Finding Aid For

George Sirian Collection, 1809-1929

USS Constitution Museum Collection [2445.1]
Finding Aid
George Sirian Collection, 1809-1929

Summary Information

**Title:** George Sirian Collection  
**Inclusive Dates:** 1809-1929  
**Bulk Dates:** 1840-1884  
**Extent:** 0.42 linear foot  
**Catalog Number:** 2445.1  
**Language of Materials:** English  
**Repository:** USS Constitution Museum  
**Processed by:** Kate Monea, August 2019

Access and Use

**Access Restrictions**
Unrestricted.

**Copyright**
Copyright status is unknown.

**Acquisition and Provenance**
This collection was donated to the USS Constitution Museum on March 5, 2019 by descendants of George Sirian. The documents were passed down through the family and came to the donors by way of George Sirian, son of Constantine Sirian and grandson of George Sirian, before his death in 1948. Two items (folders 7 and 8) were on loan to the USS Constitution Museum since March 28, 1994.

**Biographical Sketch**

George Ipsara Sirian was born in 1818 on the Aegean island of Psara, Greece. He was orphaned in 1824 during the Greek War for Independence when his mother placed him in a boat to escape a massacre in his homeland. He was rescued, but little is known about his life until he joined USS Constitution’s crew in May 1827.

Sirian served aboard Constitution, first with the rank of boy and then ordinary seaman, until the ship reached Boston Harbor on July 4, 1828. While on Constitution, Sirian was aided by Lieutenant Robert Randolph, who took the young refugee under his wing and sponsored his education. Randolph also commissioned a portrait of the boy (catalog # 2326.1) by the prominent New York artist C. C. Ingham.

Sirian later was taken by Randolph to Gunner George Marshall, a native of the Greek island of Rhodes who, in 1822, wrote the first practical military gunnery manual for the U.S. Navy. Marshall instructed Sirian in naval gunnery.
On April 20, 1837, Sirian was appointed as gunner at Gosport, Virginia. During his ensuing naval career, he served in 37 successive tours on 20 different ships and seven shore stations, including on USS Constitution’s World Cruise, as a gunnery instructor at the Naval Academy during the American Civil War, and in the Asiatic Station in Japan and Hong Kong. Sirian is the only sailor to serve on Constitution on three separate tours of duty.

Sirian married George Marshall’s daughter, Eleanor Marshall, in 1840. Of the couple's seven children, four survived to adulthood. His oldest surviving son, Constantine Ambrose Sirian, became a U.S. Navy chief. One of Constantine’s two sons, also named George Sirian, worked as a machinist’s mate in the Norfolk Navy Yard in the early 20th century.

Sirian retired in 1880 after one of the longest active duty service careers in U.S. Naval history. He died in Portsmouth, Virginia, on December 21, 1891. Sirian received a posthumous induction into the Surface Navy Hall of Fame in 2007. The George Sirian Meritorious Service Award is given annually aboard USS Constitution to an outstanding Chief Petty Officer selected from the worldwide fleet.

Scope and Content

The documents included in this collection primarily follow the naval career of George Sirian from the 1840s to the 1880s. Correspondence pertaining to his detachments, orders, and commendations make up the bulk of the records. Also included is a warrant appointing George Marshall as gunner in 1809, and a service record booklet for George Sirian, a grandson, from 1899 to 1929.

Arrangement

Folders are arranged chronologically. Oversized material (folder 68) is stored separately from the rest of the collection.

Folder List

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<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Contemporary copies of 4 letters:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) James Renshaw to George Sirian, April 11, 1840</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) James Renshaw to George Sirian, March 4, 1841</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Lewis Warrington to George Sirian, April 20, 1837</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4) James K. Pauling to George Sirian, December 31, 1840</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Front: Letter from George E. Badger to George Sirian re: appointment as acting gunner on USS Brandywine, June 21, 1841</td>
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<td>Back: Letter from Matthew C. Perry to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Brandywine, June 21, 1841</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Letter from Abel P. Upshur to George Sirian re: leave of absence from USS Brandywine, July 18, 1842</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Letter from Abel P. Upshur to George Sirian re: reporting to Captain Beverly Kennon, August 10, 1842</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Letter from Abel P. Upshur to George Sirian re: appointment as gunner, January 14, 1843</td>
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7 Letter from Daniel Henshaw to George Sirian re: orders to USS Constitution, November 18, 1843
8 Letter from John Y. Mason to George Sirian re: detachment from USS Constitution, October 1, 1846
9 Letter from John Y. Mason to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Hecla, March 1, 1847
10 Letter from Matthew C. Perry to George Sirian re: dispatch as supernumerary to USS Cumberland, February 9, 1848
11 Letter from George Sirian re: family leave, March [13], 1848
12 Letter from Thornton A. Jenkins to George Sirian re: commendation, March 14, 1848
13 Letter from John Y. Mason to George Sirian re: reporting to Gosport, July 6, 1848
14 Letter from William Ballard Preston to George Sirian re: reporting to USS John Adams, June 15, 1849
15 Letter from Francis H. Gregory to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Portsmouth, October 11, 1850
16 Letter from Robert B. Pegrim to George Sirian re: commendation, October 11, 1850
17 Letter from Levin M. Powell to George Sirian re: commendation, October 15, 1850
18 Letter from Francis H. Gregory to George Sirian re: commendation, May 4, 1851
19 Letter from Francis H. Gregory to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Dale, May 5, 1851
20 Letter from Elisha Peck to George Sirian re: commendation, May 5, 1851
21 Letter from William Pearson to George Sirian re: commendation, December 30, 1851
22 Contemporary copy of letter from John P. Kennedy to John G. Butler re: dress regulations, July 27, 1852
23 Letter from Elie A. F. Lavallette to George Sirian re: denied request, January 24, 1853
24 Letter from James L. Lardner re: commendation of George Sirian, March 12, 1853
25 Letter from James C. Dobbin to George Sirian re: detachment from USS Dale, April 9, 1853
26 Letter from James C. Dobbin to George Sirian re: ordnance duty at Norfolk, May 16, 1853
27 Letter from A. O. Dayton to George Sirian re: pay, May 27, 1853
28 Letter from James C. Dobbin to George Sirian re: warrant for appointment as gunner, June 29, 1853
29 Letter from Albert Greenleaf to George Sirian re: prize money, June 9, 1854
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33 Letter from Isaac Toucey to George Sirian re: ordnance duty at Norfolk, February 13, 1858
34 Letter from Duncan Nathaniel Ingraham to George Sirian re: ordnance duty at Norfolk, February 19, 1858
35 Letter from Isaac Toucey to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Lancaster, April 7, 1859
36 Letter from Gideon Welles to George Sirian re: reporting for ordnance duty at New York Navy Yard, November 14, 1861
37 Letter from Andrew A. Harwood to George Sirian re: services at quarters in New York Navy Yard, March 24, 1862
38 Letter from Hiram Paulding to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Sabine, April 24, 1862
39 Letter from Gideon Welles to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Sabine, April 25, 1862
40 Letter from Gideon Welles to George Sirian re: reporting to the Naval Academy, September 29, 1862
Letter from George S. Blake to George Sirian re: reporting to Philadelphia Navy Yard with 8 landsmen, April 23, 1863
Letter from Thorton A. Jenkins to George Sirian re: instructions for form from Bureau of Navigation and Office of Detail, September 26, 1863
Letter from Gideon Welles to George Sirian re: denied request to detach from Naval Academy, November 25, 1863
Letter from George S. Blake to George Sirian re: transfer of a detachment of men to New York, June 16, 1864
Letter from Gideon Welles to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Vanderbilt, August 12, 1864
Letter from Percival Drayton to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Constellation, June 23, 1865
Letter from Stephen J. W. Tabor to George Sirian re: travel to USS Constellation, July 13, 1865
Letter from Thorton A Jenkins to George Sirian re: reporting to Naval Magazine, September 22, 1865
Letter from Philip W. Woodside to William F. Taylor re: estate of George Marshall, December 27, 1865
Letter from James Alden to George Sirian re: detachment from USS Delaware to home, November 26, 1870
Letter from James Alden to George Sirian re: reporting to Norfolk Navy Yard, December 14, 1870
Letter from Daniel Ammen to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Yantie, July 30, 1872
Contemporary copy of letter from Thorton A. Jenkins to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Idaho, April 22, 1873
Letter from Enoch G. Parrott to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Ashuelot, December 24, 1873
Letter from C. J. McDougal to George Sirian re: reporting to USS Ashuelot, December 30, 1873
Letter from Alexander M. Pennock to George Sirian re: ordnance, August 13, 1874
Letter from William Reynolds to George Sirian re: detachment from Asiatic Squadron, September 22, 1874
Letter from Daniel Ammen to George Sirian re: waiting orders, December 31, 1874
Letter from Daniel Ammen to George Sirian re: ordnance duty at Norfolk Navy Yard, January 4, 1875
Letter from Stephen J. W. Tabor to George Sirian re: extra pay, August 6, 1875
Letter from Daniel Ammen to George Sirian re: reporting to magazine, Craney Island, August 17, 1875
Letter from Daniel Ammen to George Sirian re: reporting to Norfolk Navy Yard, April 17, 1878
Letter from Stephen J. W. Tabor to George Sirian re: claim for extra pay, March 13, 1879
Letter from Stephen J. W. Tabor to George Sirian re: pay, March 22, 1879
Letter from Charles Beardsley to George Sirian re: extra pay not granted, August 19, 1879
Letter from Charles Beardsley to George Sirian re: extra pay, May 13, 1884
Service record of George Sirian, 1899 - 1929
Oversized
Warrant appointing George Sirian as gunner in U.S. Navy, April 20, 1837