

Letter written by Dr. John Brosnaham defending Capt. Samuel C. Reid, commander of the privateer “General Armstrong.” The letter was written many years after the battle, but Dr. Brosnaham felt it was his duty to clear the captain’s name and the newspaper felt it should be published for the sake of justice.

Spirit of the Times; A Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature and the Stage (1835-1861). New York: May 10, 1845. Vol. 15, Iss. 11; pg. 125; Proquest: American Periodical Series Online.

Pensacola, March 18, 1845

Being informed of a report in circulation that, during the action of the 26th September 1814, at the port of Fayal, on board the late brig General Armstrong, Capt. S.C. Reid, was on shore, and the action under the command of Lt. Worth, instead of her commander—

I hereby certify that I was surgeon on board the Gen. Armstrong at the time, under the command of Samuel C. Reid. We left New York on the 9th Sept., 1814—reached Fayal on the 26th, at 10, A.M., and at eight o’clock in the evening was attacked by four boats, from the British vessels Plantagenet, Rota, and Carnation, that they were repeatedly hailed by Capt. Reid, and warned to keep off ; which they disregarded, and when close alongside, Capt. Reid gave orders to fire, which fire was immediately returned by the enemy’s boats. In this action we had one man killed, and our 1st Lieut., Frederick A. Worth, wounded in the right side, at the very commencement of the action, which wound confined him to his berth in the cabin, until his removal from the vessel, which was after the second action. In the meantime, the boats retreated to their vessels, and at 12 o’clock the same night, again attacked us, which action lasted about forty minutes, and in which action five of our seamen, and our 3d Lieutenant, Johnson, were wounded, and our 2d Lieutenant, Williams, killed by a shot in the forehead. His death was about the middle of the action, and thus devolved all duty upon our **Captain**. During the whole of the action, I could distinctly hear Captain Reid giving orders, encouraging his men, and even ordering them when they were out of cartridges [sic], to heave round shot.

At length Capt. Reid ordered the after division to rush forward, which decided the conflict in our favor, and by his command, the decks, after the action, were immediately cleared, to be ready for another attack, and although we were assured by the American Consul that further resistance was useless, still our captain did not leave the vessel until the dead and wounded were removed, together with the baggage and even the medicine chest. Furthermore, I affirm, that during the cruise from our leaving New York, until we reached Fayal, and during the actions until the loss of the General Armstrong, no vessel could have been better disciplined, than ours under command of Capt. Reid, whose conduct was brave, determined and courageous ; and in justice to Capt. Reid, I feel it my duty to assert that by the wounding of 1st Lt. Worth, 3d Lt. Johnson, and the death of 2d Lieut. Williams, the entire command was in him, and that through his skill and valor the enemy’s boats were defeated.

(Signed)

John Brosnaham

United States of America }
Territory of Florida }