Guide to the British Nineteenth Century Naval Pay Documents (Power of Attorney, etc.)
MSS.0486

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit
March 11, 2013
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
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### Summary Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Repository</strong></th>
<th>University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>British Nineteenth Century Naval Pay Documents (Power of Attorney, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>1809-1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extent</strong></td>
<td>0.05 Linear feet (3 Items, 3 Pieces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text [Box]</strong></td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Container</strong></td>
<td>486.01</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td>Power of attorney, dated 4 December 1809, and drafts, dated 10 August 1816 and 28 October 1816, for prize money for sailors of the British navy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preferred Citation note**

British Nineteenth Century Naval Pay Documents (Power of Attorney, etc.), University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama
Prize money has a distinct meaning in warfare, especially naval warfare, where it was a monetary reward paid out to the crew of a ship for capturing or sinking an enemy vessel. The claims for the bounty are usually heard in a Prize Court.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, captured ships were legally Crown property. In order to reward and encourage sailors' zeal at no cost to the Crown, it became customary to pass on all or part of the value of a captured ship and its cargo to the capturing captain for distribution to his crew. This practice was formalised via the Cruisers and Convoys Act of 1708. An Admiralty Prize Court was established to evaluate claims and condemn prizes, and the scheme of division of the money was specified. This system, with minor changes, lasted throughout the colonial, Revolutionary, and Napoleonic wars. If the prize were an enemy merchantman, the prize money came from the sale of both ship and cargo. If it were a warship, and repairable, usually the Crown bought it at a fair price; additionally, the Crown added "head money" of 5 pounds per enemy sailor aboard the captured warship. Prizes were keenly sought, for the value of a captured ship was often such that a crew could make a year's pay for a few hours' fighting. Hence boarding and hand-to-hand fighting remained common long after naval cannons developed the ability to sink the enemy from afar. All ships in sight of a capture shared in the prize money, as their presence was thought to encourage the enemy to surrender without fighting until sunk.

The following scheme for distribution of prize money was used for much of the Napoleonic wars, the heyday of prize warfare. Allocation was by eighths. Two eighths of the prize money went to the captain, generally propelling him upwards in political and financial circles. One eighth of the money went to the admiral or commander and chief who signed the ship's written orders (unless the orders came directly from the Admiralty in London, in which case this eighth also went to the captain). One eighth was divided among the lieutenants, sailing master, and captain of marines if any. One eighth was divided among the wardroom warrant officers (surgeon, purser, and chaplain), standing warrant officers (carpenter, boatswain, and gunner), lieutenant of marines, and the master's mates. One eighth was divided among the junior warrant and petty officers, their mates, sergeants of marines, captain's clerk, surgeon's mates, and midshipmen. The final two eighths were divided among the crew, with able and specialist seamen receiving larger shares than ordinary seamen, landsmen, and boys.

The collection contains three early 19th century British documents relating to the recovery and awarding of prize money. The first document is a Power of attorney, dated 4 December 1809, authorizing Charles Rivington Broughton, Alexander Cockburn, and Gottlieb Christian Rupurte to act for Capt. William Howe Mulcaster, for the recovery of any prize money, etc. owed. The other two documents are drafts,
dated 10 August 1816 and 28 October 1816, for prize money for John Wegener, for the capture of Copenhagen, and for John Field, for the capture of the Commerce Ranger and Night Hawke.

Administrative Information

Publication Information
University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama January 2009

Revision Description
March 2013

Conditions Governing Access note
None

Conditions Governing Use note
None

Provenance
unknown

Processed by
C. Doughty, 2009; updated by Martha Bace, 2013

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- Awards
- Financial records
Subject(s)

- Money
- Napoleonic Wars, 1800-1815
- Tools--Drawings
- War and Military
Collection Inventory

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<th>Vouchers</th>
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