

University of Victoria Special Collections

Couchot, Quirin, 1766-1839

SC027

Title

Quirin Couchot fonds

Dates

1808-1813

Extent

1 cm of textual records

Biographical Sketch

Quirin Couchot was a French officer in the Napoleonic Imperial Army, who fought at Austerlitz and in Spain. He appears to have been captured in Andalusia, and then interned at Dumfries, Scotland. He was probably released after the First Treaty of Paris in 1814, and then settled in Buxerelles.

Scope and Content

The fonds consists of a photocopy of Couchot's diary, 1808-1813, which includes recipes, poems, and an essay. Also included are copies of letters and documents which were enclosed. The original diary is in the possession of the donor of this fonds.

Finding Aids

File list available.

Title Source

Title based on the contents of the fonds.

SC027
Couchot, Quirin, 1766-1839
Acc No: 1995-032
1 file

Contents of the diary of Quirin Couchot, officer in the Napoleonic Imperial Army.

- Starts with a copy of the terms of capitulation of the French Army defeated in Andalusia (Spain), 22 July 1808. Some of the troops were taken as prisoners of war and Couchot may or may not have been among them.
- followed by what looks a curious recipe involving beer and dated Dumfries 28 April 1814.
- followed by a military song/ poem.
- followed by a literary essay on the experience of war and a passage at sea with references to Britain. Meant to be written in the style of Horace. Closer reading would perhaps reveal that this is autobiographical in nature.
- followed by a series of poems/ epistles, partly philosophical, partly autobiographical and very neoclassical. 'The Battle of Austerlitz' is rather interesting.
- letter to François Masquard [?] resident at Buxiere, in the department of the Meuse from Couchot at Le havre, dated 21 brumaire year 12 (roughly 1804). Mostly concerns payment of loans.
- followed by a series of legal documents testifying that Anne-Margueritte Couchot was born 19 February 1817 at Buxerelles. Parents were Marie-Anne Hautcolar [?] and Quirin Couchot, retired officer. M. Couchot was born 21 July 1766 and died 21 September 1839. Includes a certificate testifying that the Couchots were not divorced or separated and therefore his 'civil rights' (probably his military pension) are transferred to his wife.
- followed by more poems/ songs of love and war.
- followed by short letters of payment from Dumfries to Firmin Tastet [?] and Co. and M. Lamontagne at Buxiere, dated July 1812.
- followed by more poems dated 30 January 1813 written while at Dumfries. They are an interesting mix of odes to military valour and lamentations over the devastation of war.

Conclusion

My guess is that Couchot fought at Austerlitz (a great Napoleonic victory in Austria) and then was transferred to the campaign in Spain. He appears to have been among the French taken prisoner in Andalusia and then perhaps been transferred to internment at Dumfries (Scotland). His diary was probably a means of whiling away the long hours; the poems, etc. all appear to date from this period. He appears to have been well educated and well read; the classical allegories and allusions are typical of the education of the period. if he was indeed imprisoned, he would probably have been released after the First Treaty

of Paris in 1814. Thereafter he probably was forced to retire by the new Bourbon government. He appears to have returned to Buxerelles, married, and settled down.