Guide to the John Horry Dent, Jr., Letters
MSS.0431
Finding aid prepared by Martha Bace

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June 14, 2013
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
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### Summary Information

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Dent, John Horry, Jr., 1840-1864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>John Horry Dent, Jr., Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date [inclusive]</td>
<td>1861-1864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Collection contains letters written by John Horry Dent, Jr. (signed J. Horry Dent) of Barbour County, Alabama, from 1861 March 15 to 1864 July 1 to his father, John Horry Dent of Eufaula, Alabama. There are also two letters written by Dent Jr.’s fellow officers to Dent's father detailing information of Dent Jr.’s part aboard the C.S.S. McRae during the battle of Forts Jackson and St. Philip and his subsequent capture and internment at Fort Warren in May 1862.</td>
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### Preferred Citation note

The John Horry Dent, Jr., Letters, University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama
Biographical/Historical note

John Horry Dent, Jr., was born on 2 May 1840 in Barbour County, Alabama, the son of John H. and Mary M. Dent, of Barbour County, Alabama. During the Civil War, Dent served as an Assistant Engineer on several Confederate Naval steamships, including C.S.S. McRae on the lower Mississippi River from March 1861 to late April 1862, when the McRae was involved in the battle as the Union fleet attempted to pass between Fort Jackson and Fort Saint Philip. In the battle the McRae was severely damaged and was allowed to take their wounded to New Orleans under a flag of truce with only a few officers and enough men to sail her. The rest of her officers and crew, including Dent, were taken as prisoners of war to Fort Warren in Boston harbor. He was part of a prisoner exchange and returned to duty in Richmond, Virginia on 6 August 1862.

In September 1862 he was assigned to the new gunboat, the C.S.S. Chattahoochee, as it was being constructed in Saffold, Georgia. While on the Chattahoochee, Dent suffered from severe chills and high fevers that left him debilitated but his captain would not allow him to transfer out. Shortly before 27 May 1863, Dent was finally transferred to the C.S.S. Hampton at Richmond, Virginia, so he was not aboard the Chattahoochee when one of her boilers exploded, killing 18 of her officers and crew.

Dent remained aboard the C.S.S. Hampton, a wooden gunboat, until late July 1863 when he was dispatched to the ironclad ram C.S.S. Charleston at Charleston, South Carolina. In mid-September 1863 he was once again transferred, this time to the C.S.S. Juno, a blockade runner preparing to make a run for Nassau. On 28 October 1863 he was ordered back to the Charleston to replace another engineer. By 1 November 1863, Dent was back aboard the Juno, but only for a short while. He was ordered back to the Charleston in December and remained aboard her until 1864 March 1 when he went back to the Juno, which was preparing to sail for Nassau.

The Juno sailed on the evening of 9 March 1864 and on March 10 encountered a severe storm, so severe in fact, the ship broke apart and sank. The crew managed to get off in the life boats, but those capsized and sank with approximately 31 hands lost – the only two saved were a Mr. Burk, the pilot, and Dent. They were rescued the next day by another schooner, the Petrel, which had also run the Charleston blockade. They put into Nassau in early April 1864, where he soon took a berth on the C.S.S. Coquette out of Wilmington, North Carolina.

Dent arrived in Wilmington in mid May 1864 and remained on the Coquette as 1st Assistant Engineer. He made one more trip, possibly two, aboard the Coquette to Nassau or Bermuda, until his death, possibly from fever, on 15 July 1864. He was buried in Smithville (now Southport), North Carolina.

Scope and Contents note
This collection contains 117 letters written mainly by John Horry Dent, Jr. (signed J. Horry Dent) of Barbour County, Alabama, between 15 March 1861 to 1 July 1864 while he served in the Confederate Navy to his father, John Horry Dent, in Eufaula, Alabama. One letter was written to his brother, Herbert Dent, and one to his mother. There are also two letters written by his fellow officers (S. P. Blane, midshipman, C.S.N. and C.W. Read, C.S.N.) to John Horry Dent detailing information of his son’s part aboard the C.S.S. McRae during the battle of Forts Jackson and St. Philip and his subsequent capture and internment at Fort Warren in May 1862, and one letter in 1864 from a cousin, George C. Dent. There is also a small sketch of a bull ram boat, drawn in 1861.

Dent Jr.’s letters provide information about the various ships on which he served, including some of the dimensions of the ship as well as the number of masts, smokestacks, and the types of engines. He also discusses friends and family members as well as, in 1863 and 1864, his dissatisfaction with the state of the Confederate Navy. The letters also show that, on occasion, he was able to purchase items for his family in Alabama, such as shoes, yards of fabrics, and hats. Each of his letters ends with “Give my love to all the family” and is signed “Yrs truly, J. Horry Dent.”

Administrative Information

Publication Information
University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama 2008

Conditions Governing Access note
None

Conditions Governing Use note
None

Provenance
donated by the family, 2012

Processed by
Martha Bace, 2008; updated by Martha Bace, 2013
Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note
John Horry Dent Papers, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library John and Mary Wellborn Cochran Diaries, Letterbook, and Photographs, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

• Letters (correspondence)

Geographic Name(s)

• United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns
• United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Personal narratives, Confederate
• United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Prisoners and Prisons

Subject(s)

• Civil War
• Confederate States of America. Navy--Officers
• Daily Life and Family
• Soldiers--Alabama--Correspondence
• War and Military
# Collection Inventory

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<tr>
<td>Correspondence, 1864 1864</td>
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