

# PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM

Inventory for  
Manuscript Collection

**PMM 72**

## **Nathaniel L. Thompson Family Papers**

**1816-1938**

1 box  
0.5 linear feet  
Accession No. 1953.55.1

**Stephen Phillips Memorial Library**

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# PMM 72

## Nathaniel L. Thompson Family Papers

**Thompson, Nathaniel L., 1811-1889**

**Thompson, Margaret J., 1863-1954**

Papers, 1816-1938

1 box (0.5 linear feet)

Shipbuilder, ship owner and sea captain from Kennebunk, Maine

Correspondence, accounts, protests, and other records related to Nathaniel L.

Thompson's activities as a ship owner in Kennebunk, Maine. The collection includes detailed correspondence between Thompson and his brothers about ship finances and management in the cotton trade, and two years of records from the ship LIZZIE THOMPSON, culminating in that vessel's seizure by Peru over a guano trade dispute. The collection also contains transcripts and research notes used by Margaret J. Thompson to write a book on her father's ships.

Lincoln Colcord; Gift; 1953; 1953.55.1

Organized in two series: Series I. Thompson Family Business Papers; Series II.

Margaret J. Thompson Research Material

Finding aid available; folder level control

### Subject Headings:

Thompson, Nathaniel Lord, 1811-1889

Thompson, Charles, 1810-1894

LIZZIE THOMPSON (Ship)

Business enterprises—Maine—Kennebunk

Cotton trade

Guano industry—Peru—history

Ship captains

Ship owners

Shipping—finance

United States. Navy--procurement

### Local Subject Headings:

Cape Horn trade

Guano trade

### Acquisition:

This collection was given to the Penobscot Marine Museum by Lincoln Colcord. Colcord likely acquired it from Margaret J. Thompson, Nathaniel Lord Thompson's daughter, who wrote a book on her father's shipyard.

### Restrictions

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

### Condition:

This collection is in good condition.

### Related Materials:

The book *Captain Nathaniel Lord Thompson of Kennebunk, Maine and the Ships he Built, 1811-1889* by Margaret J. Thompson (Searsport, ME: Penobscot Marine Museum, 1937)

was written by Nathaniel L. Thompson's daughter, drawing in part on the documents in this collection.

### Historical Note:

Nathaniel Lord Thompson (1811-1889) was a shipbuilder and sea captain from Kennebunk, Maine. He was the son of Nathaniel Thompson (1781-1819), a master mariner, and Elizabeth Huff. He started his career at sea as a teenager and got his first command, the bark NIMROD, in his early twenties. He sailed continuously until 1844, commanding ships in the cotton trade and other long-distance routes.

In 1844, Thompson came back to Kennebunk and became a shipbuilder. He partnered with James and George Titcomb, occasionally commanding ships that the partners built, until he established his own shipyard in Kennebunkport in 1854. Many of Thompson's vessels were large, square-rigged ships, though he also built schooners, a few steamers, and, during the Civil War, one gunboat for the U.S. Navy. Thompson retained an ownership share in many of the vessels he built, leading to a profitable career.

Nathaniel Thompson had three brothers with intertwined maritime careers. William L. Thompson (1813-1893) followed his brother into a shipbuilding career in Kennebunk, while Charles (b. 1809) and Franklin N. Thompson (b. 1816) were both master mariners who frequently commanded and invested in Thompson-built ships.

### Scope and Content:

This collection contains records and correspondence related to Nathaniel L. Thompson's activities as a ship owner in Kennebunk, Maine, as well as research materials generated by Thompson's daughter.

Series I contains documents generated by Nathaniel L. Thompson and his family during the heyday of their shipping businesses. Letters written to Charles Thompson from his brothers in the 1840s and 1850s discuss both the details of the cotton trade and the broader financial concerns of a family of ship owners, as well as personal and social details. There are also letters, accounts, bills, depositions, and protests from the ship LIZZIE THOMPSON, covering two years of normal operations in the Cape Horn trade plus the vessel's seizure by Peruvian authorities during the Vivanco rebellion in 1857. Finally, there are scattered papers from the Nathaniel Thompson's shipyard, including a contract to build a gunboat for the U.S. Navy during the Civil War.

Series II contains research materials written by Nathaniel L. Thompson's daughter, Margaret J. Thompson, as she was assembling a book on the family shipbuilding business in the 1930s. In addition to notes on vessel histories and reproductions of paintings and other images, there are transcripts of log-books, court decisions, and other primary sources not included in this collection.

### Box and Folder List:

| Box | Folder   |
|-----|--|
|     | <u>Series I: Thompson Family Business Papers</u>   |
| 1   | 1 Nathaniel Thompson, brig OLIVE BRANCH, 1816  |
|     | 2 Nathaniel L., Frederick N., and William L. Thompson, letters to Charles Thompson, 1845-1853  |
|     | 3 Nathaniel L. Thompson, shipyard papers:<br>Ownership lists, HELIOS, LUNA, GOLDEN EAGLE, and LIZZIE THOMPSON, 1854<br>Letter to Capt. M.C. Maling, ship ALAMEDA, 1861 |

- 4 Contract to build a gunboat for the U.S. Navy, 1861
- 4 Ship LIZZIE THOMPSON papers, 1855-1856
- 5 1857, Cardiff to San Francisco
- 6 1857-1882, San Francisco to Callao, seizure, lawsuits

Series II: Margaret J. Thompson Research Material

- 7 Transcripts: Nathaniel L. Thompson notebook
- Frank T. Bullen, ship PHAROS, 1899
- Log-book, ship DEFIANT (later AMPHITRITE), 1875-1876
- 8 Research notes and images, vessels built by Nathaniel L. Thompson
- 9 Research notes, LIZZIE THOMPSON
- 10 Image reproductions
- 11 Paperwork for *Captain Nathaniel Lord Thompson of Kennebunk, Maine and the Ships he Built, 1811-1889, 1935-1938*