

# PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM

Inventory for  
Manuscript Collection

**PMM 64**

**James Henry Cunningham  
Family Papers**

1844-1863

½ box  
0.25 linear feet  
Accession No. LB2004.4

**Stephen Phillips Memorial Library**

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# PMM 64

## James Henry Cunningham Family Papers

**Cunningham, James Henry, 1825-1891**

**A. Cunningham & Sons**

Papers, 1844-1863

½ box (0.25 linear feet)

Merchants in Boston, Massachusetts

Three account books and one log-book related to the Cunningham family's extensive maritime ventures. The Cunninghams were merchants and shipowners, active in early nineteenth century Boston, who specialized in the Mediterranean fruit trade and other long-distance routes. This collection records the fruit trade and other cargo ventures; their interest in new markets in South America and California; the charter and purchase of a variety of vessels, many built in Maine; and investments in new industries like railroads.

In English.

Emily Lewis; Gift; 2004; LB2004.4

Finding aid available; folder level control

**Subject Headings:**

Cunningham, James Henry, 1825-1891

Cunningham, Horace, 1826-1906

NEWSBOY (brig)

Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Freight and freightage

Fruit trade

Investments

Merchants

Shipping

Ships

**Local Subject Headings:**

Cape Horn trade

Transatlantic trade

**Acquisition:**

This collection was given to the Penobscot Marine Museum by Emily Lewis.

**Restrictions**

This collection is open for research. There are no special restrictions.

**Condition:**

The bindings are very fragile on all the volumes. Some covers and signatures are detached. All covers are heavily worn.

**Historical Note:**

The Cunningham family of Boston were prominent merchants in the early nineteenth century. Andrew Cunningham (1786-1861) and his brother Charles (1791-1871) founded the firm A. & C. Cunningham in 1822. They specialized in the Mediterranean fruit trade, carrying oranges and lemons from Italian and Sicilian ports. They also frequently arranged cargoes of wine, fruit, and whale oil from the Azores, hemp from Russia and the Baltic, and logwood from

Honduras, and were active in the West Indies, South American, South African, and China trades as well. In addition to arranging cargoes, the firm owned and managed a sizeable fleet of vessels.

Charles Cunningham retired from business in 1849. Two of Andrew's sons, James Henry Cunningham (1825-1891) and Charles West Cunningham (1819-1875), became partners in the firm, which was then renamed A. Cunningham & Sons. This was one of several merchant firms founded by the younger generation of the Cunningham family in the early 1850s. Charles Cunningham's son, Frederic (b. 1826), went into business with his cousin, Charles W. Dabney Jr., as Dabney & Cunningham. This firm specialized in the Mediterranean and Azorean fruit trade and owned, among other vessels, the Thomaston-built brig NEWSBOY. Another of Andrew Cunningham's sons, Horace (1826-1906), went into business on his own and invested in a variety of commercial ventures.

### **Scope and Content:**

This collection contains three account books and a log-book documenting a wide range of the Cunningham family's merchant ventures. These are not formal ledgers. Instead, they include a variety of notes, accounts, and narratives on matters of business and personal interest to a family with wide ranging maritime and commercial investments.

The earlies of these volumes, kept by James Henry Cunningham, primarily contains detailed, though fragmentary, notes on the development of maritime trade. Some of this is directly related to cargoes and ships owned by the Cunningham firm. However, the bulk of the volume relates to the maritime world at large, including notes on the cargo capacity, speed, and sale price of a wide range of vessels, a detailed description of trading in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and lists of some of the first vessels employed in the California Gold Rush.

The remaining volumes are more focused in scope. A second account book, kept by Horace Cunningham, records Horace's "adventures," namely, the expenses and profits of specific lots of cargo. Horace Cunningham apparently operated on a smaller scale than his brothers, but was active in a variety of overseas markets. A log-book from the half-brig NEWSBOY, operated by Dabney & Cunningham, contains a daily record of round trip voyages from Boston to Messina and Fayal. Finally, a personal account book kept James Henry Cunningham in the 1850s contains a diary and a detailed record of his investments, a majority of which were in railroads and other western concerns.

### **Box and Folder List:**

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Volume 1 | Memo book, James Henry Cunningham, 1844-1848<br>"Remarks upon the Customs & Trade of Rio de Janeiro," 1846<br>Notes on cargo capacity, voyage lengths, and sale prices of various vessels<br>Expenses, profits, and ship repair, A. Cunningham & Sons<br>Personal expenses, 1847-1848 |
| 2        | Account book, James Henry Cunningham, 1852-1864<br>Investment accounts for self and others<br>Accounts for the estate of Stephen Winchester<br>Accounts, Atlas Bank   |

- Diary, 1854-1855
- 3 Account book, Horace Cunningham, 1853-1862
  - Invoices for goods shipped by or to Horace Cunningham, 1854-1859
  - Accounts for individual "Adventures" in cargo, 1853-1862
  - Specifications and notes on activities, ship TALLY HO
- 4 Log-book, half-brig NEWSBOY, 1854-1855
  - Voyage from Boston to Messina and return
  - Voyage from Boston to Fayal, Azores, and return