

Barron, James Papers (III)

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1816-1837

Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Mss. 65 B27 III

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/4180

Unit Date

1816-1837

Language

English

Creator

Barron, James, 1769-1851

Extent

0.10 Linear Feet

Extent

15 items

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Biographical Information:

Commodore James Barron, born 15 September 1768 in Hampton, Virginia, died 21 April 1851 in Norfolk, served under his father, Commodore James Barron the Elder, in the Revolutionary War. He was made Captain in the Virginia Navy in 1799 and transferred to the newly formed U.S. Navy in 1803. During the War with Tripoli he commanded the U.S. Frigates *New York* and *President* when his brother, Commodore Samuel Barron, was commander of the Mediterranean Squadron. He assisted his brother in that command when the latter's health failed and returned with him to Norfolk in 1805.

Appointed Commander of the Mediterranean Squadron in 1806 with the rank of Commodore, which title he retained for the rest of his life, he sailed aboard the U.S. *Chesapeake*. The British ship *Leopard* attacked the *Chesapeake* when Barron refused to allow his ship to be boarded in a search for British deserters. After a brief battle, Barron surrendered and on the request of his junior officers he was brought before a Naval court martial. The command was turned over to Capt. Stephen Decatur who in the Algerian War of 1815 became a national hero. Barron was suspended from the Navy for five years in a decision criticized by many, including B. Cocke of Washington and Robert Saunders of Williamsburg.

Barron took command of the merchant ship *Portia*, and after several voyages was caught in a Danish port by the outbreak of the War of 1812. He attempted to get passage home but was refused it because of the Danish neutrality and remained in Copenhagen until 1819. During this period he supported himself with his inventions including a new type of mill, a rope spinning machine, a cork cutter, and a dough kneading machine. Upon his return he sought a command in the Navy and in the course of this an argument by mail with Decatur resulted in the famous duel in which Barron was seriously injured and Decatur fatally. His second in the duel, Capt. J. D. Elliott was coupled with Barron in responsibility for the duel, though perhaps unfairly.

A Naval Court of Enquiry was held in 1821 to clear the name of Barron for his absence in the War of 1812 and other charges brought against him. The decision was very noncommittal and was criticized by many, including Carter Beverley and John Taliaferro of Williamsburg.

In 1824, Barron was given the command of the Philadelphia Navy Yard, largely through the influence of his friend, General Andrew Jackson. While there he participated in the entertaining of General Lafayette when he visited the U.S.

Commodore Barron took command of the Gosport Navy Yard in 1825 where he remained until 1831 when he returned to the command of the Philadelphia Navy Yard. In 1837, he resigned that command because an officer junior to him had been appointed President of the Naval Board in Washington, and was without command until 1842. From 13 March to 30 November 1842 he commanded the Navy Asylum, a retirement home for Naval men in Philadelphia. In that position he was also in charge of the training and examination of Midshipmen for the Navy, and his advice was asked when plans were being made for organization of the Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1847. In 1845, he returned to Norfolk where he lived in retirement until his death in 1851.

During all this time he continued his interest in inventions which included a new type of pump and bellows ventilator for ships, a steam-powered battleship, a new type of dry dock, and a cylinder steam for ships developed with Amos Kendali. He was instrumental in the development of the Naval flag signal, which he first revised in 1798.

Commodore Barron supported the education of his grandson, James Barron Hope, whose early letters, a

poem on Washington, and other poems are included at the end of Box 11. (See the James Barron Hope Papers for a continuation of these papers, and the Samuel Barron Papers for a chart to the genealogy of the Barron family.) Further information about this individual or organization may be available in the Special Collections Research Center Wiki: http://scdbwiki.swem.wm.edu/wiki/index.php/James_Barron

Scope and Contents

Photocopies of 15 patents issued to James Barron by US Patent Office between 1816 and 1837.

Keywords

Inventions--History--United States

Legal documents

Description of Subordinate Components

Patents Issued to James Barron

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/246581

Unit Date 1816-1837

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 7 (folder)