



NATIONAL CIVIL WAR NAVAL MUSEUM

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Bruce Smith

(706) 327-9798

director@portcolumbus.org

Port Columbus scores major collection

Columbus, GA – Port Columbus Executive Director Bruce Smith is set to travel to Virginia tomorrow, Tuesday, January 30, to bring back the newest group of treasures to be collected by the museum. Smith said the collection consisted of the personal papers and effects belonging to one of the Commanders of the gunboat CSS Chattahoochee, the remains of which are in the museum.

“John Julius Guthrie was the second commander of the Chattahoochee who took over from Catesby Jones, former skipper of the Merrimac the day it fought the Monitor in one of the war’s most famous naval battles,” said Smith.

The last major addition to the museum’s collection of ship related items came in 1989 when Jones’ uniform coat was donated by his descendants. Smith said the collection included many archival items including the original Confederate Navy orders assigning him to the local gunboat and more. “There is a handwritten description of the boiler explosion aboard the ship which killed 19 crewmen that is blood curdling,” said Smith.

Also included in the collection are some Civil War era articles from Columbus newspapers about Guthrie’s service in the city. Smith said the prize of the artifacts of the collection is Guthrie’s original naval sword and scabbard which is marked “Guthrie 1861.”

“I will be bringing all the archives and the sword back with me on the airplane tomorrow and will be shipping a few of the larger things like Guthrie’s sea chest by more conventional means,” said Smith.

Plans for the collection call for some conservation, though most of it was reported to be in very good condition. Later, a special exhibit of original CSS Chattahoochee material is planned by the museum. Smith said a number of donors made the quick acquisition of this collection possible, with the largest donation coming from the J.W. and Ethel I. Woodruff Foundation.

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