

# **Antonio Pons papers**

**Processed by the United States Marine Band Library and Archives**

**USMB**

**Washington, D.C.**

**2019**

<https://www.marineband.marines.mil/>

Finding aid encoded by USMB Library and Archives, 2019

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Antonio Pons papers

**Span Dates:** 1828-1889 and undated

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1828-1889)

**Accession No.:** A2017-4

**Creator:** Pons, Antonio, 1806-1889

**Extent:** 1 container ; .5 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English.

**Repository:** Library and Archives, U.S. Marine Band, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** Musician and conductor Antonio Pons (1806-1889) immigrated from Spain to the United States after serving aboard several US Navy ships. He settled in Washington, D.C., and joined the Marine Band, serving as 10th Leader/Drum Major from May 22, 1843 to February 23, 1844, and returning October 26, 1846 to July 7, 1848 to serve as 12th Leader/Drum Major. The collection consists of manuscript discharge and commendation papers from ships he served on, including the USS Constitution, two letters, orders, a drawing, a pardon for his son's Civil War service, a final paystub, and an envelope.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and listed alphabetically therein.

### Names:

Henderson, Archibald, 1783-1859

Pons, Antonio, 1806-1889

United States Marine Band

United States Navy

USS Constitution (Frigate)

### Subjects:

Band conducting

Military service

Port Mahon, Spain

Washington, D.C.

### Occupations:

Musicians

Sailors

## Administrative Information

### Provenance

Yvonne Engle-Childs of California bequeathed the papers to the Smithsonian Institution in her will, but the Smithsonian recommended to the executor that the Marine Band would be a better home. The executor agreed, and the papers arrived in the Marine Band Library in June 2017. Engle-Childs was the great-great-granddaughter of Antonio Pons, through Pons' son Antonio Jr.

### Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

## **Processing History**

The Antonio Pons papers were processed and the finding aid was coded for EAD format by MGySgt Jane Cross in 2019.

## **Copyright Status**

Materials from the Antonio Pons papers are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder.

## **Access and Restrictions**

The Antonio Pons papers are open to research. Researchers must contact the Marine Band Library and Archives to schedule a research appointment.

## **Preferred Citation**

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Antonio Pons papers, Marine Band Library and Archives, Washington, D.C.

## **Biographical Note**

Antonio Pons was born in 1806 in Port Mahon, Minorca, off the coast of Spain in the Balearic Islands. He came to the United States with his wife Julia and children, Antonio, John, and Julia. Daughter Annie was born in Washington, D.C. He lived in a working class neighborhood in Washington, D.C., near the Navy Yard. The area was mainly populated by the families of musicians working in the Marine Band many of whom supplemented their incomes by entertaining at picnics, dances, funerals, and as music teachers. Antonio taught many aspiring students, some of whom were apprentices in the Marine Band. He was also proficient in cabinet making and repairing musical instruments.

Pons enlisted in the Marine Corps as a musician on August 21, 1838. He served as Fife Major from June 21, 1842 to June 1846 and April 22, 1850 to February 23, 1854. He served as the 10th Leader/Drum Major from May 22, 1843 to February 23, 1844, then resigned and enlisted in the US Navy's Mediterranean Squadron, a group policing the waters near Gibraltar, to protect merchant ships from piracy. Upon his return, he was promoted, and again resumed a position of leader in the Marine Corps Band, serving as 12th Leader/Drum Major from October 26, 1846 to July 7, 1848.

He died at his residence, 524 8th Street, SE on March 27, 1889, and was interred in Congressional Cemetery on March 28, 1889.

His son Antonio Pons Jr. served in the U.S. Navy from 1854-57, but was discharged due to a chronic illness. He enlisted in the Confederate Army on April 20, 1861, and was mustered out Sept. 2, 1861.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Antonio Pons collection consists of ten documents that help illustrate the life of a Marine Band leader during the first 75 years of the organization's existence, a period that is otherwise sorely lacking in documentation. Through the discharge and commendation papers, as well as the drawing, we can witness his initial participation with the US military and glean some

understanding of how he came to the United States. Arguably the collection's highlights are the three documents regarding his service aboard the USS Constitution (aka "Old Ironsides"), the world's oldest commissioned naval vessel still afloat. The documents relating to Pons' leadership of the Marine Band are the orders from Commandant Archibald Henderson, the 1889 paystub, and the envelope. The letter fragments written by Mary Bassett require further research.

## **Organization of the Antonio Pons papers**

The collection is organized into 1 series:

- I. Papers, 1828-1889 and undated

## Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	<b>I. Papers, 1828-1889 and undated</b>  Documents are arranged chronologically.
FOLDER 1	Discharge papers, March 31, 1828 Signed by Daniel T. Patterson, Captain of the USS Constitution. Location given is Port Mahon, Spain. Text reads: "This is to certify that Antonio Ponse seaman on board of this ship has this day been regularly discharged from the Naval Service of the U States at his own request."
FOLDER 2	Commendation, April 1, 1828 From the USS Constitution, writer's name illegible. Location given is Port Mahon, Spain. Text reads: "I do hereby certify that Antonio Ponse musician on board of this ship for the last two years has conducted himself in a manner deserving the attention of the American Squadron." Folder also includes an envelope addressed: "Mr. Ponce Leader of Marine Band Navy Yard"
FOLDER 3	Discharge papers, September 29, 1832 From the USS Constitution, author's name illegible. Location given as Mahon. Text reads: "This is to certify that Antonio Pons seaman is this day regularly discharged from this ship and from the Naval Service of the United States."
FOLDER 4	Letter of introduction, September 20, 1836 Letter of introduction for Pons from Captain J. J. Nicholson of the USS Potomac to Captain Jesse Wilkinson commanding the USS United States, Mediterranean. Location given is Mahon. Nicholson recommends Pons highly for service aboard the USS United States. Pons served two years on the USS Potomac, first as a musician and later as the Captain's steward. Pons is lauded as faithful, honest, competent, an excellent musician, and a first rate mechanic.
FOLDER 5	Drawing, 1836 Pencil sketch on paper; title is mostly illegible. Image depicted is temple columns in ruins with a building in the background.
FOLDERS 6 and 7	Correspondence, November 10, 1841 Correspondece to "Petts" from Mary Bassett. Letter is in fragments.
FOLDER 8	Orders, April 1, 1843 Orders from Commandant of the Marine Corps Archibald Henderson to Fife Major Pons, directing him to Baltimore to select instruments for the Band.
FOLDER 9	Pardon, May 27, 1868

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
	Official document signed by President Andrew Johnson pardoning Antonio Pons Jr., for his service in the Confederate Army.
<b>FOLDER 10</b>	Paystub, 1889 US Navy Pay Office form No. 17, indicating that \$145.88 is due to the wife of "Antonio Pons late musician US Marine Corps."
<b>FOLDER 11</b>	Envelope, undated Text reads: "Fife Major A. Pons. Headquarters."