

## National Archives Southeast Region

### The *Wanderer*: a finding aid.

Built in 1856, the *Wanderer* was designed to be a luxury racing yacht. She was considered one of the most extravagant vessels of the New York Yacht Club. That distinction changed after she was purchased by William Corrie, with the assistance of Charles A.L. Lamar, for the express purpose of using her to obtain a cargo of African slaves. The voyage was successful landing 407 Africans on Jekyll Island, GA on November 28, 1858.

The records described below document the efforts of Charles Lamar to violate the slave trade law, the court trials of the men involved in the slave trade as well as customs records documenting movement of the *Wanderer*.

Charles Lamar appears to be the central figure regarding the *Wanderer*. Raised in a prominent, wealthy Savannah family, Lamar was passionate in his anger for the Northern states and their desire to end slavery. He falls in with the “Fire Eaters”, Southern radicals calling for secession, and formulates a plan to drive a wedge between the North and South. He decided to make slavery, specifically the African slave trade, a national issue by bringing in a cargo of new African slaves. He first employed the vessels *E.A. Rawlins* and the *Richard Cobden* unsuccessfully before using a third party, William Corrie, to secure the services of the *Wanderer*.

Lamar stayed behind the scenes as his name was already a red flag amongst customs officials while Corrie, J. Edgar Farnum, and Nicholas Brown captained the vessel to Africa. Those three enlisted Portuguese sailors, and experienced slavers, Juan Rajesta and Miguel Arguirir to assist with the return voyage. Upon return, several other men were required to bring in the ship, house the slaves temporarily, and then assist in dispersing the slaves across the South. Some of those men, like Lamar, were prominent citizens of Savannah and included Richard F. Aiken, Nelson C. Trowbridge, John and Henry Dubignon, John S. Montmollin, Thomas Bourke, John F. Tucker, Randolph L. Mott, and William Brailsford.

Just prior to the start of the Civil War, the Union Navy captured the *Wanderer* and used her as a blockade ship off the coast of Florida. She was successful in the capture of at least two Confederate ships, the *Ranger* and the *Anna B*.

U.S. Circuit Court, Savannah, GA  
Minutes, 1857-1860  
S.O. 108

Pages 142, 143, 147, 152-154, 158-161, 183-238, 253, 264, 267-270, 274-296, 316-317

This bound volume contains several cases and offenses involving the *Wanderer*. Among the crimes are importing Africans, holding Africans, Piracy, Rescue of a jailed inmate, and theft of the *Wanderer*. The people indicted are Charles A.L. Lamar, Richard F. Aiken, Nelson C. Trowbridge, John Dubignon, Henry Dubignon Jr., John S. Montmollin, Thomas Bourke, Nicholas Brown, John F. Tucker, Randolph L. Mott, William C. Corrie, William Brailsford, David S. Martin, Miguel Arguirir, Juan Rajesta, and J. Egbert Farnum.

U.S. Circuit Court, Savannah, GA  
Mixed Cases, 1790-1860

U.S. vs John Dubignon, 1859

- indicted for the offense of “holding and abetting in the holding of African Negroes as slaves”
- includes signature of former Supreme Court Justice James M. Wayne

U.S. vs Nelson C. Trowbridge, 1859

- indicted for importing and holding slaves

U.S. vs Carey Styles, 1860

- indicted for rescuing a prisoner (Farnum)

U.S. vs J. Egbert Farnum, 1859

- subpoena

U.S. vs C.A. Lamar, 1859

- indicted for holding African Negroes

U.S. District Court, Savannah, GA  
Admiralty Minutes, 1834-1870  
S.O. 97

Pages 172-177, 185

It is decided the *Wanderer* should be auctioned with proceeds profiting the United States and is eventually sold to Charles Lamar for \$4,001.

U.S. District Court, Savannah, GA  
Mixed Cases, 1790-

U.S. vs Charles A.L. Lamar, 1859 (H1)

- holding African Negroes

U.S. vs Nicholas Brown & others, 1859 (H2)

- subpoena issued

U.S. District Court, Savannah, GA  
Confederate States  
Writ of Garnishment

U.S. vs David Martin, 1861  
-feloniously running away with a vessel

U.S. Circuit Court, Charleston, SC  
General Journal, 1859-1860  
SO 7.5

No page numbers

Several items involving the attempts of US Attorney Joseph Ganahl to have the William C. Corrie extradited to Savannah from Charleston to stand trial. All attempts were rebuffed by Judge Andrew Magrath.

U.S. District Court, Charleston, SC  
Minute Book, 1849-1860  
SO 8

Pages 281-292

This is a piracy case against William Corrie for his involvement with the *Wanderer*.

U.S. District Court, Key West, FL  
Admiralty Final Record, v. 8, 1862-1865  
SO 40

Pages 137-140

U.S. vs Sloop Ranger  
The *Fort Henry* and *Wanderer* captured the *Ranger* during a blockade of Florida. This is the prize case for the *Ranger* and includes information about the capture and prizes awarded for her capture.

Pages 165-168

U.S. vs Schooner Anna B.  
The *Wanderer* captured the *Anna B.* during a blockade of Florida. This is the prize case for the *Anna B.* and includes information about the capture and prizes awarded for her capture.

Bureau of Customs, Savannah, GA  
Letters Received, 1842-1891  
Entry 1466

This box contains six letters from the Secretary of the Treasury, Howell Cobb (uncle to CAL Lamar), to the Collector of Customs at Savannah, John Boston. The letters date from February 1, 1858 to November 17, 1858. All letters pertain to the Bark *E.A. Rawlins*. The *Rawlins* was the first vessel obtained by CAL Lamar with the intention of bringing African slaves into the country. The *Wanderer* was eventually successful.

Bureau of Customs, Charleston, SC  
Entrances and Clearances  
Entry 1388  
Volume 7

June 26, 1858 records the *Schooner Wanderer* as having arrived from New York. It was in New York that William Corrie purchased the vessel and then had it outfitted for the slave voyage to Africa. It first sailed to Charleston where it was recorded in the Customs records. On July 4<sup>th</sup> the *Wanderer* would leave Charleston for Trinidad before heading to Africa for a cargo of nearly 500 slaves.

Bureau of Customs, Charleston, SC  
Letters Received, 1858-1860  
Entry 1382

#1 - Letter dated June 28, 1858 from the Secretary of the Treasury, Howell Cobb, to the Collector of Customs at Charleston, SC regarding the possible slave vessel, *Richard Cobden*. This was the second ship, after the *Rawlins* and prior to the *Wanderer* that CAL Lamar outfitted for a slave voyage.

#7 - Letter dated July 2, 1858 from CAL Lamar to the Collector of Customs at Charleston, SC seeking a clearance for the vessel *Richard Cobden* to port at Havana, Cuba for the purpose of securing a cargo of "Coolies" or "Asiatic Apprentices".

#13 - Letter dated July 10, 1858 from Howell Cobb to the Collector of Customs at Charleston, SC approving the decision to deny the *Richard Cobden* clearance to port at Havana.

#153 - Letter dated December 24, 1858 from U.S. District Attorney, Joseph Ganahl, in Savannah to the Collector of Customs at Charleston, SC requesting copies of the Crew List, Register, and Shipping Articles from the vessel *Wanderer* when it was in Charleston the previous July. Ganahl is in the process of acquiring evidence against the *Wanderer* and the persons involved with the slave voyage in preparation for court cases in 1859.

Department of Justice  
Microfilm Series T969  
“Letters Sent by the Attorney General, 1851-1871”  
Roll #2, v. A-3

Frames 398-401 – Letter dated April 2, 1859 asking what should be done about a wagon train of Africans, formerly on the *Wanderer*, headed for the Alabama line.

Department of Justice  
Microfilm Series M699  
“Letters Sent by the Department of Justice, 1818-1904”  
Roll #5

Frame 374 – Letter dated April 10, 1860 regarding the William Corrie case in Charleston, SC. The U.S. Attorney in Charleston is directed to enter a “Nolle Prosequere” plea and do whatever is necessary to move the case to Savannah, GA.

Frame 742 – Letter dated June 1, 1861 regarding the seizure of the vessel *Wanderer* in Key West, FL by the U.S. Navy. The Union Troops would later use the *Wanderer* as a gunboat and was credited with capturing two schooners and two sloops during the Civil War.