are not in complete chronological order, the letter book contains an index towards the end.

Ship Information for French Ship La Plata, Notes Taken by Order of Commodore Storer, 1848 February 25

Ship Information for USS Brandywine, Record Book, 1847-1850

Ship Information for USS Brandywine, Lists of Officers and Crew, Library Contents, and Supplies; Orders; and Statistics, 1847-1850

Ship Information for USS Casco, Anonymous Letter Stating that the Casco was Transporting Enslaved Persons, 1849 October 1

Ship Information for USS Constellation, Receipt for and List of Library Books, undated

Ship Information for USS Dale, Muster Roll, 1849
Ship Information for USS Dolphin, Monthly Return of Crew, 1848 May
Ship Information for USS Erie, List of Officers, 1848 April
Ship Information for USS Falmouth, Muster Roll, 1849 July
Ship Information for USS Flora (Slave Ship), Orders to and Report on Capture and Correspondence with Owner Joshua M. Clapp, 1848
Ship Information for USS Laurens (Slave Ship), Correspondence and Newspaper Clippings regarding Seizure, 1848
Ship Information for USS Ohio, Correspondence, Lists of Officers and Vessels Boarded by Crew, and Orders, 1847
Ship Information for USS Onkahye, Lists of Men Transferred from the Brandywine and Officers, 1847-1848
Ship Information for USS Perry, Lists of Officers and Crew, 1848-1849
Ship Information for USS Plymouth, Lists of Officers and Crew and Reports, 1848
Ship Information for USS St. Louis, Lists of Officers and Crew, 1848-1850
Ship Information for USS St. Mary, Lists of Officers and Crew, 1848
United States Navy Documents, including Circulars, General Orders, Legal Material, and Regulations, 1848-1849

Naval Service as Governor of the Naval Asylum at Philadelphia and President of Court of Inquiry #3, 1852-1858

Description: Materials documenting Storer's naval service as Governor of the Naval Asylum at Philadelphia and President of the Court of Inquiry #3 from 1852 to 1858 document the later years of George W. Storer's naval career. For several years, Storer was on leave, but he appears to have been anxious to return to service. On July 1, 1854, he received orders from James C. Dobbin, Secretary of the Navy, to serve as governor of the Naval Asylum at Philadelphia, a hospital and home for retired sailors which was located on the Schuylkill River. During his service as governor, Storer had a dispute with William H. Gordon, an officer with whom he worked, regarding Gordon not following an order. This dispute is documented with letters from both Storer and Gordon to Dobbin. In 1857, the Secretary of the Navy, Isaac Toucey, ordered Storer to serve as president of the Court of Inquiry #3, which resulted from an 1855 congressional act attempting to promote efficiency in the Navy by removing more than two hundred officers from service. Material largely consists of orders to testify for particular officers, but does include lists of officers affected by the Court of Inquiry.

Arrangement: Arranged by genre of material.

Orders to Serve at Court Martials (Member and Testifier), 1852
Court Martial of Commander Robert Ritchie, Orders to Serve as Member and Charges and Specifications, 1856
Personal and Family Papers, 1842-1868

Description: Personal and family papers consist of a few personal materials of George W. Storer, including correspondence about a library and grocery accounts, and materials belonging to his sons, Jacob J. Storer, Robert Storer, and Samuel Storer. Robert Storer served in the Navy and included are an official leave of absence and an order, as well as a letter from his father. While extremely small in quantity, this material provides a more personal and intimate view of George W. Storer and his role as a father, rather than a naval officer. Of interest is a letter from Samuel Storer at the time of his wife's death when he was in Sitka, Alaska.

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by subject.

- George W. Storer, Correspondence with J.B.H. Smith (probably a lawyer) regarding Family Library and Property, 1852-1857
- George W. Storer, Grocery Accounts, 1854
- George W. Storer, Photograph of Portrait, undated
- Jacob J. Storer, Letter to his Father, George Washington Storer, 1852 November 19
- Robert Storer, Leave of Absence from the USS Delaware; Order to Report to USS Potomac; and Letter from his Father, George W. Storer, 1842-1844
- Samuel Storer, Marriage Announcement; Letter regarding the Death of his Wife, Sarah P.R. Goodwin; and Photographs of 2 Women (Mabel Storer, died 1867 and Aunt [Illegible]), circa 1859-1868