

INVENTORY OF THE
TROPIC (SHIP) PAPERS
IN THE NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM
RESEARCH LIBRARY

Content: Ship's papers for several voyages of a New Bedford, Mass., merchant vessel in the foreign trade.

Volume: 4 boxes; 2 linear feet; 61 cm.

Provenance: Gift of Mr. And Mrs. Peter Bullard, 30 December 1987.

Restrictions: None.

Processed by: Judith M. Downey, with assistance from Martha Richards, 25 March 1994.

INTRODUCTION

The papers in this collection were donated to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society by Mr. And Mrs. Peter Bullard on 30 December 1987.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Ship *Tropic* was built in 1850-1851 by Trufant, Drummond and Company of Bath, Maine, for five investors: John Thornton (1808-1893), William James Rotch (1819-1893), William Rodman Rotch (1788-1860), Edmund Taber (1819-1911), and Captain Eben Ryder Smith (n.d.). The Rotches, Thornton, and Taber were business associates with investments in several vessels, including whalers. For all but two voyages, Smith served as master of the vessel. *Tropic* primarily engaged in foreign trade sailing from either New York or Boston, but was always considered of New Bedford. Destinations included ports such as London, Dunkirk, Havre, St. Petersburg, Sydney, Manila, Hong Kong, Calcutta, and Havana. The cargo varied with the destination, but often the ship carried hemp, sugar, salt, flour, cigars, and coal. In 1862, she was sold due to the impact of the Civil War on American vessels in foreign waters.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Papers in this collection document the business activities of the Ship *Tropic* of New Bedford from 1850-1862. They are solely ship's papers for eight voyages with John Russell Thornton acting as the managing agent. These papers include correspondence between the master and the agent as well as with other commercial agents, crew accounts, including crew lists for five voyages, charter parties, consular and customs records, bills of landing and exchange, freight lists and bills and receipts.

Papers for the first voyage include financial accounts and specifications with Trufant, Drummond and Company of Bath, Maine, concerning the construction of the vessel (1850-1851) and memoranda of outfits for the vessel. Papers for the third voyage (1852-1853) contain accounts; records of a marine protest for damage to the vessel due to the collision with a British vessel, the *Glamis Castle*, which later sunk off the coast of Bahia, Brazil, as a result of the crash; and papers relating to a breach-of-contract suit brought by passengers in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco. For the sixth voyage, Captain Eben Smith's correspondence indicates that he had his son aboard with him until they reached Havana, and that Smith wanted to remain at home for a while after the voyage. The master of the next voyage was John Loring, who had previously served under Smith. Eben Smith did not serve as master for that voyage or for the June-November 1854 voyage, for which Benjamin Smith served as master.

Papers for the final voyage (1860-1862) include accounts and a marine protest for damage to the vessel due to a storm on a passage from Sydney to Manila. Also the correspondence reveals Eben Smith's concerns regarding the impact of the Civil War on the availability of cargo for American ships in foreign ports. The vessel was sold after this voyage.

DESCRIPTION

Box 1:

Series A. 1851 Voyage, 1850-1852

- Folder 1. Correspondence, 1851
- " 2. Specifications and contract for building vessel, 1850
- " 3. Agent / owner accounts, 1850-1852
- " 4. Charter party, 1851
- " 5. Crew papers, 1851
- " 6. Consular records, 1851
- " 7. Customs records, 1851
- " 8. Bills of landing, 1851
- " 9-12. Bills and receipts, 1850-1852
- " 13. Memoranda of outfits of vessel, 1851

Series B. 1852 Voyage, 1852

- Folder 1. Correspondence, 1852
- " 2. Agent / owner accounts, 1852
- " 3. Crew papers, 1852
- " 4. Bills of exchange, 1852
- " 5. Freight lists, 1852
- " 6-7. Bills and receipts, 1852

Box 2:

Series C. 1852-1853 Voyage, 1852-1854

- Folder 1-4. Correspondence, 1852-1853
- " 5. Agent / owner accounts, 1852-1854
- " 6. Charter parties, 1852-1853
- " 7-9. Crew papers, 1852-1853 (includes crew lists)
- " 10-12. Consular records, 1852-1853 (includes protest for damage to vessel and sinking of British ship *Glammis Castle*)
- " 13. Customs records, 1852-1853
- " 14. Bills of exchange, 1852-1853
- " 15. Freight lists, 1853
- " 16-21. Bills and receipts, 1852-1854

Box 3:

Series D. 1854 Voyage, January – May 1854

- Folder 1. Correspondence, 1854
- “ 2. Agent / owner accounts, 1854
- “ 3-4. Crew papers, 1854 (includes crew lists)
- “ 5. Consular records, 1854
- “ 6. Customs records, 1854
- “ 7. Freight list, 1854
- “ 8-9. Bills and receipts, 1854

Series E. 1854 Voyage, June – November 1854

- Folder 1. Correspondence, 1854
- “ 2. Agent / owner accounts, 1854
- “ 3. Charter parties, 1854
- “ 4-5. Crew papers, 1854 (includes crew lists)
- “ 6. Consular records, 1854
- “ 7. Customs records, 1854
- “ 8. Freight list, 1854
- “ 9-10. Bills and receipts, 1854

Series F. 1856-1858 Voyage, 1856-1858

- Folder 1-2. Correspondence, 1856-1858
- “ 3-4. Agent / owner accounts, 1857-1858
- “ 5. Charter parties, 1856
- “ 6. Crew papers, 1856-1858
- “ 7. Consular records, 1857-1858
- “ 8. Customs records, 1858
- “ 9. Bills of exchange, 1857-1858
- “ 10. Freight list, 1858
- “ 11-16. Bills and receipts, 1856-1858

Box 4:

Series G. 1858-1860 Voyage, 1858-1860

- Folder 1-2. Correspondence, 1858-1860
- “ 3-4. Agent / owner accounts, 1857-1858
- “ 5. Charter parties, 1858
- “ 6-7. Crew papers, 1859 (includes crew lists)
- “ 8. Consular records, 1859
- “ 9. Customs records, 1859-1860

Box 4: Series G (cont.)

- " 10. Bills of exchange, 1859
- " 11-13. Bills and receipts, 1858-1860

Box 5:

Series H. 1860-1862 Voyage, 1860-1862

- Folder 1-3. Correspondence, 1856-1858
- " 4-5. Agent / owner accounts, 1857-1858
- " 6. Charter parties, 1856
- " 7-8. Crew papers, 1856-1858
- " 9-11. Consular records, 1857-1858
- " 12. Freight lists, 1861-1863
- " 13. Bills of exchange, 1861-1862
- " 14-19. Bills and receipts, 1860-1862

ADDED ENTRIES

Australia – Voyages and travels
Cargo ships – *Tropic* (Ship)
China – Voyages and travels
Cuba – Voyages and travels
Europe, Northern – Voyages and travels
History – United States – Civil War, 1862-1865
India – Voyages and travels
Marine protests
Merchant marine – Massachusetts – New Bedford
Merchant marine – Officers – Loring, John
Merchant marine – Officers – Smith, Benjamin
Merchant marine – Officers – Smith, Eben Ryder [n.d.]
Merchant ships – England – *Glamis Castle*
Philippines – Voyages and travels
Ship owners – Rotch, William James (1819-1893)
Ship owners – Rotch, William Rodman (1788-1860)
Ship owners – Smith, Eben Ryder [n.d.]
Ship owners – Taber, Edmund (1819-1911)
Ship owners – Thornton, John Russell (1808-1893)
Ship's papers
Shipbuilding – Maine – Bath
Shipwrecks
Rotch, William James (1819-1893)
Rotch, William Rodman (1788-1860)
Smith, Eben Ryder [n.d.]
Taber, Edmund (1819-1911)
Thornton, John Russell (1808-1893)