



Fairfield Museum and History Center Library
370 Beach Road
Fairfield, CT 06824

Manuscript Finding Aid

Title: Ships' Papers Collection

Collection #: Ms 36

Dates: 1786-1866

Size of collection: 1-1/2 boxes (.75 linear feet)

Accession number:

Donor: On loan from Dwight D. Graves (1950-51); gift of Cyrus Sherwood Bradley, Walter Perry, and others

Restrictions: None

Processed by: Martha Rockwell; additional processing by Barbara Austen

Date: 1985; 1998

Biographical/historical note:

Fairfield's ports were at Black Rock and Southport, from which vessels sailed to New York, the east coast south of the city, and the West Indies. From about 1789-1817 the Custom House operated in Fairfield; Samuel Smedley was the first collector for the district. Merchants shipped produce such as rye and onions, and imported cloth, iron and wine. Many of the early, prominent families that settled Fairfield could boast one or more captains among its members.

Scope and content note:

This collection was compiled from items found in the library and in other manuscript collections. The materials relating to the Estelle (Schooner) and White Rock (Schooner) were the gift of Cyrus Sherwood Bradley. Walter Perry donated the account book of the Lookout (Ship). The log books of the Maddelena (Brig) were lent by Dwight Graves in 1951. The vessels represented in the collection did not necessarily belong to Fairfield merchants or captains; the bulk of them sailed from the port of New York.

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The materials in this collection are arranged into three sub-groups, representing different types of information. Sub-group I consists of log books, financial information, port documents and bills of lading for specific vessels, arranged in Series alphabetically by the vessel's name. Series A is the log book of the Charles (Sloop) of New York, which sailed to St. Marks, Florida and New Orleans in 1835-1836 under Captain E. B. Spencer. The book is oversized, and is covered with a canvas "jacket." Series B documents the voyages of the Edna (Bark), built in Black Rock (now Bridgeport), Connecticut in 1849 by H. Hawkins. The first volume (Folder 1) covers voyages from New York to Mobile, Alabama; Puerto Rico; Demerara, British Guiana; Buenos Aires, Brazil; and Malaga, Spain from 1850-1852, under Captain Israel Bibbins. This volume also contains a log from the Newburyport (Bark), Capt. Jenvien, which sailed from New York to Valparaiso, Chile to Hawaii, the Philippines, and back to Boston from 1843-1844. The Edna's second log book (Folder 2) covers voyages, again with Israel Bibbins as master, from New York to the Mediterranean, to Sierra Leone and France, and to Buenos Aires between 1852-1854. Folder 3 contains several bills of lading, 1853, and port regulations for Bahai, about 1849.

Series C encompasses bills and receipts and a bill of lading from the Estelle (Schooner). She sailed from Norwich, Connecticut to Norfolk, Virginia in 1866 with Captain Ellenwood at the helm. The receipts represent work done to the vessel, namely painting and repairing her sails, when she arrived in Norfolk. The Eunice (Brig) sailed to Cadiz, Spain in 1813 with Andrew Stowe as captain. She is represented in Series D by bills of lading for black tin, malaga wine, broadcloth and cochineal; a survey of damage to the cargo; bills for repairs to the vessel; and crew accounts.

The Lookout (Ship) of New York was damaged in 1870 during her voyage to San Francisco and took harbor in Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands. The account book in Series E is a documentation of the damages and repairs prepared in a presentation copy entitled "Statement of General Average, 1871"

Series F consists of the log book of the Orion (Brig) of Newburyport. Benjamin Seaver was the master, and Charles Burk kept the log. The vessel sailed from Boston, Mass. to Cork, Ireland from 1810-1811. The financial records and bills of lading for the White Rock (Schooner) are organized in Series G. She sailed under Capt. Elwood from New York, to Florida and Texas, hauling lumber, between 1859-1860.

Papers relating to various vessels are gathered chronologically in Series H. They include a shipping contract with the Jenny (Brig), 1792; a prisoner's account of conditions on a "Guardian ship" in 1834; a memorandum about the Byron (Sloop)

after it sunk, n.d.; a fishing license issued to Henry Peet of the Bridgeport schooner Excel, 1844; and blank vessel registers.

Sub-group II encompasses ship's logs, accounts, and correspondence kept by Samuel H. Potter and Captain S. H. Taber, both originally of New Bedford, Mass. Samuel Taber's materials are arranged in Series A and consist of a journal of a whaling voyage aboard New Bedford's Kutusoff (Ship) from 1845-1849 followed by a journal of a voyage to California on the Pleiades (Bark) in 1849; his description of San Francisco when he arrived in 1849; a partial journal of a voyage on the Bolivia (Steamship), 1854; and assorted documents including correspondence, 1849-1853, a (gold?) claim transfer, n.d., and memoranda and notes. His correspondence indicates that he settled in Grass Valley in California, perhaps to prospect for gold.

S. H. Taber captained several vessels, so his materials are organized alphabetically in Series B by vessel name. The Condor (Brig) is represented by bills, 1851-1852. The records of the Hebe (Bark) consist of manifests, customs records and crew accounts, 1850. The brig Maddelena, upon which Taber died in 1853, is represented by crew accounts; a log book (which may have been written by Samuel Potter, and is continued by a log of the Emily Taylor (Ship) from Tahiti to New York, 1853-1854); a letter to the Governor of Tahiti concerning an incident involving the crew of the Maddelena; and inventories of Taber's personal belongings, 1853. A health permit, 1849, is the only document for the ship Magnolia. Taber's correspondence, 1848-1853, is arranged in the last folder of the series and includes two letters of introduction, and a letter from Samuel H. Potter in response to Taber's request that Potter accompany him on a voyage (aboard the Maddelena?)

Sub-group III is a collection of documents from the Fairfield Custom House. Series A encompasses legal documents, including certificates, 1803, 1853; a seaman's paper, 1805; and a letter of agreement about the manning of Fayerweather Lighthouse in Bridgeport, 1830. Series B consists of correspondence, primarily concerning the forwarding of various certificates for different products. These letters, 1804-1807, are addressed to William Munson, Inspector of the Revenue, New Haven, from Samuel Smedley, Fairfield. Letters dated 1813, 1817 and 1819 are addressed to Munson by Smedley's successor, Walter Bradley.

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| Sub-Group I. Ships' Papers, 1786-1866 | Box 1, |
| Sub-Group II. Samuel H. Potter and S. H. Taber Papers, 1845-1854 | Box 2 |
| Sub-Group III. Fairfield Custom House Records, 1803-1819, 1853 | Box 2 |

SHIPS' PAPERS COLLECTION
1786-1866

Box 1

Sub-Group I. Ships' Papers, 1786-1866

Series A. Charles (Sloop) Log Book

Folder 1. Log book, 1835-1836 (oversize)

Series B. Edna (Bark) Papers, 1849-1853

Folder 1. Log book, 1850-1852; Israel Bibbins master. Also includes

Folder 2. Log book, 1852-1853; Israel Bibbins master

Folder 3. Bills of lading, 1853; port regulations, Bahai, ca. 1849;

Series C. Estelle (Schooner) Papers, 1866

Folder 1. Bills and receipts, bill of lading, 1866

Series D. Eunice (Brig) Papers, 1813

Folder 1. Bills of lading; survey of damage to cargo, 1813; consular

Folder 2. Crew accounts, 1813; ship's account, 1813

Folder 3. Bills for supplies and repairs, 1813

Series E. Lookout (Ship) Account Book, 1871

Folder 1. Statement of General Average, 1871 (oversize)

Series F. Orion (Brig) Logbook, 1810-1811

Folder 1. Logbook, 1810-1811

Series G. White Rock (Schooner) Papers, 1859-1860

Folder 1. Bills of lading, 1859-1860

Folder 2. Bills and receipts, 1860

Series H. Assorted vessels

Folder 1. Receipts, 1786, 1856; prisoner's recollections, 1834;

SHIPS' PAPERS COLLECTION
1786-1866

Box 1 (cont.)

Sub-Group I (cont.)

Series H (cont.)

- Folder 2. License to fish issued to schooner Excel of Bridgeport,
- Folder 3. Journal of voyage to Bombay, Madras, Mocoa, and
- Folder 4. Foreign port documents, 1834

Box 2

Sub-Group II. Samuel H. Potter and S. H. Taber Papers, 1845-1854

Series A. Samuel H. Potter Papers, 1845-1854

- Folder 1. Journal of a whaling voyage aboard Ship Kutusoff, 1845-
- Folder 2. Description of San Francisco, 1849
- Folder 3. Partial journal aboard Steamship Bolivia, 1854
- Folder 4. Correspondence, 1849-1853; notice of public auction, 1849;

Series B. S. H. Taber Papers, 1850-1853

- Folder 1. Condor (Bark), bills 1851-1852
- Folder 2. Hebe (Bark), manifests, customs records, accounts, 1850
- Folder 3. Hebe (Bark), crew accounts, 1850; Maddelena (Brig), crew accounts, 1853
- Folder 4. Maddelena (Brig), log book, 1853; Emily Taylor (Ship), log
- Folder 5. Maddelena (Brig), fragments of log book; letter to
- Folder 6. Magnolia (Ship), health permit, 1849
- Folder 7. Correspondence, 1848-1853

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SHIPS' PAPERS COLLECTION
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Box 2 (cont)

Sub-Group III. Fairfield Custom House Records, 1803-1819, 1830, 1853

Series A. Legal Records, 1803-1806, 1830, 1854

- Folder 1. Importation certificate, 1803; seaman's paper, 1805; bill,
- Folder 2. Agreement regarding staffing Fayerweather Lighthouse,

Series B. Correspondence, 1804-1819

- Folder 1. 1804
- Folder 2. 1805
- Folder 3. 1806
- Folder 4. 1807, 1813-1817, 1819

SHIPS' PAPERS COLLECTION
1786-1866

Subject headings:

Bibbins, Israel, 1818-1854
Bradley, Walter, 1764-1842
California--description and travel--1848-1869
Canton (China)--commerce
Charles (Sloop)
Customs administration
East Asia--commerce
Edna (Bark)
Elwood (Capt.)
Estelle (Schooner)
Eunice (Brig)
Fairfield Custom House (Fairfield, Conn.)
Fayerweather Lighthouse (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Harbors--port charges
Hebe (Bark)
India--commerce
Insurance, marine
Kutusoff (Ship)
Lighthouses--Conn.--Bridgeport
Log-books
Lookout (Ship)
Magnolia (Ship)
Newburyport (Bark)
Orion (Brig)
Pleiades (Bark)
Potter, Samuel H.
Prison hulks
Seamen
Ship registers
Shipmasters
Ships--cargo
Ships--equipment and supplies
Smedley, Samuel, 1753-1812
Stow, Anthony, 1775-1847
Taber, S. H. (d. 1853)
Whaling