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**LETTERS RECEIVED BY THE SECRETARY
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NOTES ON ROLL 52

The volume reproduced on this roll has the following backstrip title: "Commanders' / Letters / Jan. - Mar. / 1857. / Vol. I. / Navy / Department." It contains letters, with their enclosures, addressed to the Secretary of the Navy from January 1 to March 31, 1857, by officers with the rank of commander. The communications in this volume are arranged in chronological order. An index appears at the front of the volume.

This volume is part of a body of records in the National Archives designated as Record Group 45, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library.

W. S. S. Wyand
Master of Aspinwall January 16th 1857

Sir,

I have the honor to enclose a letter to (me) from our Commercial Agent at San Juan del Norte (B. S. Colwell), accompanied by a statement of C. M. Harris one of the owners of the "New York & San Francisco Steam Ship Line via Nicaragua", in reference to the seizure of the Lake and River Steamers by the Costa Ricans. Now the receipt of this information, had I been at liberty, I should have repaired without delay to San Juan for the purpose of investigating the matter, but the reasons which prevented me from leaving here on a former occasion operate with double force at the present time. I also enclose the proceedings finding and sentence of a Summary Court held onboard this ship, together with two Reports of Target Practice with Great Guns.

I am respectfully

Your obt. servant

Robert L. Robb
Commander

Wm. S. S. Wyand
Secretary of the Navy
Washington

Commercial Agency U.S.A.
San Juan del Norte
5th January 1857

Capt Robert R. Webb U.S.N.
Commanding U.S. Ship Cyane
Aspern or all &c.

Sir:

I enclose you a copy of a letter addressed to me by Mr L. H. Harris as one of the representatives of the owners of the New York and San Francisco Steam Ship Line via Nicaragua, asking your interference in recovering the Steamers lying on the San Juan River, and the State of Nicaragua, all of which have been seized by the Costa Ricans, and of which they hold possession.

The passengers from San Francisco are now here, having arrived last evening, the Steamer Texas from New Orleans with passengers for San Francisco also arrived here last evening and the Steamer Tennessee is immediately expected from New York with passengers bound to the same destination. The Steamers having been seized by the Costa Ricans, all communication across the Isthmus is cut off, and the passengers are hindered from proceeding on their contemplated journey.

I have notified you of these facts at the request of the representative of Messrs Charles Morgan & Sons of New York, and you best know what steps should be taken in the matter.

Respectfully Y^r

(Signed)

B. Squier Gilchrist
U.S. Cons.

On board Steamer Texas
5th January 1857

B. S. Whitt
Comd. Agent U.S.
Nav. Juan del Norte

Dr. Sir

As one of the owners of
the New York & San Francisco Steam Ship Line via
Paraguay I call your attention to the fact that
on board the Steamer San Carlos while coming down the river in
pursuit of our legitimate business of transporting passengers
and the Steamer San Carlos, the Steamer was seized
by a Costa Rican armed force, who announced
that they had possession of every other of our Steamers
running on the same route, and unless we delivered without
delay the Steamer San Carlos, they would proceed to
take her by force, with a view of saving the lives of men
and children, no further possession. We found in our
possession here they had possession - I would here observe
that the Costa Rican force detained us into entering the
river by carrying the American flag at the Jack Staff
of the Steamer, on which they were, thus leading us to suppose
that our own people were in board of her. Learning that
an American vessel of war is lying in Chamela, I
trust that you will notify the Commanders thereof of the facts
above, and leave to his judgement whether the facts
are not such as call for his demanding of the Costa Rican
delivery of all property (thus seized) to our Agent
Santa Thomas

(Signed) Chas Morgan & Wms
per J. O. Harrie

41

U. S. Navy Yard
New York. Jan. 17th 1857.

Hon J. C. Dobbin
Secretary of the Navy.

Sir.

I have the honor herewith to forward an official list of such of the Crew late serving in the "St. Marys" as in my opinion deserve the distinction of an honorable discharge under the law.

I am very respectfully
Your Obedt. Servt.

J. Bailey
Commander.

52
Respectfully forwarded
S. M. Stringham

Comdr. Naval Rendezvous,
Boston, Jan. 27th 1857.

Sir -

There has been handed me, for inspection, an honorable discharge of a man from the St Marys, which certifies on the face that the man was discharged as a seaman, on the back is ^{a certificate} enclosed, over the signature of the Executive Officer, that the man served in the capacity of petty officer; and I am informed that all the petty officers received similar discharges as the one which has guided us requiring that any person recruiting with an honorable discharge shall receive three months pay "equal to that which he would have been entitled for he has been employed in actual service". I would beg leave to request instructions for our government.

Very Respectfully
Yr Obedt Servt
J. A. Winslow
Comdr

The Hon^{ble} J. C. Dobbin,
Secretary of the Navy,
Washington,

U.S. Ship Saratoga
 Head of St. Thomas.
 January 28th 1857.

Sir,

After encountering
 very heavy Gale in the
 vicinity of Bermuda, we
 arrived off this Port with-
 out accident yesterday,
 eleven days from the Cape
 of Virginia - all well.

I have the honor to be
 Very Resp^{tly} Yours W. S. S.
 E. G. Tilton
 Commander.

Hon^{ble} J. C. Dobbin
 Sec^y of the Navy.

59
U. S. Ship "Chie"
Boston 30th Juny 1857.

Sir.

I have to inform you that John
Byrns U.S. who ran from this ship on
the ice on the 25th and reported to you
on the 26th of Juny. was brought on board
to day by a Constable I have paid the
reward which was offered of twenty dollars
and confined him in double irons to
await your pleasure at the time he
admitted he was in debt one dollar to
the Government.

I have the honor to be Sir
Very Respectfully Yours A. S. L.
J. D. Hazard
Commander.

Hon. J. C. Dobbin
Secretary of the Navy.
Washington
D. C.

Recd. & Forwarded
J. H. Stingham
Comm^d

89
U.S. Ship Saratoga
Sec^y of St. Croix.
Feb. 16th 1837.

Sir, The Saratoga left
St. Thomas on the 10th of this
month, and anchored here
the same day.

Mr. Sanford arrived
at this place last Night—
we sail to day with him
on board for La Guyane.

I have the honor to be Sir
Very Resp.^y Your Obedt. Serv.
E. G. Tilton
Commander.

Hon:

J. C. Dobbin

Sec^y of the Navy.

103
U.S. Ship Saratoga
Harbor of La Guaya.
Feb 22nd 1857.

Sir,

Mr. Sanford was landed at La Guaya on the 20th Inst. Three days & we have after he joined us.

The Department having given me permission to do so, on our way to "San Juan del Norte" to do so, we sail tomorrow if the weather permits for the Island of "Curacao", to recruit the crew.

I have the honor to be
Sir, very respectfully,
Your Obedt. Servt.

E. G. Tilton

Commander

Hon: S. C. Dotin

Secy of the Navy.

Copy

U. S. Ship "Saratoga"
Harbor of La Guayra
February 20th 1857

Sir,

The "Saratoga" anchored in this harbor
today.

I am pleased to inform me if I can do
anything to advance the interests of the cit-
izens of the United States in Venezuela.

Yours, Sir,

Very Respectfully
Your Obedt. Servt.

(Signed)

E. S. Tilton
Commanding

Thos. Chas. James

U. S. Ministers Residents
Caracas.
Venezuela.

Telegraph.

Baracas, 22 de Feby. de 1857
a las 10.45. la A.M.

Señor Capt. G. G. Tilton.

In reply to your note received yesterday I have to request that if in your judgements, it be practicable, you will do me the favor to come to this city, as I desire a conference with you, and cannot at this moment conveniently leave the legation. Should you be able as I hope, to come, I shall be glad, if you will come at once, to my house, and remain with me as long as you can stay in Baracas.

Yours very truly
(Signed) G. G. Tilton
Min. Rep. of U. S.

Copy

Legation of the United States
Savannah, 21st Feb. 1857

Commander

W. G. Feltou

Commanding U. S. Ship
Saratoga.

Dear Sir,

I regret very much to learn by your telegraphic dispatch of today that you propose to sail tomorrow. The coming of our national vessels on these regions always produces a good effect, and I think your arrival in the Saratoga at this time especially of fortune. It is true that no emergency to my knowledge now exists here requiring the interposition of the force under your command, but I have no doubt that your presence here for a few days longer would be useful and would promote American interests here. I hope you may feel under the circumstances justified in staying a short time longer and in giving me the pleasure of seeing you here.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours very truly
Signed W. G. Feltou

Recd. 23rd Feb.

W. G. F.

12³

U. S. Ship, Serrano
Aspinwall N. H.
March 1st 1857.

Sir, The "Serrano" anchored
in this Port the night before
last, to procure Intelligence.
I proceed in the morning
tomorrow, if the wind permits,
to San Juan de Norte.

I have the honor to be Sir
Very Resp^t your Obedt. Serv.
J. G. Tilton.
Comdr.

M^r: J. C. Dolbin
Sec^y of the Navy.

128
Washington City,
March 2d 1857.

Sir:

I have received your communication of the 28th ultimo and in reply beg leave to say, that my sickness and Surgeon Potter's advice induced me to remain eleven days at Honolulu and twenty-six at Papeete Tahiti. I did not visit the Feejee Islands during my last cruise to the Polynesian Islands for three reasons:

1st. My health was so bad that I could not take proper care of my ship in the dangerous navigation among the Feejee Islands.

2d. The order of Commodore Mervin dated January 12th 1856 under which I sailed from San Francisco did not specify the Feejee Islands.

3d. I visited the Feejee Islands in September 1855, destroyed five native towns on those Islands, obtained indemnity from the natives of small amounts, and promises for other American citizens for larger amounts. I made a report of my proceedings to Commodore Mervin, and the Navy Department, and I have not yet heard from either, approving or disapproving of my action, and therefore, if my health had permitted me to have visited the Feejee Islands, in November last, I should have been at a loss how to act, particularly

E B Donnell

particularly as the English Missionaries had reported me to my government for protecting my countrymen, and that report is now in the State Department. If instead of sending two of his squadron to the Feeje Islands at the same time to create confusion, Commodore Mervin had obeyed the orders of the Navy Department, and had sent one to those Islands every six or twelve months, Mr. Williams' person and property would have been respected by the natives, provided, the commander of that ship, acted independent of English influence.

The Surgeon of the John Adams was left with Lieut. Corbin because he desired to remain. I would not have left him without his consent, and if he does not acquit me of all blame under the circumstances when he is heard from, then I must suffer. I will here call attention to the fact that, the St. Mary's, a much larger ship than the John Adams performed almost the entire cruise in the Pacific with but one medical officer on board, and he an Assistant Surgeon, not passed. I doubt not it is in the memory of Commodore Mervin that, Surgeon Potter expressed a wish to go in the St. Mary's whenever the John Adams and she met; and in regard to a Commander, I have stated in a former

former letter how easy it was for Commodore Mervin to send Commander Hoff to take the John Adams and return to the Islands. Therefore, I cannot understand how the Squadron was crippled by my action! I hope in a few days to be able to produce the orders given by Commodore Mervin during my last cruise to the Pacific. I arrived at Valparaiso too ill to return in pursuit of the Guano Islands. To have remained and died at Valparaiso, would not have sent the ship to sea any sooner, as she had to await Commodore Mervin's orders, to have detained the ship in port until my recovery, which in the opinion of my physicians might have taken many months, and would have been a violation of Commodore Mervin's orders to return to the Islands. I therefore proceeded according to your regulations which makes it necessary, if in the opinion of the Commander, any officer or other person on board his ship be sick, to apply to the senior Commanding officer present to order a survey. Being the officer myself, I ordered a survey on myself, and in accordance with the recommendation of the survey, I ordered myself home, subject to the approval of Commodore Mervin then at Panama. I followed this course

course on a former occasion in regard
 to other officers of my ship, who are
 yet living, and I have never yet
 learned that my action was dis-
 approved of by the Department or
 Commodore Mervin, and I was
 therefore led to believe that, my
 conduct was approved. From the
 regulations governing surveys, as
 laid down in the "Naval Register"
 it appears to me that I have pursued
 the proper course and that they
 were made for my benefit as well
 as the other officers of my ship.
 If I had met orders at Valparaíso
 to remain on the coast of Chili or
 go to Panama, the case would have
 been different, but under the cir-
 cumstances, with the newspapers
 charging Commodore Mervin with
 neglect of duty, and calls being
 made on the Secretary of the Navy
 to send another ship of war to settle
 the question in regard to there
 being guano on the Island, what
 right had I to retain the John
 Adams in the port of Valparaíso,
 and keep command of her, and
 not obey the command of the Com-
 modore, to go and search Jarvis's
 Island for guano. If I had been
 in good health, nothing would have
 given me more pleasure than
 to have obeyed the order, but under
 the circumstances, I was unable
 to

to return to sea and perform duty and so the medical board decided.

The suspicions of Commodore Mervin induced him to express himself too freely in his communication to the Department, and to myself on this subject. In regard to his inquiry into my case I wish that he could have had the officers of the John Adams, including Dr. Potter and Lieut. Nelson of the Store-ship Fredonia, to give him a statement of my health at the time of my arrival at Valparaiso.

I have the honor to enclose a copy of the order under which Lieut. Shattuck returned to the United States, and also a copy of the one under which I left the John Adams for the United States via Panama, expecting to obtain the sanction of Commodore Mervin on my arrival at the latter place, and while waiting for a boat to visit his ship, for the purpose of reporting myself, his letter of the 24th of January 1857 was placed in my hands.

I have the honor to be
Very respectfully
Your Obedt. Servt.

E. B. Boutwell
Commander.

Hon.
J. C. Dobbin
Secy. of the Navy.

136

U. S. Ship *Saratoga*
Harbor of San Juan de Norte-
March 7th 1857.

Sir, The "*Saratoga*" reached
this Anchorage, the day
before yesterday, from
Aspinwall, she will.

I have the honor to be
Sir, Very Resp^{ly} Yours W. S. S.
E. G. Tilton
Commander.

to the
Hon: Sec^y of the Navy
Washington
D.C.

United States Ship "Potsmouth";
Min River, March 6th 1857.

Sir,

The following named invalided men were sent from this ship when at Shanghai, to New York in the clipper ship "Romance of the Sea"; viz -

Thomas Gaynor, O. S. - Good character, - is entitled to an honorable discharge. He was wounded in storming the Barrier Forts, near Canton, on the 20th of November 1856.

Thomas O'Mealy, / Seaman - Good character, - and if health should be restored would be entitled to an honorable discharge.

Henry Tyson, / Seaman, / Good character, - old, & entitled to the privileges of the Naval Asylum.

Peter Cannon, (O. S.,) - Indifferent.

James F. Wiley, (O. S.,) - Permanently diseased.

Joseph Sproule, (3rd class App.) - Permanently diseased.

George A. Wilson, (3rd class App.) - Indifferent.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,
your obedient servant,

Andrew H. Foote
Commander.

Honorable

The Secretary of the Navy,
Washington, D. C.

150
Plattsburgh N.Y.
March 12th 1857

Sir.

The deaths of Captains Abbot, Morris, McKeever and Dubany, have made vacancies for the promotion of four Commanders on the active list of the Navy to the rank of Captain. -

The 3^d Section of the "Act to promote the efficiency of the Navy," approved Feb'y 28th 1855, provides for "the regular promotion of officers on the service list of the Navy who may be at any time entitled to promotion - consequent upon deaths, dismissals, or resignations in the Naval service." -

The act to amend the act quoted above, provides that the law limiting the number of Officers of the Navy shall be suspended so far as to authorize the restoration of officers reserved or dropped under that Act.

I am the senior Commander on the active list, and as such, have a claim to the vacancy made by the death of Captain Abbot. - For my conduct and qualifications, I refer you to the record of my late successful cruise in command of the U. S. Ship, St. Marys, closed at

Panama in December last, and 39 years
service. -

The laws above cited, contemplated the
promotion for which I apply - May I therefore
respectfully solicit your influence with the
President to have my name (and that of
others on the active list equally entitled)
renominated to the Senate for promotion.

I am informed that a majority of that
Body are in favor of our promotion, if
the nominations are made. I therefore
solicit your favorable action in the matter.

I have the honor to be
Sir your obed^t. serv^t

J. Bailey
Commander U.S.N.

Hon Isaac Toucey
Secretary of the Navy.

Ans that he
has been nominated
& confirmed &
will receive his
commission in a
few days

answered

17th March 1857

B Mar 17 ^{Hardin} ~~Walter~~

165
U. S. Ship Saratoga
Harbor of San Juan del Norte
March 18th 1857

Sir,

Nothing has transpired since the Saratoga anchored in this harbor, on the 8th Inst: requiring my interposition.

Our citizens here are unmolested in their lawful pursuits.

The accompanying papers impart all the intelligence I possess.

We sail for Havana & Key West, touching probably at Aspinwall, tomorrow.

I have the honor to be
Very Respy. Your Obedt. Servt.

J. J. Tilton
Commander

Hon: Secy. of the Navy.

'copy'

'Union & boats' at
Greytown, 6 March 1857

Sir,

I have the honor to enclose the copy of a letter I have just received from several persons, of whom a large proportion represent themselves to be citizens of the United States of America.

Should you have no opportunity of sending these men to the Port of Tiptunwall, as they request, I shall be happy to order them a passage in the Steamer Selyde, which is to sail on the morning of the 8th.

I have the honor to be
Sir

Your most obedient servants
(signed) John E. Erskine
Captain and
senior officer

Captain Telson
United States Ship
Saratoga

Copy

(signed) John E. Enskine
Captain and Senior Officer

Greytown N. Z. 6 March 1887.
The Commander of the British fleet.

We the undersigned having been deceived by the falsehoods and misrepresentations of interested persons and induced to engage in an unlawful and unholy warfare against inoffensive people against whom we had no cause for such proceedings and having taken advantage of the first opportunity to escape from the snare in which designing parties had entrapped us, and being desirous furthermore to take advantage of the generous proclamation of General Buller, which we believe will enable us to reach our homes from the port of Chippingwall.

We, therefore, take the opportunity to request for ourselves an extension of your kindness in granting us a passage from this port to the port of Chippingwall on board of the Royal Mail Steamer Clyde, which we understand is about to sail in a few

days. For which and the humane
kindness already extended, we, the un-
designed shall remain most gratefully
indebted.

J. Jay Wilkins, (Natchez), Miss.
J. St. Smith --- La.
D. Christie --- La.
Robert White --- Penn.
Wm. L. Fucius --- New Orleans.
S. L. Howard --- Ala.
Frederick Miller --- New Orleans.
E. A. Richardson --- Ala.
S. Livingston --- do.
William Henry --- do.
T. G. Mc Carthy --- Ill.
J. Rosebury --- Miss.
J. Bracken --- Miss.
C. Green --- Ala.
Jas. Kennedy --- New York.
Narcissus Rabins --- Cuba.
F. Frank --- France.
T. A. Guin --- England.
James Marshall --- La.
D. Sawyer --- Mac.
H. Coffle --- Texas.

"Copy."

U. S. Ship *Saratoga*
Harbor of San Juan del Norte
March 7th 1857

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of yesterday's date - together with its enclosure.

In reply I have to inform you that the ship I command is without steam power, & that her destination is not to Chipinwell C. B. at present.

I have the honor to be.
Very Respy, Your Obedt. Servt.
Signed W. S. Fulton
Commander

Captain Jas. E. Corbitt
R. C.

'Copy'

Punta Arenas, March 6th 1857

To the Captain
of the
United States ship of war Saratoga

Sir,

Representation has been made to me that the English Authorities have refused further countenance or protection to men whom they have at different times induced to desert from my command. These men have been brought out to this country as Emigrants at the expense of the Government of Nicaragua, and have been with me at the battle of Saniqui and elsewhere on the river - and I consequently claim them as Nicaraguans and not entitled to your protection as American citizens.

I have the honor to be
Sir

Your most obedt. servt.

(Signed) J. A. Lockidge
Emigrants Agent for Nicaragua
& commanding on the San Juan

P.S. I shall remain here until the arrival of the steamer from the States, having received satisfactory news from my camp up the river.

(Signed) J. A. L.

"copy"

Punta Arenas, March 6th /57

Capt. Felton

Comdg U. S. Ship of War *Saratoga*

At Sea,

I take the liberty of forwarding you a list of the names of the men who have been induced by English influence to desert from my command, by the promise of protection and a free passage to their homes viz,

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| - Livingston | - Green |
| - Howe | - Dunne |
| - Coffie | - Guin |
| - White | - Sam |
| - Lewis | - Wilkins |
| | - Smith |

besides some two or three others, names not known & it is quite likely they will apply to you under different names.

Hoping that you will disregard all such applications as my men have no cause for complaints having plenty of good & wholesome provisions

I remain with Respects

Your most obt. Servt.

(Signed) S. H. Lockbridge

Emigrants Agent for *Chiriquia*

Copy

U. S. Ship *Saratoga*
San Juan del Norte
March 16th 1857

Commodore,

I have the honor to forward the accompanying letter, dated March 14th 1857, addressed to me by the U. S. Commercial Agents at this place, for such action as you may deem proper.

I have the honor to be
Very Resp. Yours Obedt. Servt.
(signed) E. G. Feltou
Commander

Commodore

Wm. Kernine
Lieut. U. S. Naval Force in the Pacific
Sloop Ship *Independence*
Harbor of Panama.

Steamers are plying.

I have the honor to be
Very Respectfully
Your Obedt. Servt.

(Signed) P. Squire Dotrell
U. S. Comdr. Agh.

11 April 7
A. H. 10

File

LATEST FROM GREY TOWN.

ASPINWALL, MARCH 9, 1857.

[By P. R. R. Telegraph.]

The British steamer *Clyde* arrived here at noon, with 22 deserters. She reports the *Tennessee* as having arrived at Greytown, on the 7th inst., with a large number of passengers, the majority of whom are bound for Aspinwall.

U. S. S. *Saratoga* arrived there on the 6th inst.

Col. Lockridge has garrisoned at Greytown and the mouth of the San Carlos (?)—On the 18th, Col. Titus held a parley with the Costa Ricans at Castillo, and permitted a messenger to pass through his lines from their forces, on condition that they would surrender next day at noon. One hour before the time specified, the messenger returned with a large Costa Rican force, under General Mora, which drove Titus from his position, with loss. On the 3rd, the steamer *Reserve* returned to Punta Arenas, and was boarded by a British officer, with the usual offer of protection to any of the Nicaraguan army; upon which Titus abused the officer, who returned to his ship and had Titus taken prisoner, and placed on board the frigate *Cassack*. The *Reserve* was seized and placed alongside the gun-boat *Victor*. A gun-boat was immediately despatched to inform Capt. Erskine, the commander of the Squadron, at Pearl Key Lagoon, of the above. The following morning, immediately on its arrival, Titus and the Steamer were released, shortly after which the *Saratoga* came to anchor.—The *Tennessee* will probably be here to-day.

[This St. Carlos, mentioned in the foregoing, cannot be the Fort St. Carlos at the mouth of the Lake, but the Island of St. Carlos, below Castillo, which Col. Lockridge had possession of by the last accounts received.—EDS. STAR AND HERALD.]

Price of passage through, \$25 Children under 12
Trains of Agt. half price. One do & do & do
APRIL, 1856.
PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY.
OF THE

RECEIVED
H. A. n. v. in the harbor of
San Juan del Norte

Cassack, 20 guns, Screw Steam Corvette
Archer, 13 " , Screw Steam ship
Victor, 6 " , Screw Steam Gun Vessel
Pioneer, 6 " , do do do do

Oce, Mail Steamship Co.

Up the coast, reported at Pearl Bay

Union, 91 guns, Screw Steamship.

Antreped, 6 " , Screw Steam gun Vessel

It is reported that the Union & Archer will sail
soon for England.

March 18th 1857

Respectfully forwarded
E. L. Tilton.
Commander