

CW/VFM-20, 21: *Francis W. Dickens*

Private journal of an acting midshipman completing his education at the U.S. Naval Academy. Dated 24 March 1862. Entries dating 15 July 1862 through 1 October 1862.

MS approx. 120 pp. CW/VFM 20. Also, CW/VFM 21 contains a photocopy of the journal.

Through the summer of 1862 until the new academic year begins, Acting Midshipman Francis W. Dickens from Connecticut participates in two training cruises on the U.S.S. John Adams—from New Port, RI to New London, CT, stopping in such places as Martha's Vineyard, Oyster Bay, Gardiner's Bay, and Glen Cove. He mentions encountering such notables as Commodore Foote, the *Great Eastern*, and the *Sabine*.

Most of his journal documents the everyday operation of the ship, striking sails, weighing anchor, and watch. Among the incidents documented are several minor accidents—a sailor falling from the rigging, a boat sinking from a snagged cable, and others.

He frequently remarks on the divine services that he attends and describes himself as “a temperance man,” yet still has time for many remarks about the attractive ladies he sees. While on shore, he looks at “the pretty ladies and other objects of interest.” He is even invited to call on a Ms. Frost of Glen Cove.

His journal ends with the beginning of his second academic year at the naval academy, but there are extensive after thoughts including:

- Text for the Midshipman's Song
- Notes on maneuvering and boatswain's calls.
- Notes on using a sextant
- Notes on time calculations, including three inserted pages of notebook paper with figures.
- Notes and an essay titled Memoranda in Ethics
- Memoranda on Seamanship
- Questions in Seamanship
- 58 sketches of ships and maneuvers
- Extensive notes and sketches of steam engines and how they function.

The journal ends with a number of pages left blank.

Keywords: Union; Navy; Diaries

Location: Civil War Vertical File Manuscripts, Special Collections & College Archives, Musselman Library at Gettysburg College.

See also: [Civil War Sources in Special Collections](#)