

PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM

Inventory for
Manuscript Collection

PMM 67

Curtis-Kneeland Family Papers

1839-1962

2 boxes

1 linear foot

Accession No. 1993.202, 1993.231,
LB1996.463, LB1998.8, LB2003.31, LB2004.11, and LB2007.10

Stephen Phillips Memorial Library

Penobscot Marine Museum

11 Church St., Searsport, Maine 04974

penobscotmarinemuseum.org

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PMM 67

Curtis-Kneeland Family Papers

Curtis Family Kneeland Family

Papers, 1839-1962

2 boxes (1 linear foot)

Families from Searsport, Maine

Correspondence, receipts, land deeds, log-books, tax rolls, and ephemera from the Curtis and Kneeland families of Searsport, Maine. The Curtis papers are primarily records of a sea-going family active in the long-distance Cape Horn trades and, later, steamships; while the Kneeland papers record family life, schooling, and municipal business in Searsport. The two were connected by the marriage of Jane A. Curtis (1881-1962) to Henry W. Kneeland (1882-1960).

In English.

Organized in two series: Series I. Curtis Family; Series II. Kneeland Family

Jane C. Whitten and Phyllis Whitten; Gifts; 1993 and 1996; 1993.202, 1993.231 and LB1996.463. Jane C. Whitten; Gifts; 1998, 2003, 2004, and 2007; LB1998.8, LB2003.31, LB2004.11, and LB2007.10.

Finding aid available; folder level control

Subject Headings:

Curtis, Frank A., 1842-1911

Curtis, Frank E., 1874-1947

Kneeland, James H., 1843-1917

American-Hawaiian Steamship Company

R.P. BUCK (Bark)

Searsport (Me.)

Business enterprises—Maine—Searsport

Grain trade

Grocers

Lumber trade

Rural schools

Ship captains

Shipping

Taxation—Maine—Searsport

Local Subject Headings:

Cape Horn trade

Guano trade

Acquisition:

This collection was given to Penobscot Marine Museum by Jane Curtis Whitten and her mother, Phyllis (Kneeland) Whitten, direct descendants of the Curtis and Kneeland family members found in these papers. It arrived in multiple installments over many years.

Restrictions

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

Condition:

This collection is in good condition. Some papers have torn or folded edges, surface dirt, and other wear commensurate with age and use.

Related Materials:

PMM-3, the Family Papers collection, contains a full box of material from the Curtis family.

Processing Note:

Jane C. Whitten intended that her multiple gifts be considered one collection, and so the accessions have been filed together according to the creator of the document.

Historical Note:

Lebbeus Curtis (1816-1880) started his career at sea in the 1830s. He came to specialize in the long-distance grain, coal, and guano trades to South America, Europe, Australia and California. His commands included large, new vessels like the barks R.P. BUCK and ROBERT PORTER. Lebbeus married Jane Porter (1821-1899) in 1841 and had six children: Francis A. (Frank) (1842-1911), Lebbeus (1847-1909), Eben E. (1849-1912), Jane (1852-1906), Joseph Porter (1862-1947) and Laura Rich (1863-1919).

Of Lebbeus and Jane Curtis's six children, only Frank A. Curtis is represented in this collection. After serving in the Civil War, Frank A. joined his father as the mate of the bark R.P. BUCK. He took over command of the R.P. BUCK in 1871, and subsequently captained the barks BEATRICE HAVERNER and HUDSON. He retired from the sea in 1892 to open a grocery store in Searsport.

Frank A. Curtis married Amanda L. Babcock in 1869. They had two children: Frank E. (1874-1947) and Jane A. (1881-1962). Frank E. Curtis was educated at the Eastern Maine Conference Seminary in Bucksport before going to sea himself. Most of his career was spent in steamships, mostly those owned by the American-Hawaiian Steamship line. After World War I he took a job with the Pillsbury Marine Surveyors in San Francisco, where he lived with his wife, Loessa. Jane A. Curtis married Henry W. Kneeland, a fellow Searsport native who worked in the insurance industry in Boston. They lived in the Boston area with their daughter, Phyllis (Kneeland) Whitten.

Henry H. Kneeland (1806-1860) was a farmer from Prospect, Maine. He purchased land from David Sears in 1839, served in the local militia in the early 1840s, and supplemented his income by cutting and hauling lumber. Henry H. Kneeland married Harriet Randell and had eight children. Of those eight, only James Henry Kneeland (1843-1917) is represented in this collection.

James H. Kneeland, sometimes known as Henry, was also a farmer who took on a variety of roles in Searsport. He served in the Civil War and, on being discharged, briefly went to sea. Returning to Searsport, he obtained a teaching license and taught in the local public school. He also served as the town tax collector and was later elected to the state legislature in 1900. He kept up a number of business ventures that supplemented farming, including partnering with his brother, Milton Kneeland, as Kneeland Bros; running a small grocery business; and, late in life, becoming an insurance agent.

James H. Kneeland married Amanda Crockett in 1867. They had three children: Frank E. (b. 1870), who worked as an accountant in Brooklyn before returning to the family farm in Searsport; Katherine (b. 1875), who became a school teacher; and Henry W. (1882-1960), who studied at the University of Maine and became an insurance manager in Boston. Henry W. Kneeland married Jane A. Curtis, linking these two branches of the Curtis and Kneeland families.

Scope and Content:

This collection contains material from the Curtis and Kneeland families of Searsport, Maine. The Curtis papers are primarily records of a sea-going family active in the long-distance Cape Horn trades and, later, steamships, while the Kneeland papers record family life, schooling, and municipal business in Searsport.

Series I contains material from three generations of the Curtis family. Much of this series consists of correspondence between members of the family, describing their activities while at sea. The earliest material is a log-book from the bark R.P. BUCK, commanded by Lebbeus Curtis with his son, Frank A. Curtis, as mate, on voyages to Melbourne, San Francisco, Liverpool, Boston, and Quebec. This volume is more comprehensive than most in recording the bark's business while in port, details that are complemented by letters written by Frank A. Curtis to his father after taking command of the R.P. BUCK in 1872.

Series I also contains receipts, accounts, and other material from Frank A. Curtis's life ashore in Searsport. This includes receipts for stock that he purchased for his grocery store in the early 1900s, and receipts and correspondence from his wife, Amanda.

The remainder of Series I consists of letters written by Frank E. Curtis to his parents, which record his education in Bucksport, his early career at sea, work on the Panama Canal, and a decade as a captain in the American-Hawaiian Line. There are also a few letters between Frank E. and his sister, Jane A. (Curtis) Kneeland, as well as two booklets of poetry written by Jane.

Series II contains documents from the Kneeland family. The bulk of these are receipts, accounts, certificates, and other formal records, and most are from James Henry Kneeland. There are documents from his work as a school teacher, state legislator, tax collector, and grocer, in addition to receipts, pension and life insurance forms, deeds, and certificates that more generally document Kneeland's life. Of particular note are registers for Searsport schools in the late 1860s, which list all students, teachers, and other administrative details; and Kneeland's tax books from the 1880s and 1890s, which list every taxpayer in Searsport together with the value of the property they owned.

Series II also contains a similar mix of deeds, certificates, and accounts from Kneeland's father, Henry H. Kneeland, though the material is more fragmentary. Two of James H. Kneeland's children are also represented: Frank E. Kneeland by an album of postcards collected on a trip to Colombia and Mexico; and Henry W. Kneeland by a few bills and letters filed in Series I.

Box and Folder List:

<u>Series I: Curtis Family</u>	
Box	Folder
1	1 Lebbeus and Jane Curtis, letter from Lebbeus to Jane, 1877
	2 Letters from son Frank A. Curtis, 1872-1874
	MS 535 Log-book, bark R.P. BUCK, 1869-1871
	3 Frank A. Curtis, shipping papers, 1883-1891
	4 Receipts for grocery store stock, 1904-1907
	5 Personal papers, 1891-1905
	6 Amanda (Babcock) Curtis, letters from Frank A. Curtis, 1884-1888
	7 Letters from son Frank E. Curtis, 1890-1914

- 8 Letters from Frank E. Curtis, American-Hawaiian Line, 1912-1920
- 9 General correspondence, 1873-1925
- 10 Bills, receipts and ephemera, 1894-1918
- 11 Jane A. (Curtis) Kneeland and Henry W. Kneeland, 1899-1963

Series II: Kneeland Family

- 2 1 Henry H. Kneeland and Harriet (Randell) Kneeland
- 2 2 James H. Kneeland: teaching and schools
- 3 3 Tax collector; state representative
- MS 527 4 Searsport Tax Lists, 1880-1886, 1888-1890, 1893-1894
- 4 5 Grocery business; Insurance agency
- 5 6 Seaman's Protection Certificate; fraternal organizations
- 6 7 Checks
- 7 8 Bills, receipts, and correspondence
- 8 9 Deeds; Wills
- 9 10 Pension; Life insurance
- 10 11 Frank E. Kneeland, postcard album
- 11 12 Ephemera