

PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM

Inventory for
Manuscript Collection

PMM 76

William McGilvery Papers

1859 – 1878

4 boxes

2 linear feet

Accession No. LB1999.3, LB2000.3, LB2017.21, and LB2021.1

Stephen Phillips Memorial Library

Penobscot Marine Museum

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PMM 76

William McGilvery Papers

McGilvery, William, 1814-1876

Papers, 1859-1878

4 boxes (2 linear feet)

Shipbuilder, sea captain, ship owner, and merchant of Searsport, Maine

Accounts, receipts, ledgers, and other business records from William McGilvery of Searsport, Maine. The bulk of the collection relates to McGilvery's activities as a shipbuilder and ship owner in the 1860s and 1870s, though there is material from some of his other enterprises, like the lumber trade, as well. As McGilvery handled maritime investments for many Searsport residents, this collection also reflects the business networks of Searsport as a whole.

In English

Lincoln Colcord; Gift; c. 1940; LB2021.1. Brooks Colcord; Gifts; 1999 and 2000; LB1999.3 and LB2000.3. Mark Smith; Gift; 2017; LB2017.21

Finding aid available; folder level control

Subject Headings:

McGilvery, William, 1814-1876

VIRGINIA (ship)

WILLIAM MCGILVERY (ship)

Searsport (Me.)

Commerce

Lumber trade

Prices

Shipbuilding

Shipbuilding—equipment and supplies

Shipowners

Shipping

Ships

Acquisition:

The loose papers in this collection were part of two larger gifts of manuscript material from Brooks Colcord in 1999 and 2000. The bound volumes were likely given to the museum by Lincoln Colcord circa 1940. One cash book and papers from the brig AMEILA EMMA were donated in memory of Katherine Nickels Smith in 2017, part of a larger gift of manuscripts from the family of William McGilvery's son-in-law, Albert Vinal Nickels.

Restrictions:

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

Condition:

This collection is mostly in good condition. The cash book for 1866-1870 has a moldy smell, and has been isolated in a plastic sleeve.

Related Materials:

Information on some of the many vessels that McGilvery built and owned is available at the Penobscot Marine Museum, and may be found by searching under the vessel's name. An

account book for the bark MOONBEAM is in MS 66; accounts for the barks THEODA and TRAVATORA are in MS 63; and accounts for the ships ODESSA and WILLIAM McGILVERY, along with records from McGilvery's son-in-law, Albert V. Nickels, are in PMM 77.

Parts of William McGilvery's estate descended to his daughter, Elizabeth McGilvery Nickels. These records are preserved in PMM 49, the Nickels Family Estate Papers.

Historical Note:

William McGilvery (1814-1876) was a prominent shipbuilder and maritime businessman in Searsport, Maine. He was born in Prospect, Maine, and spent his early career at sea. By the mid-1840s, he was promoted to command of the bark E. CHURCHILL, followed by the bark HENRIETTA, schooner GENEVA, brigantine SARAH, bark J.B. JOHNSON, and brigantine HARRIET H. McGILVERY. He retired from the sea in 1851 to become a ship builder, partnering with Benjamin Colcord to run a shipyard in Searsport. By 1855, he had entered a second partnership, with Daniel S. Goodell, at a neighboring shipyard. Both partnerships later dissolved, but McGilvery continued to build vessels in Searsport, as well as in shipyards in Bucksport and Brewer. In the 1870s, he was one of several Searsport builders who financed a shipyard in Bucksville, South Carolina, closer to supplies of ship timber.

McGilvery owned and managed many of the ships that he built, keeping abreast of the varied coastal and global markets in which they sailed. As a ship owner, he employed many Searsport sea captains, many of whom also invested in shares of McGilvery's vessels. As a result, McGilvery was a central figure in Searsport's mid-nineteenth century maritime affairs.

McGilvery was also active in the local business community. He was on the board of directors of the International Telegraph Company, the Union Insurance Company, Eastern Insurance Company, and the Bay and River Railroad. He was instrumental in founding a state bank in Searsport in the 1850s, followed by the Searsport Savings Bank in 1874. He was part of the McGilvery & Trundy Lumber Company, and active in exporting ship timber from Bucksville, South Carolina. Finally, McGilvery was an advisor for Lloyd's marine insurance, and represented Searsport for multiple terms in the state legislature as a Republican.¹

William McGilvery married Harriet Hichborn in 1836. They had five children: Desiah (1837-1903), who married William Buck and moved to Bucksville, South Carolina; Elizabeth (1842-1927), who married Captain Albert V. Nickels of Searsport; Mary (1850-1923), who married John Clifford Storrers of Sandy Point; Harriet (1853-1875), who married Captain Norman Dunbar; and William (1855-1881). William McGilvery died in 1876, apparently by suicide, leaving an estate worth \$333,330 and substantial debts.

Scope and Content:

This collection contains accounts, bills, shipping papers, freight circulars, and other business records from William McGilvery of Searsport, Maine. The bulk are related to McGilvery's activities as a shipbuilder and ship owner in the 1860s and 1870s, including accounts for construction materials, labor, outfitting, freight, and captain's accounts for vessels that McGilvery built and/or managed. Most of these records are in McGilvery's ledgers and account books, though some vessels are also represented by charter parties, crew lists, and other loose documents. Though most of McGilvery's other business interests in banks, railroads, and similar concerns are not well represented, there is some documentation of his involvement with the lumber trade originating in both South Carolina and Maine.

McGilvery's accounts also provide a record of the maritime investments and financial networks for many Searsport residents who did business either directly or indirectly with

¹ These activities are referenced in the *Portland Daily Press* (Maine), 3 Jun 1868 p. 2 and 3 December 1869 p. 3; the *Daily Kennebec Journal* (Augusta, Maine), 26 January 1870 p. 2, 28 June 1870 p. 2, and 27 January 1871 p. 3; and the *Republican Journal* (Belfast, Maine), 23 June 1921 p. 8

McGilvery. It covers the disruptions of the Civil War as well as the period of solidification directly afterwards, in which Searsport became a new leader in the US merchant marine.

In addition, this collection also contains a quantity of freight circulars and market reports sent to William McGilvery between 1862 and 1864. These are detailed descriptions of commodity markets around the Atlantic, in which McGilvery's ships were heavily involved.

Box and Folder List:

Box	Folder	
1	1	General correspondence, 1862-1865
	2	Political material, c. 1863
	3	Statements and charters, marine insurance, telegraph companies, and banks, 1862-1865
	4	Miscellaneous business bills and accounts, 1863-1868
	5	Lumber business, Bucksville, South Carolina, 1874-1876
	6	Shipbuilding: ship timber, 1864-1870
	7	Circular letters advertising equipment and supplies
	8	Shipping Papers, brig AMEILA EMMA, 1874
	9	Brig A.J. ROSS, 1860 Bark CLARA E. MCGILVERY, 1870 Bark COM. DUPONT, 1864
	10	Brig H.H. MCGILVERY, 1864 Ship HARRIET H. MCGILVERY, 1874 Bark HERBERT BLACK, 1874
	11	Brig MARY E. THOMPSON, 1865
	12	Bark MOONBEAM, 1873-1874
	13	Bark ORCHILLA, 1859-1864
	14	Ship ODESSA, 1862-1865 Ship ONEIDA, 1874
	15	Bark TALAVERA, 1865-1874 Bark TEJUCA, 1862 Ship S.F. HERSEY, 1874
	16	Ship VIRGINIA, construction, 1870
	17	Brig WACCAMAW, 1865
	18	Ship WILLIAM MCGILVERY, construction and operation, 1870-1874

Bound volumes:

1	19	Cash book, 1866-1870
	MS 36	Ledger F, 1859-1860
	MS 62	Supplement to Ledger H, 1869-1871
	MS 48	Cash accounts, 1870-1871
	MS 267	Ledger of bills payable, 1859-1864
	MS 65	Ledger of bills payable, 1871-1874
	MS 301	Receipt book, 1866-1868
	MS 103	Receipt book, 1868-1870
	MS 64	Estate of William McGilvery, business daybook and blotter, 1877-1878
	MS 417	Probate inventory, William McGilvery, 1876

2	1	Circular letters, commission merchants, 1862-1864
		Freight Circulars, 1862-1864:
	2	United States, Boston: Ayer & Farwell
		Philadelphia: Edmund A. Souder & Co.
	3	Portland, Maine: Portland Price Current Letter Sheet
	4	San Francisco: Wm. MacCann & Co.
	5	Europe, Cardiff: Samuel Nash & Co.
	6	Sydney D. Jenkins & Co.
	7	Liverpool: Boulton, English & Brandon
	8	London: Charles Gumm
	9	David Brown
	10	South America, Buenos Aires: Henry A. Green & Co.
		Rio de Janeiro: George Rudge, Jr. & Co
	11	West Indies, Barbados: Barrow & Leib
		John Jeffray
		N. H. Gaston
	12	S. P. Musson, Son & Co.
	13	Cuba: Cardenas: Ernesto Fischer
		J. M. Churchill
	14	Havana: Adot Spaulding & Co.
	15	J. M. Morales & Co.
	16	Matanzas: Alfonso & Co.
	17	St. Thomas: G. W. Smith & Co.
	18	Geo. A. Philips & Co.
		J. Niles & Co.
		James T. Abbott & Co.