

Archival Resources on Rear Admiral John Lorimer Worden

Robert L. Worden
Annapolis, Maryland



There are several repositories of collections of manuscripts relating to Rear Admiral John Lorimer Worden (1818–1897). All of the collections have original documents and some have copies or transcripts of documents from each others' collections. All of the collections also include photographs as well.

The John L. Worden Papers, 1844–1888 (Catalog No. MS016), at **The Library at The Mariners' Museum**, in Newport News, Virginia, includes 75 pieces of correspondence (some originals and some copies of originals or transcripts), 90 photographs, and miscellaneous items, such as biographical information, petitions, awards, invitations, newspaper articles, pamphlets, texts of resolutions, and programs. The collection was accessioned in 1934, probably from a descendant or intermediary. Most of the letters relate to two periods in Admiral Worden's life. The first period was in 1861 and the second from 1875 to 1879. The first batch of documents relates to the time when Worden was seized, on April 15, 1861, as the first prisoner-of-war taken by the Confederates during the Civil War. He had been sent by the secretary of the navy to Pensacola, Florida, with a message for the Captain Henry Adams, commander of the U.S. Squadron. After delivering the message to Adams—which ordered him to reinforce and hold Fort Pickens (on Santa Rosa Island, near Pensacola) and not

surrender to Confederate forces—Worden set out to return to Washington, D.C. However, he was arrested by Confederate forces in Montgomery, Alabama, and held as a POW for seven months (April–November 1861). The letters in the Worden Papers concerning this situation include those from Worden's brother Ananias in Grand Rapids, Michigan; his wife, Olivia in Quaker Hill, New York; D.U. Ingraham of Montgomery, who visited the prisoner and found him well; Commander Charles H. Davis, USN; S.E.C. Moorehead of Rockwood, New York; John Conover Ten Eyck, U.S. Senator from New Jersey; Flag Officer Louis M. Goldsborough of the flagship U.S.S. *Minnesota*; Major General Benjamin Huger, commander of the Confederate Department of Norfolk; Judah P. Benjamin, Confederate Acting Secretary of War; Gideon Wells, Secretary of the Navy; Gustavus Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy; and from the prisoner himself to various Union and Confederate officials and other influential persons. The majority of the letters are between Union and Confederate military officials concerning Worden's exchange for a Southerner held prisoner in the North.

A small group of documents date from 1862–65 and include originals and copies of letters about the Battle of Hampton Roads (March 9, 1862), Worden's injuries, information on awards given to his heroic actions onboard the USS *Monitor*, and concerning his command of the USS *Montauk*. A few items relate to Worden's superintendency of the U.S. Naval Academy (1869–72). Most of the rest of the collection—the second major batch of documents—is correspondence and invitations between 1875 and 1879, during and after the time (1873–77) Worden was commander of the Navy's European Squadron. These are mostly letters and invitations received by Worden from Russian, German, Italian, French, and British officials, officers, and private citizens. Five additional letters date to the period after his European tour and during his retirement.

The Worden Papers at The Mariners' Museum include numerous commercial photographs and prints of Worden at various ranks (lieutenant to rear admiral). Photographs of *Monitor* crew members, John Ericsson, and others also are included.

While the vast majority of letters are of an official nature, one—the oldest in the collection—is quite personal. It is in fact, a love

letter from 26-year-old John L. Worden, who signed himself "Cupids Envoy," to Olivia Aiken Toffey (1820–1903), his fiancée. Although he was assigned at the time to the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., he wrote from New York to which he had just returned from accomplishing the mission described in his letter. He informed "Dearest Olive" that he had gone to "Bulls Head" as "Envoy extraordinary" from the "Court of Cupid" to engage in "negotiations of a highly interesting and delicate nature" with her father (Daniel Toffey, 1788–1852). He was thrilled to report to "my own truly loved one" that her "good Father gave his consent to our engagement without a moments hesitation remarking that as it was a matter which particularly interested you he would allow you to judge for yourself." The suitor admitted that he was "completely unstrung by a rush of emotions to my heart when [your father] gave so prompt a consent" that he was left speechless. He revealed in the belief that now only "Divine interposition will prevent the dearest wish of my heart." As an interesting sidelight, he closed the letter mentioning that he was leaving New York City the next day to go to Sing Sing, near the place of his birth (Sparta, which adjoins the Village of Sing Sing, or Ossining as it is now called). From there he would proceed to Quaker Hill to be with his beloved. "Bull's Head" is an area in the northeast corner of Town of Clinton, Dutchess County, New York, 37 miles north and west of Quaker Hill, the home of the Toffeys near Pawling, New York. There is a Bull's Head Quaker Meeting there and Bull's Head Road. There is another Bull's Head in Richmond County (Staten Island), New York, and a Bull's Head Tavern on the Bowery in New York City. The Toffeys were Quakers, however, so Worden's reference to Bull's Head probably indicates he went to meet with Daniel Toffey, not on the Bowery, and Staten Island also seems an unlikely place for Daniel Toffey to have been, but at Bull's Head in the Town of Clinton.

The Worden Papers at the Mariners' Museum were written about by Roger Thomas Crew Jr., "The John L. Worden Papers," *Mariners' Museum Journal* (Newport News, Va.), vol. 11, no. 3 (1984). This article was reprinted in part in *Cheesebox* (Newport News, Va.), vol. 5, no. 1 (February 1987). More recently, Lisa Wilson of the Mariners' Museum produced the 27-page *Guide to the John L. Worden Papers, 1844–1888, Catalog Number MS016, The Library of*

the Mariners' Museum (Newport News: Mariners' Museum, 2005).

The John Lorimer Worden Papers, 1835–1891 (accession no. 80–1364) at the **Abraham Lincoln Museum and Library, Lincoln Memorial University**, in Harrogate, Tennessee, includes 51 letters (originals and copies), and a variety of letters of appointment, reports, resolutions, and orders. The collection also includes personal notes written by Worden and a scrapbook he kept concerning the Battle of Hampton Roads. What is important about this collection is that it came almost directly from Admiral Worden's youngest daughter, Olivia Steele Worden (1856–1933), who was known as Mrs. Perrin Busbee in her first marriage and Mrs. Thomas A. Hammond in her second marriage. She sold the papers to Thomas F. Madigan, a New York City autograph dealer who, in turn, added some Worden items of his own, and then sold the collection to Lincoln Memorial University in 1931. Copies of letters, orders, notes, and telegrams dealing with the POW issue of April–November 1861 are included in this collection. One of the letters, from Worden to his wife, dated April 15, 1861, Montgomery, Alabama, informed her that he was “under arrest here as a prisoner of war.” The collection also includes Worden's own handwritten account of his mission to Pensacola and his imprisonment in Montgomery. In contrast to the Mariners' Museum collection, this collection has a number of letters concerning the *Monitor*, including one written on the evening of March 8, 1862, to Olivia Worden, and the original text of the famous letter from the “Monitor Boys” wishing Worden a speedy recovery and early return to command of their ironclad. There are other Civil War-era letters relating to Worden's command of the USS *Montauk* and the battles in which it was engaged under his command. Included among these documents are those signed by Rear Admiral Samuel F. DuPont, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, Thomas A. Stephen, senior engineer of the U.S. Navy, and none less than Abraham Lincoln. Although some of the letters are copies (the originals are in the National Archives), they are personal file copies written by Worden himself.

The Lincoln Memorial University collection was described by R. Gerald McMurtry in “John L. Worden—Prisoner of War,” *Lincoln Herald* (Harrogate, Tenn.), vol. 48, no. 3 (October 1946). More recently, Leanne Garland produced

the 12-page *Guide to The John Lorimer Worden Papers of the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum* (Harrogate, Tenn.: Abraham Lincoln Museum, 1998).

A microfilm edition of the Lincoln Memorial University collection is in the **Hagley Museum and Library** in Wilmington, Delaware, and was described by John Beverley Riggs in *A Guide to Manuscripts in the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Accessions Through the Year 1965* (Greenville, Delaware: Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, 1970). In addition to the microfilm, the Hagley Museum and Library also has in its Samuel Francis DuPont Papers an original letter, dated January 20, 1863, from DuPont ordering Worden to attack Fort McAllister, Georgia, and destroy the Confederate ship *Nashville*.

There are also many important John Lorimer Worden-related materials at U.S. Government depositories. The **National Archives** in Washington, D.C., has numerous letters written by, to, and about Worden in a number of different record groups. There currently is no one assemblage of John Lorimer Worden documents, rather they are spread out among the receiving or sending departments, bureaus, and other offices. Some of the documents—known as “Z Files”—that were once in the National Archives, were relocated in 1972 to the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center and in 2002 records were transferred to the Navy Department Library. Photographs of Worden can be found at the Still Records Section, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

The **Navy Department Library, U.S. Naval Historical Center**, in the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., has the U.S. Navy “Z Files.” These files, located in the Rare Book Room, include manuscript materials on personnel, ships, places, operations, and miscellaneous. The Worden file is located in the ZB (personal) files. The Naval Historical Center has numerous photographs (some inscribed by Worden) of and primary and secondary written sources about Worden and the four ships named after him.

The Manuscript Division of the **Library of Congress** also has a collection of John Lorimer Worden Papers (MSS 0536D NHF-086). The 65 documents include letters exchanged between Du Pont and Welles concerning Worden's

incarceration in Alabama in 1861 and his service onboard the U.S.S. *Montauk* in 1863; a letter to Worden from Rear Admiral William Reynolds, commander of the Asiatic Squadron, concerning the European Squadron's visits to German ports; and general orders, mostly issued by Worden as superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy (1869-74) and as commander of the European Squadron (1875-1877). The manuscript collection includes one photograph of Admiral Worden. The Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress has 14 images of Worden at various ranks. These include six of the well-known Brady-Handy photographs of Admiral Worden.

An interesting John Lorimer Worden letter is the one he wrote from New York on April 1, 1865, to President Abraham Lincoln. It is not in any of the above-mentioned collections but is in the Abraham Lincoln Papers at the **Library of Congress**. (Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833-1916). Worden wrote to Lincoln to recommend W.C. Bibb, Esq. of Montgomery, Alabama, who "did me various kind & friendly acts" during his April-November 1861 imprisonment. He described the "very general hostile and harsh feeling" against him at the time and how, despite this unfavorable atmosphere, Mr. Bibb "treated me with kindness" and "did me justice." As always, Worden was a gracious and grateful gentleman.



Resolving Worden Mystery No. 44, Howland Sherman Worden

Gilbert S. Bahn

On WP 748 I said that there was too much information, so as some of it to be conflicting, concerning Howland Sherman Worden. The real problem was that the Dawson family apparently wished to avoid acknowledging Howland's first wife, Minerva Jones, who deserted. Minerva ran off to Michigan, from Tompkins County, New York, with Israel Slocum. Desertion is desertion, an unpleasant condition even if the one deserted says, "Be gone, to my relief." When desertion leads to adultery in this day and age, that adds to statistics. In Howland Worden's time, it might lead to criminal proceedings. Howland possessed cause to

divorce, but whether he did divorce is not in evidence. Of course, if he did divorce, then Minerva and Israel could establish a valid common law marriage in Michigan. Resolution of mystery derives from research done some time ago by Dick Hutchins, which has lain unused among Pat Worden's files that are now in the hands of Pat Warden.

Dick discovered a book entitled *A Collection of Family Records with Biographical Sketches... Bearing the Name Dawson*, compiled by Charles O. Dawson, published by Garnier & Co. in 1874, and reprinted in 1969. According to this reference, Emily Dawson married in Danby (Tompkins County), April 14, 1838, Howland Sherman Werdon [sic]. He was born in Pauldingtown [sic], Dutchess County, April 3, 1807, and died in Newfield, Tompkins County, October 10, 1848. They had three children, Lucinda, born in Danby, January 27, 1839, and died May 25, 1841; Chester Lorenzo, born in Newfield, October 20, 1840, and living at Ulysses, Tompkins County, in 1872; Ophelia A., born in Newfield, October 11, 1844, and living at Sullivanville [Chemung County] in 1872.

The most critical bit of information here is the specific marriage date expressed. As far as the family was concerned, this amounted to a valid marriage, whether it was legal or not. There can be no question that Charles O. Dawson acquired information, with exact dates, from living persons who knew those exact dates. This reference both supplants on the one hand, and confirms and extends on the other hand, the family account passing from Ophelia which I questioned on WP 749. There, it appeared to be refuted by a finding in the 1850 census.

Same as the family tradition, the reference does not give Howland's parentage (at least as abstracted). However, now there can be no doubt that his father was the second James (James II or James Jr), grandson of Thomas Worden of Dutchess County. As reported on WP 749, Lorenzo and Ophelia in 1850 were living with this James and his wife Welthy, and we now have Howland for the missing generation. Now it makes sense that Orren Worden was the brother of Howland, and they were both sons of James.

As noted before, Orren became guardian of Ambrose, the oldest child of Howland and