

INVENTORY OF THE
HARTSON HARTLETT BODFISH PAPERS
IN THE OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WHALING MUSEUM LIBRARY

Content: Principally financial records of a whaling captain
and trader active in the Arctic region, 1857-1942.

Volume : 8 inches.

Provenance: Gift of George Bodfish, 1 Dec. 1978.

Restrictions: None.

Processed by: Judith Downey.

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National Endowment for the Humanities.

INTRODUCTION

Papers in this collection were donated to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society by George Bodfish on 1 December 1978.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Hartson Hartlett Bodfish was born in West Tisbury, Mass., in about 1862. First going to sea in 1880 on the steam whaling bark BELVEDERE, he made a career of whaling in the Arctic region and eventually became captain of several vessels, notably the steam barks BELUGA and HERMAN. Bodfish also acted as a trader who supplied Arctic whalers and natives in the area with food, clothing, and other goods, often in return for pelts. He retired from whaling and trading by 1920 and in 1936 published a biographical account of his exploits entitled CHASING THE BOWHEAD. Bodfish died in 1945.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Papers in this collection chiefly reflect the activities of Hartson Hartlett Bodfish in San Francisco, Calif., and the Arctic region from 1892-1911. Most notable among these materials are nineteen log books including those of the BELUGA, MARY D. HUME, and NEWPORT in which Bodfish describes winters spent in the Arctic, principally at Herschel Island. These volumes, in addition to approximately seventy-five photographs taken in the Arctic between ca. 1890-1914, have been transferred to other sections of the Society's holdings and are described in the separations list which concludes this inventory. Materials described by the inventory itself primarily consist of financial records, including trade accounts, ca. 1894-1911; masters' accounts, 1892-1900; an outfitting book for the steam bark BELUGA, ca. 1900; and bills and receipts, mostly for the HERMAN, 1892-1911. Bodfish's papers also include a deposition and newspaper article concerning his trial for manslaughter in 1906 and a copy of a letter written to his mother in 1891. In addition, this collection contains master's accounts for the NIMROD (Ship), out of New Bedford, Mass., under Capt. Willis Howes; genealogical notes relating to the Bodfish family between 1635-1847, compiled 1893-ca. 1920; and a variety of certificates, invitations, clippings, and miscellaneous documents, 1896-1942. Published works which may supplement or clarify papers in this collection are Bodfish's 1936 biography and STEAM WHALING IN THE WESTERN ARCTIC by John Bockstoe (1977).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

- Series A. Financial Records, 1857-1911.
Trades accounts, masters' accounts, outfitting
book, bills and receipts. 7 inches.
- Series B. Legal Documents, 1906.
Manslaughter trial deposition and clipping. 2 items.
- Series C. Correspondence, 1891.
Letter to mother. 1 item.
- Series D. Genealogical Notes, 1635-1847; 1893-ca. 1920. 2 items.
- Series E. Certificates, invitations, clippings and miscellany,
1896-1942. 18 items.

DESCRIPTION

Series A. Financial Records, 1857-1911

Sub-series 1. Trade accounts, ca. 1894-1911

- Volume 1. HERMAN (Steam bark), 1909
- " 2. " " " , 1910
- " 3. " " " , 1911
- Folder 1. " " " , 1911
- " 2. NEWPORT " " , ca. 1894
- " 3. Trade requisitions, 1910

Sub-series 2. Masters' accounts, 1857-1900

- Folder 1. BELUGA (Steam bark), 1900
- " 2. MARY D. HUME (Steam bark), 1892-1893
- Volume 1. NIMROD (Ship), 1857-1861

Sub-series 3. Outfitting books, ca. 1900

- Volume 1. BELUGA (Steam bark), ca. 1900

Sub-series 4. Bills and receipts, 1896-1911

- Folder 1. 1896
- Volume 1. 1900
- Folder 2. 1909
- " 3-16. 1910
- " 17-31. 1911

Series B. Legal Documents, 1906

- Folder 1. Manslaughter trial deposition and related newspaper clipping, 1906

Series C. Correspondence, 1891

- Folder 1. 1891

Series D. Genealogical Notes, 1635-1847; 1893-ca. 1920

- Folder 1. 1635-1847; 1893-ca. 1920

Series E. Certificates, Invitations, Clippings and Miscellany, 1857-1942

- Folder 1. Certificate, 1942
- " 2. Invitations, 1896, 1901
- " 3. Clippings, prescription, and miscellaneous documents, 1857-1911

ADDED ENTRIES

Account books--Alaska--1851-1911
Account books--Arctic coast (Canada)--1857-1911
Account books--San Francisco, Calif.--1892-1911
Alaska--Commerce
Arctic coast (Canada)
Beluga (Steam bark)
Bodfish family
Business records--Calif.--San Francisco
Fur trade--Alaska
Grocery trade--Calif.--San Francisco
Herman (Steam bark)
Herschel Island, Yukon
Merchants--Alaska
Merchants--Calif.--San Francisco
Merchants--Yukon--Herschel Island
Russia--Commerce--United States
San Francisco, Calif.--Commerce
Shipmasters--Calif.--San Francisco
Ships--Equipment and supplies
Ship's papers
United States--Commerce--Russia
Whalers
Whaling--Arctic Ocean
Mary D. Hume (Bark)
Newport (Bark)
Nimrod (Ship)

SEPARATIONS LIST

Removed to the photographs collection:

77 photographs taken primarily in the Arctic -- 28 of Bodfish, traders, and natives; one of the steam whaler ALEXANDER and one of the HERMAN, 1914; and 34 of buildings, animals and scenes from Herschel Island, Alaska and region, ca. 1890-1914.

Removed to the map collection:

Pacific Steam Whaling Company map of Alaska with whaling stations and canneries, ca. 1900.

Removed to the log book collection:

BELUGA (Steam bark), 1897-1898; #951A
 " " " , 1898-1899; #951B
 " " " , April - Dec. 1900; #952A
 " " " , Jan. - Nov. 1901; #952B
 " " " , April - Nov, 1902; #953
 " " " , March - Nov, 1903; #954
 GOVERNOR MORTON (Ship), 1868-1872; #947B
 GRAMPUS (Steam bark), Feb. - Nov. 1888; #948A
 " " " , Feb. - Nov. 1889; #948B
 HERMAN " " , April - Nov. 1909; #957
 " " " , May - Oct. 1910; #958
 " " " , March - Nov. 1911; #959
 MARY D. HUME (Steam bark), 1890-1892; #949
 NEWPORT (Steam bark), 1893-1896; #950
 NIMROD (Ship), 1858-1861; #946
 U.S.S. VANDERBILT (Steam paddlewheel), 1865-1866; #947A
 WILLIAM BAYLIES (Steam bark), March - Oct. 1905; #955
 " " " " , March - Nov. 1906; #956A
 " " " " , April - Oct. 1907; #956B