



Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation
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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

care United Fruit Company,
Guatemala City, Guatemala,
12 December 1939

Secretary, U.S. Naval Institute,
Annapolis, Maryland.

Sir:

When in Jamaica a few weeks ago, I chanced upon a tombstone in the graveyard at Spanish Town cathedral, with the inscription shown on the enclosed sheet. I am wondering if you can give me any information as to the action in which the Vixen was taken, and if you have any records regarding the achievements of George Washington Reed?

I like the inscription; the story it tells seems wholly in keeping with the best traditions of the United States Navy.

Sincerely yours,

Wilson Popenoe

In
memory of
George Washington Reed,
Master Commandant in the Navy of the
United States
Born at Philadelphia May 26th 1780,
Captured in the U.S. Brig of War Vixen,
under his command,
By H.B.M. Frigate Southampton;
He died a prisoner of war at this place
January 4th 1813.
Unwilling to forsake his companions
in captivity, He declined a proffered parole,
and sunk under a tropical fever.

UNITED STATES NAVAL INSTITUTE

ANNAPOLIS, MD.

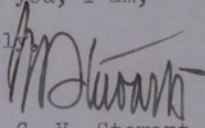
4 January, 1940

Sir:

I enclose the rather extensive memorandum from Mr. Bolander, Assistant Librarian of the Naval Academy Library, in connection with George Washington Reed. I trust that this information is what you desire. It is all that can be obtained.

With best wishes to you, I am,

Sincerely,



G. V. Stewart
Captain, U. S. Navy
Secretary-Treasurer

Mr. Wilson Popenoe
c/o United Fruit Co.
Guatemala City, Guatemala

GVS:HMS

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

Annapolis, Maryland

LIBRARY

3 January 1940

Capt. G. V. Stewart, USN (Ret.)
Secretary, U. S. Naval Institute
Annapolis, Md.

Dear Captain Stewart:

I am in receipt of your letter of December 29th with enclosures re Lieut. George Washington Read and the loss of the U.S.S. Vixen. The inscription, as far as I can learn, seems to be entirely correct as the following quotations will show:

Vixen, brig, 12 guns, 111 men, 185 tons, built by contract in Baltimore, Md. by William Price in 1803. Launched June 24, 1803. Captured Nov. 22, 1812 by H.M. frigate Southampton in the West Indies. Both vessels were wrecked soon afterward. Battery, 1803: 12 carronades, 18 pdrs. (Mariner, October 1934, p.126.)
Captured at sea, Nov. 22, 1812, while in command of Lieut. George W. Read, US.N. (who died while a prisoner in Jamaica) by the Southampton, 32, Sir. J. L. Yeo. Both vessels were soon after wrecked on the Bahamas, West Indies; officers and crew saved. Was also employed in the Tripolitan wars under Lieuts. J. Smith and George Cox, returning to the U.S. in 1806; and was subsequently employed on the Coast under Lieuts. J. Lawrence and C. Ludlow.
(Emmons, G. F. United States Navy from the Revolution to date, 1775-1853.p.8-9)

Reed, George W. Midshipman 13 Jan.1799; lieutenant 10 Mar.1803; Died 4 January 1813. (Hamersly. List of officers of U. S. Navy ... 1775-1900. p.455.)

"It is confidently stated in a Charleston paper that the British frigate Southampton and the United States brig Vixen (a prize) have lately been shipwrecked upon the Cat Key, Bahamas. Particulars not mentioned." (Niles' Weekly Register, January 16, 1813, p.818.)

"It appears, that the U. S. brig Vixen, was captured by the Southampton, after a chase of nine hours. Both vessels were totally lost on the island of Conception (Bahamas)--but the crews were saved and carried to Nassau." (Niles' Weekly Register, Feb. 6, 1813, p.365.)

"Baltimore, Feb. 16, 1813.

In a Jamaica paper of the 19th December, we have a particular account of the shipwreck of the British frigate Southampton and late United States brig Vixen, her prize, on a reef of rocks not laid down in any chart, near the island of Conception, one of the Bahamas. There were no lives lost. The officers and crews have arrived at Port Royal in the Rhodian brig. The Vixen was captured after a chase of nine hours; and when shipwrecked, her officers and crew behaved so much to the satisfaction of Sir James L. Yeo, that he summoned them together and expressed his approbation, stating that he would exert himself to obtain for them preference and accomodation in his power." (Niles' Weekly Register, Feb. 20, 1813, p.398.)

"The arrival of several officers of the Vixen enables us to publish a more particular account of the loss of that vessel, and the death of her gallant commander, Captain Reed, an officer so eminently entitled to the usual biographical memorial.

He was the youngest son of the late President Reed of Penna., and received the honor of his name from General Washington, at a time when that illustrious person was in habits of confidential intimacy with his father. Such were the early auspices of a man of whom in the morning of life an inscrutable Providence had consigned to an untimely death. After receiving a liberal collegiate education and graduating at Princeton, Captain Reed entered the navy, and as he regularly rose through the various stations from midshipman to master and commander(?), was always distinguished for intrepidity, scientific and practical seamanship, unexceptionable deportment, in subordination and in command, with every other endowment for the highest rank of that honorable profession, which has just exalted its adepts to the summit of maritime ascendancy, at the very moment when the subject of this article has descended into the tomb.

In private life his characteristics were probity, cheerfulness, extensive intellectual acquirements, a most unaffected diffidence of his own sterling merit--together with a general sobriety and chasteness of conduct, a due sense of moral and religious obligations not always the recommendations and sometimes not even the aim of young gentlemen of the sword.

He acted as 2d lieutenant of the Nautilus in the memorable attack on Tripoli in August, 1806, and after the death of Captain Somers; and 1st lieutenant James Decatur took command of that vessel, stood into the harbor with the utmost gallantry and skilfulness, and effectually covered the gun-boats in their operations. For his conduct on that occasion he was noticed by Commodore Preble in his general orders, issued on the termination of that bold and successful enterprise. Lieut. Reed afterwards accompanied General Eaton's detachment to the coast of Africa, and served on board the vessel which co-operated with him on that romantic expedition.

When war was declared against England last summer Captain(?) Reed solicited employment, though his health was extremely delicate. He was ordered to a command to the southward, whither he repaired

immediately, notwithstanding the unhealthiness of the climate at that season. The death of Captain Gadsden preferred him to the command of the brig Vixen. The sea air in a great degree restored his health, but it was his peculiarly hard fate to be captured by a force so superior as to preclude any contest, (the Southampton frigate); then to be shipwrecked on an inhospitable coast, and finally to die a prisoner among strangers. During all these reverses, however, he preserved that equanimity and resolution which never forsook him. When the Southampton and Vixen ran ashore, in the night, the English crew became mutinous from intoxication, and what was saved from the wrecks was principally due to the exertions of the American seamen, under the direction and encouragement of Captain Reed. For this generous interposition he received the public acknowledgements of Sir James Yeo, the British commander, and an offer of parole to return home, but he would not leave his officers and men behind him, and chose rather to remain with them in the unwholesome atmosphere of which he was unfortunately the first victim. He died, after four days illness, of a fever brought on by the fatigues, anxiety, and exposures incident to his painful and mortifying situation. His enemies paid those honors to his remains which the brave of all nations render to each other. His interment was attended by the British officers, and a detachment from the garrison, who committed him to the earth with the ceremonies of a military funeral.

(Quoted from the National Intelligencer from Niles' Weekly Register, April 24, 1813, p.130.)

"The customary courts of enquiry have been held on the conduct of Lieutenant Henleylate commander of the U. S. brig Viper captured by the British frigate Narcissus--and on master commandant G. W. R. Reed, late of the U. S. brig Vixen, captured by the Southampton frigate--in both of which cases the officers were honorably acquitted, as having done all in their power to escape a superior force." (Niles' Weekly Register, June 12, 1813, p.244)

Very truly yours

Louis H. Bolander
Louis H. Bolander
Assistant Librarian.

2 enclosures.

In
memory of
George Washington Reed,
Master Commandant in the Navy of the
United States
Born at Philadelphia May 26th 1780,
Captured in the U.S. Brig of War Vixen,
under his command,
By H.B.M. Frigate Southampton;
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