

# PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM

Inventory for  
Manuscript Collection

**PMM 9**

**Robert B. Applebee Collection**

**Circa 1945 – 1979**

52 volumes and 3 boxes  
9 linear feet  
Accession No. LB1972.1; LB1980. 220-46,  
.248-55, .257, .281, .286-9, .291-2, .300, and .304-7;  
LB2012.22; LB2013.31; and unaccessioned material

**Stephen Phillips Memorial Library**

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# PMM 9

## Robert B. Applebee Papers

### **Applebee, Robert B., 1885-1979**

Papers, c.1945 -1979

52 volumes plus 3 boxes (9 linear feet)

Customs officer, collector, researcher, and maritime historian.

Research materials, correspondence, scrapbooks, and other material from Robert B. Applebee, a customs official and maritime historian who focused on Maine-built ships. The bulk of the collection consists of unpublished volumes of Applebee's encyclopedic research into ships built or registered in Maine customs districts. Correspondence and personal material are primarily related to Applebee's research and the development of interest in American maritime history in the mid-nineteenth century.

In English

Robert B. Applebee; Gift; 1972; LB1972.1. Mrs. Robert B. Applebee; Gift; 1980; LB1980.220-46, .248-55, .257, .281, .286-9, .291-2, .300, and .304-7, plus unaccessioned material. Sturgis Haskins; Gift; 2012; LB2012.22. Joyce Kinney; Gift; 2013; LB2013.31

This collection is organized into 2 series: Series I. Compiled Research; and Series II. Correspondence and Personal Material.

Finding aid available; folder level control

### **Subject Headings:**

Applebee, Robert B., 1885-1979

Penobscot Marine Museum

Navigation--history

Schooners

Shipbuilding

Ships

U.S. Customs Service

### **Acquisition:**

The bulk collection was donated to the Penobscot Marine Museum by Mrs. Robert B. Applebee shortly after Applebee's death. Some correspondence, mostly related to enquiries through the Penobscot Marine Museum, was donated by Robert B. Applebee in 1972. A small group of Applebee's research notes were added to the collection by Joyce Kinney in 2013, and a postcard addressed to Applebee donated by Sturgis Haskins in 2012.

### **Restrictions**

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

### **Condition:**

Much of the unbound material in this collection is on cheap, acidic paper or carbon copy paper, and therefore fragile. Staples and other metal fasteners are common and require care in handling. Covers on Applebee's scrapbooks and "Maritime Bits and Pieces" are fragile, and the covers on volume 2 of the scrapbook are completely detached.

**Processing Note:**

Applebee's correspondence was organized by two different systems: one, chronological, for general correspondence, much of it related to queries addressed to the Penobscot Marine Museum; and a second, roughly topical and by sender. The former group was given directly to the Museum by Robert B. Applebee in 1972; the latter was likely donated by his widow in 1980. While likely original, the system is not perfect and there may be related correspondence in both groupings.

**Related Materials:**

When Mrs. Applebee donated this collection, she also donated many of Applebee's reference books and his collection of WPA transcripts of customs registers and enrolments. These are available in the reading room in the Phillips Memorial Library. The library also has several thousand photographs collected by Applebee, accession nos. LB1980.41, 220-227, and .302-303.

PMM 13, the US Customhouse collection, contains material likely salvaged by Applebee from several Maine Customhouses, which may also have figured in his research.

Applebee's compilations of information on vessels built in Maine, frequently used for reference, have been photocopied onto acid free paper. They have also been re-typed, with some additions, by Jon Johansen. These typescripts are available in the Library's reading room.

Another collection of Applebee material is at the Peabody Essex Museum, in the Robert B. Applebee collection.

**Historical Note:**

Robert B. Applebee (1885-1979) was a maritime historian and researcher particularly interested in vessels built in Maine. He was born in New Brunswick, Canada, but immigrated with his family to Maine as a child. Applebee served in World War I, then joined the marine department of the U.S. Customs Service. In this capacity, he spent time in all of the Maine customhouses, surveying and compiling their information on vessels in his spare time. He was later transferred to the Washington, D.C. office and retired as the Deputy Collector in Charge.

After retirement, Applebee moved to Searsport, Maine, with his wife Amy Ernestine (Graham) Applebee. Already a well-known maritime historian, he continued to focus on shipbuilding and vessel data, compiling exhaustive lists of vessels built or registered in customs districts up and down the Maine coast, much of it drawn from customs records themselves. He also collected documents, photographs, artifacts, and books related to Maine's maritime history, including an extensive collection of material salvaged from Maine customhouses. He served as a historian for the Penobscot Marine Museum for many years and maintained an active correspondence with other mid-twentieth century maritime historians, entertaining many in his Searsport home.

**Scope and Content:**

This collection contains research materials, correspondence, notes, scrapbooks, and other material from Robert B. Applebee. The bulk of the collection is in Series I, which consists of unpublished volumes of Applebee's meticulous research into vessels built in Maine. These, primarily based on ship registers, enrolments, and other customs documents, are organized by vessel and include descriptive information like builder, dimensions, owners, and captains. Using similar sources, Applebee also created volumes of information on vessels registered in Castine, regardless of where they were built, and Maine-built vessels registered in Massachusetts ports. This series also includes binders of Applebee's research into individual vessels, with photographs, as well as scrapbooks of postcards and clippings that reflect Applebee's ongoing interest in the maritime world.

Series II contains correspondence, research notes, and other personal material from Robert B. Applebee. Most of this is directly related to Applebee's research interests or his work as the historian for the Penobscot Marine Museum. This series also contains scripts for talks on maritime history that Applebee gave to a variety of groups in coastal Maine, and rough research notes that likely developed into the completed works of Series I. Though there is little directly personal material here, this series records Applebee's role in the network of maritime historians, museum professionals, and enthusiasts during a period of burgeoning interest in the American maritime past.

### **Series Outline:**

#### Series I. Compiled Research:

- Vessels built in Maine Customs Districts
- Vessels recorded in Maine and other Customs Districts
- Individual vessel notes and photos

#### Series II. Correspondence and Personal Material:

- Correspondence—by correspondent or topic
- Correspondence—general (by date)
- Research Materials
- Speeches and talks
- Personal material

### **Container List:**

#### Series I: Compiled Research:

Vessels built in Maine, by customs district:

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Volume 1 | Vessels built in Addison, Maine                                       |
| 2        | Vessels built in Belfast and Northport (photocopy)                    |
| 3        | Vessels built in Camden & Rockport                                    |
| 4        | Vessels built in the towns of Cherryfield, Harrington, and Millbridge |
| 5        | Vessels built in Deer Isle  |
| 7        | Vessels built in the Frenchman's Bay District                         |
| 8        | Vessels built in the Kennebunk District                               |
| 9        | Vessels built in Lincolnville   |
| 10       | Vessels built in Nobleboro, Newcastle, Damariscotta and Bristol       |
| 11       | Vessels built in the Passamaquoddy Customs District                   |
| 12       | Vessels built in Penobscot River Towns                                |
| 13       | Vessels built in the Portland & Falmouth Customs District             |
| 14       | 200 Vessels Built in the Portland & Falmouth Customs District         |
| 15       | Vessels built in Rockland   |
| 16       | Vessels built in Saco & Biddeford                                     |

- 17 Vessels built in Thomaston
- 18 Vessels built in Vessels built in Vinalhaven
- 19 Vessels built in Waldoboro
- 20 Vessels built in Warren
- 21 Vessels built in Medford, MA
- 22 Vessels built in St. Andrews, N.B. and St. Stephens, N.B., and Strong's  
Shipyards
- 23 Volume containing:
  - Vessels built in Maine towns as shown by histories, documentation at  
other ports, and from other sources.
  - Vessels built in Medford, MA, 1849-1873
  - Vessels built as shown on sailing ship cards
  - Vessels built in U.S. & under Norwegian flag
  - Vessels built, miscellaneous items.
- 24 Vessels built in Maine towns, miscellaneous, v. 1
- 25 Vessels built in Maine towns, miscellaneous, v. 2

Vessels documented in Maine and other customs districts:

- 26 Vessels documented in the Castine Customs District, "Some Castine Vessels,"  
v. 1, A - Lark
- 27 Vessels documented in the Castine Customs District, "Some Castine Vessels,"  
v. 2, Laura - Z
- 28 Vessels documented in the Penobscot-Castine District
- 29 Vessels documented in the Wiscasset Customs District
- 30 Maine-built vessels documented in Boston, 1789-1795
- 31 Maine-built vessels documented in Boston, 1789-1800, 1841-1850
- 32 Maine-built vessels documented in Newburyport, MA
- 33 Maine-built vessels documented in Newburyport, Salem & Gloucester, MA
- 34 Index of vessels documented in the District of Bath
- 35a GFB Index
- 35b The Fleet of the J.S. Winslow & Company

Vessel research notes, with photographs:

- 36 Records #1-124
  - 37 #125-250
  - 38 #251-374
  - 39 #375-500
  - 40 #501-624
  - 41 #625-750
  - 42 #751-876
  - 43 #877-1002
  - 44 #1003-1126
  - 45 #1127-1206
- Papers stored loose in these volumes (removed to box 3 folder 13)

Scrapbooks:

- 46 Scrapbook, postcards, v. 1
- 47 Scrapbook, postcards, v. 2

- 48 "Maritime Bits and Pieces," v. 1
- 49 "Maritime Bits and Pieces," v. 2
- 50 Scrapbook, news clippings, v. 1 (oversized)
- 51 Scrapbook, news clippings, v. 2 (oversized)

Speeches:

- 52 Speeches by Robert B. Applebee, transcripts, v. 1
- 53 Speeches by Robert B. Applebee, transcripts, v. 2

**Correspondence**

Box	Folder	
1	1	Correspondence (from notebooks): Grace Nash Pierce, Harry D. Hamilton, Horace A. Hilton, James McLeod, and others
	2	Correspondence, John Lyman
	3	Correspondence with Peabody Essex Museum staff: Walter Muir Mitchell, Charles H.P. Copeland, Ernest Stanley Dodge, Marion V. Brewington, and others
	4	Correspondence with Bath Marine Museum (Maine Maritime Museum) staff: Frederick E. Drake, Charles E. Burden, Harold Brown, Nancy C. Brown, and others
	5	Correspondence with Ethel Ritchie; material about William A. Fairburn and <i>Merchant Sail</i>
	6	Miscellaneous correspondence: information on vessels
	7	Miscellaneous correspondence: Canadian museums, Lois C. Lynch, and others
		Correspondence, general:
	8	1953 – 1956
	9	1957
	10	1958
	11	1959
2	12	1960
	1	1961
	2	1962
	3	1963
	4	1964
	5	1965
	6	1966 – 1967
	7	1968 – 1969
	8	1970
9	1971-1972	

**Research notes and materials**

3	1	Research notes and correspondence, Frenchman's Bay
	2	Research notes and material: shipbuilding in Pembroke Oral history with Captain Stephen W. McDonough Map of telegraph lines, Central and South American Telegraph Co.
	3	Research notes and transcripts: history of Franklin, Ellsworth, and Bangor
	4	Compiled notes: shipbuilding and shipping fleets

- 5 Notes on coal barges
- 6 Notes and drafts on sea-going superstitions
- 7 Miscellaneous research notes
- 8 Reports on the U.S. Customs service, several authors
- 9 "An International Community on the St. Croix" by Harold A. Davis, taken from  
*The Maine Bulletin* Second Series no. 64
- 10 "Ship Building in the Setaukets" by William b. Minuse, 1955
- 11 "The Troop Fleet in the Days of Sail," Department of Canadian Hlsotry, 1960  
"Johnny Woodboat: The Sotry go the St. John River Woodboats," by George  
MacBeath, rpt. *American Neptune* 7 no. 1 (January 1957)
- 12 Manuscript on schooner WELCOME RETURN, John H. Wilterding
- 13 Archaeological report on the bark GRIFFON, compliments of Mrs. Walter Remick
- 14 "Viking Ships and Viking Shipyards," talk before the Steamship Society of  
America, speaker unidentified
- 4 1 *Old-Time New England: the Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New  
England Antiquities*, nos. 26, 30, 60, 64, 88 (1921-1937) (in box 4:  
duplicates)

### Speeches and talks

- Vol. 51 Speeches by Robert B. Applebee, transcripts, v. 1 (loose volumes)
- Vol. 52 Speeches by Robert B. Applebee, transcripts, v. 2 (loose volumes)
- 3 15 "Talks and Comments," transcripts, bound
- 16 Talks, transcripts
- 17 "Sailing Ship History," a talk given by Robert B. Applebee for the Searsport  
Masonic Lodge, 1956

### Personal

- 18 Personal material
- 19 Receipts for gifts to the Peabody Essex Museum
- 20 Loose material from vessel image volumes