

PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM

Inventory for
Manuscript Collection

PMM 82

Tobias and Benjamin Thompson Papers

1825-1894

4 boxes
2 linear feet
Accession No. 272

Stephen Phillips Memorial Library

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PMM 82

Tobias and Benjamin Thompson Papers

Thompson, Tobias O., 1807-1896

Thompson, Benjamin, 1834-1904

Papers, 1825-1894

4 boxes (2 linear feet)

Ship captains from Winterport, Maine

Correspondence and accounts from Tobias O. Thompson and his nephew, Benjamin Thompson, two master mariners from Winterport, Maine. Material from Tobias O. Thompson covers his activities in the coasting, West Indies, and cotton trades from the 1820s through the 1850s, while material from Benjamin Thompson deal with the global grain and bulk trades from the Civil War to the 1880s. Limited personal material includes detailed accounts for the construction of Tobias O. Thompson's house in the 1830s.

In English

Organized in two series: Series I. Tobias O. Thompson; Series II. Benjamin Thompson Mrs. Louise Williams; Gift; 1937; no. 272. Museum Purchase.

Finding aid available; folder level control

Subject Headings:

Thompson, Tobias O., 1807-1896

Thompson, Benjamin, 1834-1904

William F. Weld & Co.

BOSTON PACKET (sloop)

KENDUSKEAG (schooner)

GREAT ADMIRAL (ship)

SPORTSMAN (ship)

TAMERLANE (schooner)

Winterport (Me.)

Coasters (Ships)

Coastwise shipping

Cotton trade

House construction

Merchant mariners

Schooners

Ship captains

Shipping

Ships

United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865

Wages

Local Subject Headings:

Cape Horn trade

Grain trade

Guano trade

Acquisition:

This collection was donated by Mrs. Louise Williams, daughter of Captain Benjamin Thompson. Williams also donated Benjamin Thompson's charts, tool chest, and other artifacts

that he collected and used over a life at sea. One journal from the GREAT ADMIRAL was purchased separately.

Restrictions

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

Condition:

This collection is in good condition, with light wear commensurate with age.

Related Materials:

Typescripts of many of Benjamin Thompson's letters are available at PMM, as is a compilation of research and transcripts done by Alice Ellis in 1982.

Historical Note:

Tobias O. and Benjamin Thompson were both ship captains from Winterport, Maine. Tobias O. Thompson (1806-1896) was the son of Benjamin and Olive Oakman Thompson, some of the first European settlers of Frankfort and Winterport. Tobias had a long career at sea starting in the local coasting trade and ending with deep sea routes like the transatlantic cotton trade and Peruvian guano trade. He was a captain by the mid-1820s, and his commands included the sloop BOSTON PACKET, schooners TRITON, KENDUSKEAG, TAMERLANE, and T. O. THOMPSON, and the ships ADVANCE and HENRY GRINNELL. Tobias O. Thompson largely retired from the sea by outbreak of the Civil War, but remained an active investor and developer of property in Winterport. He was married twice: first to Eliza A. Leighton (1809-1837) and, after Eliza's death, to Lydia Hatch; and had five children.

Benjamin Thompson (1834-1904) was Tobias O. Thompson's nephew, the son of Tobias's brother, William (1810-1872). He started his career at sea with his father, serving as mate on the ship SPORTSMAN before inheriting the command in 1857. The SPORTSMAN primarily sailed to South America, though she was chartered as an ordnance ship by the U.S. Navy during the Civil War. Thompson commanded the SPORTSMAN until 1864, then went on to command the ships COLUMBIA, PERUVIAN, ENOCH TRAIN, and GREAT ADMIRAL for William F. Weld & Company in the California grain trade and a variety of global routes. Thompson's wife, Arabella Dunham Thompson (1836-1922), frequently accompanied him to sea. They had two children: William C. (1875-1913), who was lost at sea, and Abbie Louise (b. 1858), who married Frank H. Williams, an insurance agent in Bangor.

Scope and Content:

This collection contains business papers from Captains Tobias O. and Benjamin Thompson of Winterport, Maine, an almost continuous record of seventy years of maritime activities.

Series I contains papers from Tobias O. Thompson from his start as captain of a small coasting sloop to the end of his seagoing career as a captain in the transatlantic cotton trade. Thompson's accounts for his early coasting work are fairly complete, consisting of separate tallies of his vessels' expenses, earnings from freight, and wage and slop accounts with individual sailors. Loose correspondence, bills, and accounts also address Thompson's shipping business.

Series I also contains some of Thompson's domestic accounts. These include a contract and detailed expense list for the construction of a house in the 1830s; accounts kept with Thompson's parents, Benjamin and Olive Thompson; and a few insurance documents and other materials related to Thompson's ongoing investment in Winterport buildings.

Series II contains accounts, business correspondence, and journals from Captain Benjamin Thompson. The earliest material is from his command of the ship SPORTSMAN while under charter to the U.S. Navy during the Civil War. Later material deals with Thompson's business in the global grain and guano trades, mostly in the ship GREAT ADMIRAL. Thompson's journals all date to this period, and offer a daily personal account of the ship's affairs. These complement Thompson's surviving correspondence, addressed to William F. Weld & Co and other merchants, regarding the business affairs of Thompson's ships.

Series II also holds a ledger and journal from the Mascot Silver & Lead Mining Company. This short-lived concern was based in Bangor, Maine, with unrealized hopes of operating a major mine; the account books here cover the first two years of the firm's business. Benjamin Thompson's son-in-law, Frank H. Williams, was active in the firm.

Box and Folder List:

Series I. Tobias O. Thompson

Box	Folder	
1	1	Correspondence, business, B – L
	2	Correspondence, business, P – T
	3	Correspondence, miscellaneous, business and personal
	4	Bills and receipts, 1829-1843
	5	Bills and receipts, 1843-1878 and undated
	6	Accounts with merchants and shipping agents, 1841-1860
	7	Shipping records, schooner KENDUSKEAG, 1833-1838 Schooner T.O. THOMPSON, 1846-1850 Ship WILLIAM A. COOPER, 1851 Ship HENRY GRINNELL, 1852-1854 Schooner BENJAMIN WILLIS, 1859-1860
	8	Shipping records, ship ADVANCE, 1856
	9	Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale
	10	Insurance documents, 1836-1891
	11	Tax receipts, 1830-1894
MS 382		Account book, freights, sloop BOSTON PACKET, schooner TRITON and schooner TAMERLANE, 1825-1840 Accounts with Benjamin and Olive Thompson, 1827-1855
MS 337		Sloop accounts, sloop BOSTON PACKET and schooners TRITON, KENDUSKEAG, and TAMERLANE, 1827-1837
MS 357		Account book, schooners KENDUSKEAG and TAMERLANE, 1829-1836 Accounts for building a house, 1838 Domestic accounts, 1838-1839
MS 383		Sloop accounts, ship HENRY GRINNELL, 1852-1854
MS 381		Account book, with Benjamin and Olive Thompson, 1865

Series II. Benjamin Thompson

Box	Folder	
2	1	Correspondence, ship SPORTSMAN, 1856-1861
	2	Ship SPORTSMAN, 1862
	3	Ship SPORTSMAN, 1863-1864
	4	Ships HARRISBURG and COLUMBIA, 1865
	5	Ship PERUVIAN, 1871

- 6 Ships ENOCH TRAIN and GREAT ADMIRAL, 1872-1873
- 7 Ship GREAT ADMIRAL, 1874-1875
- 8 Ship GREAT ADMIRAL, 1876
- 9 Ship GREAT ADMIRAL, 1877-1880
- 10 Ship GREAT ADMIRAL, 1881-1884
- 11 Ephemera, undated

- MS 394 Letter copy book, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1875-1878

- MS 390 Account book, ships SPORTSMAN, COLUMBIA, PERUVIAN, ENOCH TRAIN,
 and GREAT ADMIRAL, 1861-1885
- MS 393 Slop accounts, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1882-1886

- MS 384 Benjamin Thompson, journal, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1874
- MS 385 Benjamin Thompson, journal, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1879-1880
- MS 386 Benjamin Thompson, journal, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1881-1882
- MS 387 Benjamin Thompson, journal, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1882-1883
- MS 388 Benjamin Thompson, journal, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1883-1886
- MS 389 Benjamin Thompson, journal, GREAT ADMIRAL, 1886

- MS 391 Journal, Mascot Silver & Lead Mining Company, 1882-1883
- MS 392 Ledger, Mascot Silver & Lead Mining Company, 1882-1883