

Peltz, Philip G., Journal

Philip G. Peltz Journal

1862-1863



Title Statement

Peltz, Philip G., JournalPhilip G. Peltz Journal, 1862-1863 Ms.2022.090

Author: Miranda Christy, Graduate Assistant, and Anthony Wright de Hernandez, Archivist

Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)
560 Drillfield Drive
Newman Library, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Business Number: 540-231-6308
specref@vt.edu
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



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Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-08-14 07:01:48 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Revision Description

2025-08-01 Expanded biographical, historical, scope and content notes, ADW

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2022.090

Unit Date

1862-1863

Language

The materials in this collection are written in English.

Abstract

This collection contains the journal of Philip G. Peltz, United States Navy engineer, during his service as chief engineer aboard the U.S.S. Dacotah and the beginning of his service as chief engineer aboard the U.S.S. Minnesota.

Creator

Peltz, Philip G., 1832-1868

Extent

0.3 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased by Special Collections and University Archives in 2021.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Philip G. Peltz Journal was completed in December 2022.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Philip G. Peltz Journal, 1862-1863, Ms2022-090, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Philip G. Peltz was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 7 October 1832 to Philip Peltz, M.D. (1802-1858) and Elizabeth Lentz (1808-1875). He was the fourth of nine children: Rebecca (1826-1890); David Lentz (1829-1904); Elizabeth Lentz (1831-1919); Philip G. (1832-1868); John William (1835-1860); Mary E. (1837-1920); Samuel Henry (1839-1865); Josiah (1842-1905, M.D.); and George Mifflin Dallas (1845-1917, M.D.).

Peltz served as an engineer in the United States Navy from 1856 until his death in 1868. He began service as a Third Assistant Engineer on 26 June 1856. His first cruise was on the newly commissioned U.S.S. *Wabash*, a wooden screw frigate and the flag ship for the Home Squadron. While aboard the *Wabash*, Peltz took part in Commodore Hiram Paulding's arrest of William Walker, the American filibusterer and self-proclaimed President of the Republic of Nicaragua. Peltz is listed in news reports as "Ensign, Third Assistant Engineer" alongside "*Company D* - Sharp's rifles", though his actual relative rank was Midshipman not Ensign. Peltz was promoted to Second Assistant Engineer on 21 July 1858 while still aboard the *Wabash*.

By the beginning of 1859, he was listed serving "Special Duty" at the Philadelphia Navy-Yard and was likely awaiting reassignment. His second cruise began 3 August 1859 with a promotion to First Assistant Engineer. This cruise was aboard the U.S.S. *Wyoming*, a wooden screw sloop in the Pacific Squadron. He served aboard the *Wyoming* for approximately two years.

On 5 November 1861, Peltz was promoted to Chief Engineer (w.r.r.o.* Lieutenant Commander) and placed on "Special Duty" at the Philadelphia Navy-Yard awaiting commission of his next ship.

On 20 February 1862, Peltz began his third cruise. He was the Chief Engineer (w.r.r.o. Lieutenant Commander) aboard the U.S.S. *Dacotah*, a wooden screw sloop, which would become part of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Peltz served aboard the *Dacotah* until 25 December 1862 when he received orders reassigning him as Chief Engineer (w.r.r.o. Lieutenant Commander) aboard the U.S.S. *Minnesota*, a wooden screw frigate and flag ship of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

Sometime in 1864, Peltz was reassigned as Chief Engineer (w.r.r.o. Lieutenant Commander) for the Baltimore Naval Station. He served in that role until 28 December 1865 when he was placed on Special Duty awaiting new orders.

On 26 April 1866, he reported as Chief Engineer (w.r.r.o. Commander) aboard the U.S.S. *Lackawanna*, a wooden screw sloop in the North Pacific Squadron. Peltz served in as Chief Engineer aboard the *Lackawanna* until his death off the coast of Carmen Island, Mexico, on 21 August 1868.

Peltz's body was originally buried at La Paz, Lower California. He was later disinterred by the officers of the U.S.S. *Ossipee* who took his body to San Francisco. From there, his remains were sent on to Philadelphia where they were reinterred at Laurel Hill Cemetery.

* w.r.r.o. = with relative rank of

External sources:

"Chief Philip G. Peltz", Findagrave.com, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/28526982/philip-g-peltz>, accessed May 18, 2023.

"Arrest of Gen. Walker by the United States Forces." *New York Daily Herald*, morning ed., 28 Dec. 1857, p. 1.

"Naval items." *The Solano-Napa News Chronicle (Vallejo, California)*, 09 Jan. 1871, p. 2.

Historical Note

The U.S.S. *Dacotah* was a Third-Rate Steel Screw Steam Sloop-of-War that served in the United States Navy during the American Civil War. From March to September 1862, the ship served as part of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

Historical Note

The U.S.S. *Minnesota* was a First-Rate Wooden Screw Steam Frigate in the United States Navy. It originally launched in 1855 and served for two years in east Asia before being decommissioned. At the beginning of the American Civil War, it was recommissioned to be the flag ship of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

Historical Note

The Engineer Corps of the U.S. Navy was established in 1842 as a civilian staff corps. In 1859 relative rank was conferred upon officers of this corps by the Secretary of the Navy and Congress. The relative ranks were established as "Chief engineers of more than twelve years service ranked with commanders; chief engineers of less than twelve years, with lieutenants; 1st assistant engineers, next after lieutenants; 2nd assistant engineers, next after masters; and 3rd assistant engineers, with midshipmen."

External source: Garrett, Fay A. "History of the Insignia of the Staff Corps of the United States Navy." Unpublished typescript cataloged in the Navy Department Library, 1958. Naval History and Heritage Command, 12 Jan. 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/u/uniforms-usnavy/insignias-us-navy-uniform.html>.

Scope and Content

This collection contains the journal of Philip G. Peltz during his time as Chief Engineer aboard the U.S.S. *Dacotah* and the beginning of his time as Chief Engineer aboard the U.S.S. *Minnesota* during the American Civil War. It also includes a typed, bound transcription of the journal.

Peltz wrote about his experiences aboard ship in 1862 and 1863, including the destruction of the U.S.S. *Merrimack*, his experience with yellow fever, and encounters with people escaping enslavement who sought out the Union Army.

He mentions his brother Samuel twice in the journal. First, noting Samuel's commission in the Union Navy as an Assistant Surgeon on 22 August 1862; and second, when his brother reported for duty aboard the U.S.S. *Chocura* on 14 February 1863. Samuel was later transferred in 1864 to the U.S.S. *Patapsco* and drowned when that ship hit a mine in Charleston Harbor (South Carolina) on 15 January 1865.

Of the destruction of the first U.S.S. *Merrimack*, Peltz wrote, "Soon the flames spread over her entire length enshrouding her in one sheet of fire, The fire and smoke came pouring out of the smoke pipe greater than from a Cupola . . . At 4.34 A.m. the entire mass of flame, a great portion of her Iron Sheathing, +c, were seen to ascend high into the heavens, Presenting one of the most Magnificent pyrotechnical views I ever beheld,"

Regarding encounters with formerly enslaved people, Peltz wrote, "We have taken on board several Contrabands who came down to the beach and begged to be taken on board, Sometimes they would be possessed with passes from their [enslavers] . . . When these fellows were closely interrogated as to what their motives were in running off they only seemed to think that their condition could not be any wosser (worse) so they would try it anyhow, some lift their wives and families behind in their eagerness to leave their state of bondage."

Keywords

Civil War

Diaries

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Diaries
United States -- Navy -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
Dacotah (Sloop)
Minnesota (Steam frigate)

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Description of Subordinate Components

Philip G. Peltz Journal

Unit Date 1862-03-02-1863-03-28

item 1 (box)

Container 1 (item)

Philip G. Peltz Journal Transcription

item 1 (box)

Container 2 (item)