

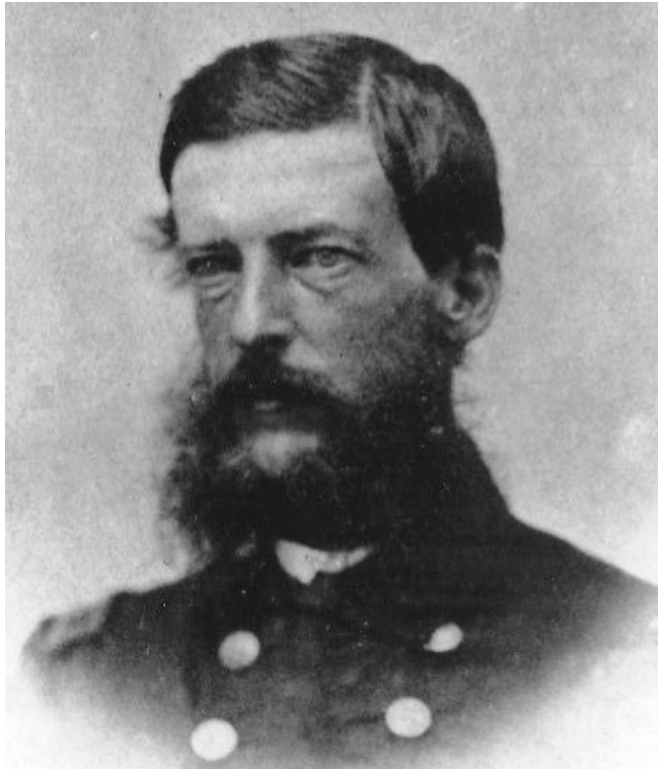
Edward Yorke McCauley

An American "Master and Commander"

By Lew Zerfas

August 17, 2004

(rev. March 30, 2006)



Lt. Cmdr. Edward Y. McCauley

Photo probably taken 1862 - 1866

Edward Yorke McCauley was the first Captain of the *U.S.S. Fort Henry* when it was placed into service as a gunboat in the U.S. Navy. He commanded the ship for over a year before moving on to other duties and responsibilities. The Squadron's Admiral called the *U.S.S. Fort Henry* the "Terror of the Gulf." What earned the ship this nickname? What influence did the ship's commanding officer, Edward McCauley, have on the aggressive behavior of the crew to earn this motto? Perhaps by looking at McCauley's life we can answer these questions.

Forward

This brief biography of Edward Yorke McCauley will acquaint you with a unique man who joined the navy at the age of thirteen, and retired as a Rear Admiral. He traveled around the world and spoke four languages, and an Egyptologist. He was in Japan with Commodore Perry when history was being made. He fought Asian pirates, and later, Confederates. McCauley was on the ship that laid the first Trans-Atlantic telegraph cable. He met foreign dignitaries. He was a sketch artist that captured scenes when there were no cameras, documenting history in his books and papers.

Perhaps, what gives us incite to McCauley is what how people described him: A friend, who later served under McCauley, described him as "naturally a shrewd observer and a good imitator" who "improved ever occasion to increase his repertory of languages and his mastery of Oriental habits of thought." From McCauley's paintings and the entries in his diary, it seems that McCauley had a "high appreciation of ladies' society" and was "everywhere welcome to it." Those acquainted with his temperament described McCauley as being stern on duty, discerning in the role of judge or disciplinarian, and personally sensitive, proud – even passionate. He was large framed, vigorous, and carried himself erect and with seemingly effortless poise.

As an athlete, McCauley enjoyed fencing, sparring, riding, and hunting, and was also a skillful dancer and billiard player. As an officer he was professionally ambitious, a cultured cosmopolitan with a trace of English accent. Perhaps to conceal intellectual attainments unusual among his fellows, he seems to have adopted the ways and jargon of the sea with an enthusiasm.

Edward Yorke McCauley

The Early Years

Edward Yorke McCauley was born into a naval family, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 2, 1827. His great-uncle, Rear-Admiral Charles Stewart, served the Navy for seventy-one years, seventeen as the Navy's ranking officer. Edward's father, Daniel Smith McCauley, rose to a lieutenantcy between 1814 and 1825, when he resigned to enter a business.

Daniel McCauley married Sarah Yorke in 1823. He had a son, Edward and two daughters, but Sarah died in November 1830. A year later Edward's father married Frances Ann Jones of North Carolina. Daniel took his family to Tripoli in North Africa, where he assumed the duties of United States Agent and Consul General for Egypt. Edward's

Edward grew up by the blue Mediterranean and became acquainted also with the desert and with the ruins of ancient civilizations. He met Arabs, Greeks, Turks, and Levantines, as well as American and British naval personnel. Richard James McCauley, Edward's half-brother, was born on August 7, 1832 in Tripoli. He died one day short of his first birthday and was buried in Tripoli.

When Edward was only ten, he navigated his father's yacht to Malta and back to Tripoli. A cholera epidemic obliged the McCauleys to move temporarily to Malta and later to the Continent. The consul and at least part of his family, including Edward, took a Mediterranean cruise for three months, touching at Sicily and returning to Malta in August 1837. By 1840 Edward had learned how to speak fluently in French, Italian, Arabic, and Turkish.

The Young Sailor

In 1840, McCauley applied for a commission as a midshipman in the United States Navy. While awaiting appointment, he traveled to Tajura, opposite Aden on the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb. At the age of thirteen, McCauley received his commission as a midshipman in the United States Navy on Sept. 9, 1841.

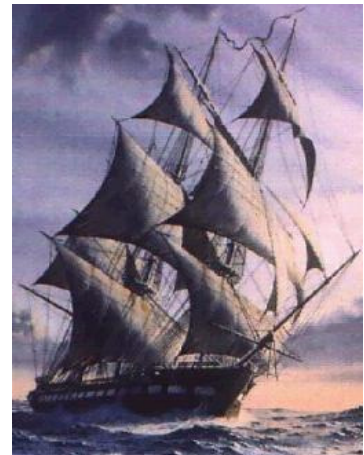
Later, his father arranged for him a cruise to Gibraltar on *H.M.S. Malabar* (drawing, right) with the understanding that he should be put on any American warship encountered. It is not certain that he visited the fortress at this time, but the present journal indicates his familiarity with its features. McCauley was transferred to the U.S. sloop-of-war *Fairfield*, on which he served until 1845.



In November 1845, Midshipman McCauley entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Seeking a change from studies, he volunteered for service in the Mexican War, but was disappointed with an assignment to the African coast where he remained for two years and contracted fever. Already he had attained some skill as an amateur artist.

The Passed Midshipman

The widespread outbreak of revolutions in Europe led to the recommissioning of the *U.S.S. Constitution* (drawing, right) in 1848. Beginning in France with the deposition of King Louis Philippe, rebellion fever caught on in Austria, Germany, Hungary and farther south in Italy, which then was a collection of kingdoms and Papal States. Heavy U.S. commercial interest in the Mediterranean basin made it incumbent upon the Navy to take what steps it could to protect American citizens and trade in the unsettled region.



USS CONSTITUTION LOG: 9 Oct 1848

Officers present: Captain John Gwinn; Lieutenants James H. Rowan, Andrew F. V. Gray, Carter B. Poindexter, Benjamin F. Shattuck; Acting Master Henry Rolando; Purser Benjamin Cahoon; a Passed Assistant Surgeon; Passed Midshipmen James Rochelle, Edward J.[Y.] McCauley, Joseph D. Daniels, Dulany Forest; Midshipmen James Sitwell, George H. Chapman, R. M. Caldwell, James G. Maxwell, James L. Butler, Eugene H. Oakley; Boatswain John Featherston; Gunner John C. Ritter; Carpenter Luther Mauson; Sailmaker George Blackford. Marine Guard: 3 sergeants, 3 corporals, 2 musics, and 40 privates. On board: 112 seamen, 112 ordinary seamen, and 108 landsmen and boys. 1430 Commissioned ship by hoisting ensign and pendant.

Also in 1848, McCauley returned to Annapolis for five months, then as a

passed midshipman, really began his naval career aboard the *U.S.S. Constitution* ("Old Ironsides"), bound for the Mediterranean. In the same year, his father was transferred as consul from Tripoli to Alexandria. The McCauley family was given passage to Egypt on the *Constitution*.

McCauley was on board the *U.S.S. Constitution* in transit to the Mediterranean. Rather than stop at Gibraltar, Captain Gwinn headed directly for his first port of call, Tripoli, where it arrived on January 19, 1849. The ship carried Consul Daniel Smith McCauley, who

was being transferred to Alexandria with his pregnant wife, six children (Edward's siblings).

Captain Gwinn set sail on the 22nd for Malta, where he remained for over two weeks before heading east. As the ship was entering the harbor on February 24, the Consul's wife (Edward's mother) gave birth to a son, who received the name of Constitution Stewart McCauley, in honor of the ship and his famous grand uncle, Charles Stewart, naval hero of the war of 1812.

USS CONSTITUTION LOG: 24 Feb 1849

At 9 30 Mrs. Frances Ann McCauley wife of D.S. McCauley U. S. Consul General of Egypt gave birth to a Son, who received the name of Constitution Stewart..." -- 1100 arrived at Alexandria.

The new baby's older brother, Edward Yorke McCauley, was serving at the time as a passed midshipman on this ship. The *Constitution* was in the Egyptian port for more than a month as Captain Gwinn and his officers took advantage of the opportunity to visit the famed pyramids. This is probably where Edward became interested in Egyptology.

After calls in the embattled north of Italy at La Spezia, Leghorn and La Spezia again, the *Constitution* sailed south to Naples, arriving late on June 7, 1849. There, in the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, lay more political turmoil, for King Ferdinand II was contending not only with unrest in Sicily itself, but attempting to support Pope Pius IX in his confrontation with the liberal revolution that had caused him to flee Rome. The big frigate spent the rest of June and all of July there as a potent reminder that U.S. neutrals would be protected.

USS CONSTITUTION LOG: 2 Aug 1849

1115 Pope Plus IX and King Ferdinand II of the Two Sicilies visited the ship; manned yards; 21-gun salutes, coming and going -- royal yacht nearby -- 1540 sailed -- 2000 Midshipman Chapman knocked overboard by the main bowline; rescued.

On 25 July, Commodore Charles W. Morgan arrived on board the frigate *Mississippi*. Morgan was briefed by Gwinn as Gwinn reported a proposal that the *Constitution* proceed to Gaeta and there be visited by Pope Pius and King Ferdinand. Morgan adamantly opposed it verbally and later in writing, on the ground that both were then contesting their thrones against revolutionaries in a conflict in which the United States had avoided taking sides. Instead, Commodore Morgan ordered Captain Gwinn to proceed "with as little delay as possible" to Messina, then to Sardinia and Northern Italy to safeguard U.S. interests in those places. Morgan sailed for Tunis later that afternoon.

King Ferdinand expressed an interest in visiting their frigate and the Americans called upon the Queen, whom they found talking to Pope Pius IX, her spiritual advisor. The next day they called upon the Pope in the Vatican, and invited him to the ship.

Captain Gwinn got the *Constitution* under way on the afternoon of the 31st with Chargé d'Affaires Rowan on board, and proceeded to Gaeta, arriving early on the morning of August 1. Near noon that day, the King and the Pope were rowed through the harbor in an ornate galley (*drawing, right*), passed Spanish, French and British warships with their yards manned, and were received on board with yards manned and a 21-gun salute for each. Whether Morgan's orders



were ignored by Gwinn or overridden by the diplomat is not known, but the occasion was the first time a pope set foot on U.S. territory. (A commissioned ship in the U.S. Navy has the same legal status as a piece of U.S. soil, in the same way any of its embassies around the world does.)

The King and the Pope visited every part of the ship. At the request of the Catholics in the crew, they were lined up on the gun deck and received the Pope's benediction as the Pontiff walked among them, escorted by the linguistically talented Surgeon Guillou. That done, the guests were led to the captain's cabin for refreshment, where it became apparent that Pius IX was seasick! The surgeon prescribed for him and soon had him feeling better. When the dignitaries departed, after nearly three hours on board, yards were again manned and two 21-gun salutes fired. The *Constitution* got underway late that afternoon and returned briefly to Naples to drop off Rowan (and fire a 21-gun salute in honor of the "Accouchement of the Queen of Naples") before proceeding southwest to Messina, in accordance with Commodore Morgan's orders.

The Pope subsequently sent 150 rosaries for the 80 Catholics in the *Constitution's* crew, together with a silver medal bearing his image and coat of arms to Captain Gwinn. Commodore Morgan, on the other hand, was outraged by what he viewed as an outright violation of U.S. Neutrality and flagrant disobedience of orders. As a mark of his disapprobation, he recommended to Secretary of the Navy William B. Preston that the offending frigate and her captain be ordered "to the Brazil Station, or some other station" and another unit sent to the Mediterranean.

As it turned out, no action was necessary: Captain Gwinn died at Messina on 4 September 1849, possibly of a slow cerebral hemorrhage. Pope Pius IX lived to become the longest-serving pope in history, and is remembered as the promulgator of the dogma of papal infallibility.

Sailing with Commodore Perry

At the age of twenty-two with the rank of Passed Midshipman, McCauley joined on board the *U.S.S. Constitution* on Nov 21, 1849, now serving in the East India Squadron under Commodore Matthew Perry. This squadron attacked pirates in the China Sea.

Several years in the Mediterranean must have begun to show on the active young twenty-five years old officer, who doubtless was glad to return to Philadelphia and was excited to receive an order of August 13, 1852, to report on board the *U.S.S. Powhatan* Japan (photo of a model, right). This was one of the men-of-war ships being prepared to join the East India Squadron in its now-famous venture to for the opening of American-Japanese diplomatic and commercial relations.



After many delays, the *Powhatan* left the United States on February 13, 1853 on its journey circling the globe eastward, stopping at various ports starting with the coast near Gibraltar, down the coast of Africa, to Cape Town, upward to Singapore, Hong Kong (arriving July 25, 1853), Indonesia, and eventually Japan.

It was on route to Japan when McCauley got sick. Part of his diary entry on Nov. 8th reads "...we are all laid up with the swamp fever – a pretty set of skeletons we are." He had been ill with the fever for several weeks at the time of this entry. Other entries indicate a shortage of food supplies on the journey.

By February 13, 1854, they reached the Japanese islands. He would spend much time ashore here, a stirring challenge and a promise of novel experience. As McCauley's diary indicates, he probably spent some of this time reading in translated Dutch and Russian accounts about the people, geography, economy, civilization, government, and foreign relations of Japan. His diary reflects much on the culture of Japan and his experiences there.



In the later part of 1855, McCauley returned home. McCauley was disappointed that his only hostile action had been against pirates in the South China Sea.

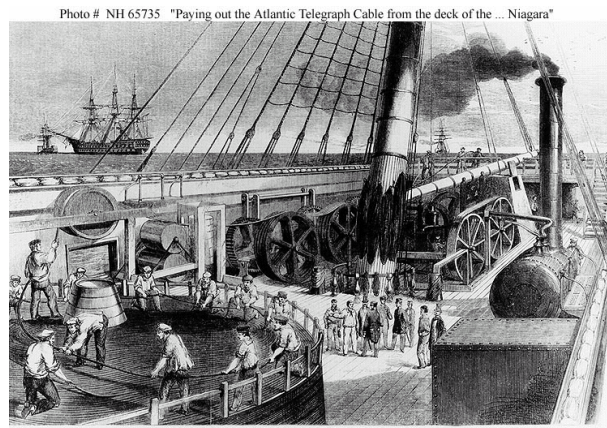
On August 14, 1855, McCauley was promoted to Lieutenant, and fully commissioned on October 25, 1855.

First Transatlantic Cable Laying

The only battle of the War of 1812 in which there were heavy casualties was the Battle of New Orleans, fought on January 8, 1815. It was a decisive victory for the U.S. but there was one major problem: the Treaty of Ghent ending the war had been signed on December 24, 1814 -- about two weeks prior to the battle! Neither side was aware that the war was over. This was, of course, normal for the times. News could only travel as fast as the swiftest horse or the fastest sailing ship. At the time, news rarely reached North America from Europe in under two weeks.

The idea of a transatlantic cable was first proposed in 1845, only a year after the first practical demonstration, but the far greater distances and greater depths presented formidable problems. In 1856 the Atlantic Telegraph Company was registered. On the American side Cyrus W. Field was the driving force; on the British side it was Charles Bright and brothers John and Jacob Brett.

McCauley received a succession of promotions, eventually to the rank of Lieutenant Sept. 14, 1855. He was assigned as navigation officer on the *U.S.S. Niagara* which was engaged with other American and British vessels in laying the first Trans-Atlantic cable.



The American ship *Niagara* (drawing, above right) and the British *Agamemnon* started laying cable but it snapped after just 380 miles had been laid. The ships returned to port. Extra cable was made for the second attempt which began on June 25, 1858. This time the same two ships met each other in mid-Atlantic where they joined their respective ends. The cable broke several times and it was clear that this was not going to be easy! On July 29, they made their fifth attempt, again starting from the mid point. This time it worked! On August 5, 1858 both ships reached their destinations -- Valentia Harbor in Ireland and Trinity Bay in Newfoundland and the two continents were joined.

On 16 August communication was established with the message "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will to men." Unfortunately the engineer in charge, Wildman Whitehouse, started by applying very high voltages rather than the very weak currents that had been tested during the cable laying. Within three weeks the damage inflicted on the cable by the high voltages was becoming apparent and it ceased to work.

Back to Civilian Life

Edward McCauley married Josephine McIlvaine Berkeley of Virginia on January 28, 1858. A few months later, he was ordered to the National Observatory in Washington, where Lieutenants Mathew F. Maury and John M. Brooke were establishing world-wide reputations as naval scientists. McCauley had three children, Berkeley, Mary, and Helen.

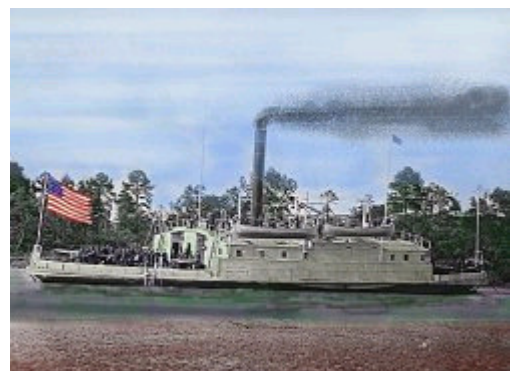
At the age of thirty-two and in ill health plus a subsequent distasteful appointment, McCauley obtained a sick leave and, from St. Paul, Minnesota, eventually resigned his commission in August 19, 1859. There he went into business.

The American Civil War

After the start of the Civil War, McCauley volunteered and rejoined the U.S. Navy with the rank of Acting Lieutenant May 11, 1861.

McCauley initially served on the steamer *U.S.S. Flag* in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Originally a steamship which had been built at Philadelphia, it was converted to a gunboat and renamed *Flag*, an commissioned in late May. The *U.S.S. Flag* blockaded the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia and eastern Florida, participating in the capture or destruction of several would-be blockade runners, among them three steamers. She also was involved in several operations against enemy shore positions, including the occupation of Tybee Island, Georgia, in November 1861, the capture of Fernandina, Florida, in March 1862.

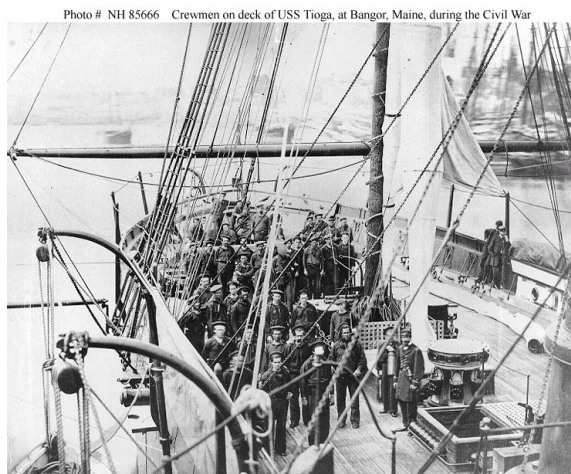
On March 25, 1862, a New York City side-wheel steam powered ferryboat was purchased by the U.S. Navy. The 150-foot long ship was fortified and armed six large guns, and named the "*U.S.S. Fort Henry*" (drawing of a similar ship is at the right). Under the command of Acting Lieutenant Edward Yorke McCauley, it arrived at Apalachicola on June 25, 1862 for duty in the Eastern Gulf Blockading Squadron. The sector of coastline assigned to the *Fort Henry*, had shallow water, requiring all reconnaissance on the enemy or attacks by the crews to be accomplished by using the ship's small launches.



Throughout McCauley's command of the *Fort Henry*, they were very active in engaging the enemy. Most of the engagements took place when the crew scoured the shoreline and rivers in search of Confederates. Skirmishes took place both along the shore and on land. Even McCauley was under fire several times. (Rather than reproduce the history of the Fort Henry here, please refer to the full story available on our web site.)

McCauley was promoted to Lt. Commander July 16, 1862, while commanding the *U.S.S. Fort Henry*.

On 23 November 1863, Admiral Bailey ordered him to take command of the *U.S.S. Tioga* (photo, right), a 700-ton side-wheeler mounting four guns



On the morning of 20 March 1864, the *Tioga* captured the 100-ton sloop *Swallow* off Elbow Cay, Bahama Bank. This blockade runner had embarked from the Combahee River in South Carolina; the point where the Union navy took it was about 460 miles from home and 110 miles short of Nassau, its intended destination.

After McCauley disposed of the cargo and prisoners, he composed his terse official dispatch to headquarters. The next day, he wrote Bailey a longer and informal report: "Yesterday afternoon," he wrote, "I sent to market the first invoice of this year's crop from your Plantation in these arables, consisting of 180 Bales Cotton, 80 Barrels Rosin..., 25 Boxes Tobacco, making about the most valuable prize the 'Tidy' has yet captured....A dozen Confederacies were on board, of whom the captain and one man were sent North for the usual general good. They had been out 9 days and had on board at the time of capture Hf. peck black beans, Hf. peck mouldy bread and a very little coffee, so that the beggars should be grateful to us for our trouble, as they might have starved before getting in."

Concerning his own ship, McCauley wrote, "The *Tioga* is much improved by your attentions to her last time at K. West. She used to steam 7 Knots, without the Blower. She now makes nearly 9. I have not had a chance to try her, full speed, save that we overhauled the *Oriental* the other day, hand over fist."

During a single eighteen-month period in 1863-1864, Bailey's squadron captured one hundred fifty blockade runners, of which this was one.

McCauley was commander of the *U.S.S. Benton* (drawing, right) from November, 1864 through June, 1865, with the Mississippi Squadron. He operated between Grand Gulf and Natchez on the Mississippi to prevent illegal shipment of cotton and escape of Confederate leaders to Texas. McCauley was the last commander of the *U.S.S. Benton*, an ex-wrecking boat that had once served as the flagship on the Mississippi River. Known as the "Old War Horse," the *Benton* she was slow, but stronger and more heavily armed than the "City" class boats. During the Red River expedition, they captured the C.S.S. *Missouri* June 1-6, 1865. It was also during this period McCauley served as the commander of the 5th Naval District



Post War years

The post-war years brought steady advancement. McCauley became a Commander on September 27, 1866, a Captain on September 3, 1872, a Commodore on August 7, 1881, and finally, a Rear Admiral on May (could be March) 2, 1885.

During 1867-68, McCauley was Fleet Captain of the Atlantic Squadron. Then he was stationed at the Portsmouth Navy Yard and, for two years after 1870, headed the Department of French at the Naval Academy. Later on, he commanded the *U.S.S. Lackawanna* in the Pacific and subsequently was appointed superintendent of the Naval Asylum in Philadelphia.

In 1885, McCauley was placed in charge of the Pacific Station, from which responsibility he resigned in the following November. Upon returning home, he learned of his wife's death. The Commodore's affections were henceforth more than ever concentrated on his two sons and two daughters.

Retirement

After retirement on January 25, 1887, McCauley devoted more attention to literary pursuits and won recognition as an Egyptologist. In 1881, the American Philosophical Society elected him to membership. He was also a member of the Oriental Society of Philadelphia. Also in 1881, he completed "A Manual for the Use of Students in Egyptology." This publication of which was followed, two years later, by that of his dictionary of Egyptian hieroglyphics. Hobart College awarded him the LL.D. degree in 1892.

Rear-Admiral Edward Yorke McCauley died on September 14, 1894, at "The Mist," his summer home on Canonicut Island in Narragansett Bay. He was sixty-seven at the time of his death. He is buried at Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, USA. Plot: Section 14, Lot 135

McCauley's Writings

McCauley's "Journal of the Perry Expedition to Japan" is one of few such extant documents to be published. His diary is a personal, eyewitness account of Perry's historic mission.

With Perry in Japan: The Diary of Edward York McCauley.* Author: Cole, Allen B. Publisher: Princeton, 1942. First edition. 125 pages. HARDCOVER ISBN: 1125997117

A Dictionary of the Egyptian Language [Translations of the American Philosophical Society, Article I]. McCauley, Edward Y. Philadelphia, 1882, First edition. 240 pages.

(Other papers by McCauley have been written and are located in libraries in New York.)

*Edward's diary of the Commodore Perry expedition to Japan in 1853 was retained by his daughter Ellen. The diary is considered to be a significant source of information about the historic expedition.