INVENTORY OF THE

GIFFORD FAMILY PAPERS

IN THE OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WHALING MUSEUM LIBRARY

Content: Primarily correspondence by a New Bedford, Mass., whaling master and his wife, 1851-1980.

Volume: 7½ inches.

Provenance: Gift of Mrs. David Blair Littlefield on 22 July 1985.

Restrictions: None.

Processed By: Judith M. Downey, April 20, 1990.

INTRODUCTION

Material in this collection was donated to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society by Mrs. David Blair Littlefield on 22 July 1985.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Leonard Sanford Gifford was born in New Bedford, Mass., in 1821. Gifford began his whaling career as a young man and by 1851, had advanced to become a captain. His first command was the Ship HOPE of New Bedford which lasted until 1857. When he returned from this voyage, he married Lucy Ann Roberts. Lucy was born in New Bedford in 1832 and lived with her widowed aunt, Sarah Crapo Roberts (1800-1860). Gifford again took command of the HOPE in 1857 and was accompanied by his wife. On this voyage, Lucy gave birth to four children while the vessel was in various ports but the first two children died within a few months of birth. The HOPE was wrecked on Bampton's Shoal off Australia in late 1863. The remains of the two children were on board and only one was salvaged. The family finally arrived back in New Bedford at the end of 1864. Two more children were born to the couple in 1865 and 1866. Leonard returned to the sea in 1867 but not in the whaling industry, rather in the merchant trade. He became the captain of the Schooner J. S. WAINWRIGHT and also had 1/8 ownership. He sailed for South Africa with a cargo of petroleum. After disposing of this cargo, Gifford entered the coastwise trade in South Africa with cargos of sugar and fruits. Gifford died and was buried at Cape Town, South Africa in February 1868. Lucy was left with four children to raise and she died a few years later in 1873.

David Blair Littlefield was the great-grandson of Leonard and Lucy Gifford who inherited the manuscripts in this collection. He attempted to create a story out of this material so that it could be published but his own death prevented it.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Materials in this collection reflect the activities of members of the Gifford family of New Bedford, Mass., 1851-1980. The material concentrates on Leonard Sanford Gifford and his wife, Lucy Ann Roberts Gifford. Leonard's papers consist of correspondence, ship's papers and certificates, 1851-1868.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

His correspondence, 1851-1868, primarily consists of letters written by him to his wife while on voyages on the Ship HOPE, 1851-1856 and on the Schooner J.S. WAINWRIGHT, 1867-1868. The letters from the Ship HOPE describe his whaling activities, plans for Lucy to join him at Hawaii as many other captains had their ladies aboard, activities at ports where the vessel anchored including Honolulu, Lahaina, Macaulay's Island and Lima, Peru. There are also letters written to his mother and from ship's agents, Wilcox & Richmond. The letters from the Schooner J.S. WAINWRIGHT were written by him to his wife while he was in South Africa. These describe his merchant activities with the cargo of petroleum, his coastwise shipping from Cape Town, Table Bay, Port Elizabeth and Port Natal, the need for dentists and the over abundance of photographers in South Africa.

The ship's papers contain records for the Ship HOPE and the Schooner J.S. WAINWRIGHT, 1857-1867. Papers for the HOPE include a Sea Letter, 1857 and a typescript of the logbook, 1863. Papers for the WAINWRIGHT include agent/owner accounts and bills and receipts. The certificates consist of a marriage certificate, 1857, Masonic Lodge membership, 1857, and life insurance policies, 1865-1867.

Papers for Lucy Ann Roberts Gifford consist of correspondence, legal documents, bills and receipts and poems, 1851-1873. Her correspondence, 1857-1873, are primarily letters written by her while aboard the Ship HOPE to her aunt, Sarah Crapo Roberts, 1857-1858, letters to her regarding her husband's death, 1868-1869, and other family letters, 1869-1873. The letters aboard the HOPE describe shipboard life and experiences at various ports especially Fayal and Talcahuano, including the births and deaths of her two children.

The legal documents include deeds, consular records and insurance policies, 1865-1871. The deeds are for property in New Bedford purchased by Lucy in 1865. The consular records concern the death of her husband in South Africa and his estate, 1868-1869. The insurance policies are life insurance policies and settlements on her husband and fire insurance of a cottage on Martha's Vineyard, 1868-1871. The final two series are bills and receipts, 1871-1872 and poems, 1851-ca. 1859.

Papers for Sarah C. Roberts consist of letters written by her to Lucy and Leonard Gifford, 1857-1859. These letters relate family news, events in New Bedford, her financial situation and her declining health.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

Papers of David Blair Littlefield contain correspondence, research materials, genealogy notes and two versions of the typescript "Memories of a Whaling Wife," 1938-1980. Littlefield inherited the manuscript letters and thought them to be of such importance and interest that he worked on a volume using their transcriptions as basis for a publication. The correspondence, research materials and genealogy notes are all background materials either used for research or as part of the proposed publication.

Sub-group 1. Leonard Sanford Gifford Papers, 1851-1868. Correspondence, ship's papers and certificates. 1 inch.

Sub-group 2. Lucy Ann Roberts Gifford Papers, 1851-1873. Correspondence, legal documents, bills and receipts and poems. 1½ inches.

Sub-group 3. Sarah Crapo Roberts Papers, 1857-1859. Correspondence. 11 items.

Sub-group 4. David Blair Littlefield Papers, 1938-1980. Correspondence, research materials, genealogy notes and "Memories of a Whaling Wife." 5 inches.

DESCRIPTION

Sub-group 1. Leonard Sanford Gifford Papers, 1851-1868

Series A. Correspondence, 1851-1868

Folder 1. 1851-1852
" 2. 1853-1854
" 3. 1854-1856
" 4. 1862-1865
" 5. 1867-1868

Series B. Ship's Papers, 1857-1867

Sub-series 1. HOPE (Ship) Records, 1857-1863
Folder 1. Sea Letter, 1857
" 2. Typescript of logbook, 1863

Sub-series 2. J. S. WAINWRIGHT (Schooner) Records, 1867
Folder 1. Agent/owner accounts, 1867
" 2. Bills and receipts, 1867

Series C. Certificates, 1857-1867

Folder 1. Marriage certificate and vows, 1857
" 2. Masonic Lodge membership, 1857
" 3. Insurance policies, 1865-1867

Sub-group 2. Lucy Ann Roberts Gifford Papers, 1851-1873

Series A. Correspondence, 1857-1873

Folder 1. 1857-1858
" 2. 1864-1868
" 3-4. 1869-1873

Series B. Legal Documents, 1865-1871

Folder 1. Deeds, 1865
" 2. Consular records, 1868-1869
" 3. Insurance policies, 1868-1871

Series C. Bills and receipts, 1871-1872

Folder 1. 1871-1872

Series D. Poems, 1851-ca. 1859

Folder 1. 1851-ca. 1859

Sub-group 3. Sarah Crapo Roberts Papers, 1857-1859

Series A. Correspondence, 1857-1859

Folder 1. 1857-1858
" 2. 1859

Sub-group 4. David Blair Littlefield Papers, 1938-1980

Series A. Correspondence, 1961-1972

Folder 1. 1961
" 2. 1967-1972

Series B. Research Materials, 1938-1977

Sub-series 1. Historical societies brochures, 1960-ca. 1970
Folder 1. New Bedford Whaling Museum, 1961-ca. 1965
" 2. Mystic Seaport, 1960-1961
" 3. Others, ca. 1961-ca. 1970

Sub-series 2. Articles and clippings, 1938-1977
Folder 1. Articles, ca. 1970
" 2. Clippings, 1938, 1964-1966
" 3-4. " , 1972-1977

Sub-series 3. Research notes, ca. 1960-ca. 1965
Folder 1. Notes taken from published sources, ca. 1960-ca. 1965

Series C. Geneälogy Notes, ca. 1940-ca. 1961

Folder 1. ca. 1940, ca. 1961

Series D. "Memories of a Whaling Wife", 1975-1980

Volume 1. Typescript draft, 1975
" 2. " " , 1980 - 217p.

ADDED ENTRIES

Children on ships
Coastwise shipping--South Africa
Deaths at sea
Deeds--Mass.--New Bedford
Family--Mass.--New Bedford
Gifford, Leonard Sanford, 1821-1868
Gifford, Lucy Ann Roberts, 1832-1873
Hope (Ship)
J.S. Wainwright (Schooner)
Littlefield, David Blair, ca. 1915-ca. 1983
Merchant ships--Mass.--New Bedford
Roberts, Sarah Crapo, 1800-1860
Shipmasters--Mass.--New Bedford
Shipping
Ship's papers
South Africa--Commerce
Whalemen--Correspondence, reminiscences, etc.
Whalemen's wives
Whalers
Whaling--Mass.--New Bedford
Women and the sea
Women on ships

SEPARATIONS

Removed to photograph collection:

CHARLES W. MORGAN at Mystic, b & w, 11 items.
79 Bay Street, New Bedford, b & w, 4 items.
Gifford Family Plot, Rural Cemetery, b & w, 9 items.
Ship model, b & w, 2 items.
Sea chest, b & w, 2 items
Baptist Church, William St., New Bedford, b & w, 1 item.