

Biographical/Historical note

Stephen Decatur (1752-1808) served in the United States Navy during the Quasi-War with France and commanded the U.S.S. *Delaware*. Originally a merchant shipper, Decatur served as a captain in the navy during the Revolutionary War. Following peace with Great Britain, Decatur returned to work with Gurney and Smith of Philadelphia and raised his family, including son, Stephen Decatur, Jr. (1779-1820) who would become a commodore of the United States Navy during the War of 1812. According to Parsons, “at the close of hostilities, when the officers, men and vessels of the navy were greatly reduced under the Peace Establishment Act, October 22nd, 1801, he was honorably discharged and retired to property he owned at Frankford, near Philadelphia.”

The U.S.S. *Delaware* was purchased by the United States Navy on May 5, 1798 and sold in June 1801. According to the Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, the U.S.S. *Delaware* “cruised to protect American merchant shipping from French privateers; guarded convoys during their approach to Philadelphia and New York; patrolled the West Indies; and escorted convoys into Havana,” (Naval Historical Center). During the course of the Quasi-War, the U.S.S. *Delaware* captured the French privateer *La Croyable* on July 7, 1798 as well as several other privateering ships, including *Le Sans Pareil* and *Le Marsuin*, and with the U.S.S. *United States*, the *la Jaloux*.

Little is known about Thomas Wilkey who sailed on the U.S.S. *Delaware* under Decatur during 1798. However, it appears that he also served under Decatur on the U.S.S. *Philadelphia* and kept a log dating from May 28, 1800 to January 25, 1801 (log available at the Naval Historical Center).

Bibliography:

Naval Historical Center. Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/d3/delaware-ii.htm> (accessed March 8, 2012)

Parsons, William Decatur. *The Decatur Genealogy*. New York, 1921. http://www.archive.org/stream/decaturgeneal00pars/decaturgeneal00pars_djvu.txt (accessed March 8, 2012)

Scope and Contents note

This collection consists of a single journal, written by Thomas Wilkey, that contains daily records of the U.S.S. *Delaware*’s voyages in 1798, including weather conditions, courses set, latitude and longitude, daily activities, and encounters with other ships including privateers.