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
Penobscot Marine Museum
11 Church St., Searsport, Maine 04974
penobscotmarinemuseum.org
207-548-2529 ext. 212 │ libraryresearcher@pmm-maine.org
Copyright Restrictions

The material described herein is the physical property of the Penobscot Marine Museum. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors of the various items, or to their legal representatives, or to the Penobscot Marine Museum. For further information, consult the library staff.

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship or research.” If a user later uses a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if fulfillment of the order is judged to be in violation of copyright law. It is the user’s responsibility to understand the copyright law concerning the use of the historical documents contained in this library.

Copyright © 2020 by Penobscot Marine Museum

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Stephen Phillips Memorial Library at the Penobscot Marine Museum.
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:**

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