Inventory for
Manuscript Collection

PMM 13
Maine Customhouse Records
1778 – 1938
Bulk 1870 – 1918

17 linear feet
Accession No. LB1980.79

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Maine Customhouse Records

United States. Customs Service
Records, 1778-1938 (bulk 1830-1918)
17 linear feet
Federal agency charged with regulating shipping, imports, and exports.
Correspondence; vessel documentation; registries and enrollments; customs reports and proposals; account books, receipt stubs, and vouchers; and instructions to collectors in multiple Maine customs districts from the establishment of the US Customs Service to the early twentieth century. The bulk of the records are from the District of Castine. Bath, Belfast, Frenchman's Bay, Machias, and Waldoboro are also significantly represented. This collection documents the development, business, and administrative functions of the US Customs Service, as well as providing detailed lists of merchant and fishing vessels registered in these districts.
In English
Organized in three series: Series I. Castine; Series II. Other Customs Districts; Series III.

Customs Forms and Circulars.
Robert B. Applebee; Gift; 1980; LB1980.79
Finding aid available; folder level control

Subject Headings:
- Customs administration
- Customhouses
- Cod fisheries
- Exports
- Fishing
- Fishing boats
- Imports
- Merchant mariners
- Shipping
- Ships
- U.S. Customs Service

Local Subject Headings:
- Salt trade

Acquisition:
Materials in this collection were collected and donated by Robert B. Applebee.

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

Condition:
Many of the volumes are in poor condition, with broken spines, fragile bindings, and flaking covers and pages. Materials are still legible, but require careful handling.
Related Materials:
More records from the U.S. Customs Service are held by the National Archives and Records Administration in Record Group 36. Some customs records related to Bath are at the Maine Maritime Museum in MS 7, the Robert B. Applebee Papers.
Robert B. Applebee made abstracts of much of the information about individual vessels in this collection and organized it into alphabetical reference books. These are available at the Penobscot Marine Museum in PMM 9.
Applebee also collected personal material from Peter H. Green, a customs collector in Bath, and William Bartlett Smith, a collector in Machias. These are, respectively, cataloged as PMM 103 and PMM 104.

Processing Note:
This finding aid reflects the intellectual arrangement of the collection, organized by customs district and the functions of the customs service. The collection is housed according to the physical size of the document. This often results in box, folder and item numbers that are not sequential: please be specific when requesting materials from this collection.

Historical Note:
The United States Customs Service was formed in 1789 to collect duties on goods imported into the United States. Over time, the scope of the agency expanded to include enforcing laws related to imports and exports; appraising, gauging, and weighing cargoes; registering and licensing ships and other vessels; collecting fees, taxes, and penalties assessed against vessels; and collecting statistics on imports and exports. The Customs Service also handled activities since transferred to other government agencies. These included handling finances and paperwork for the U.S. Revenue Marine (removed from direct supervision in 1871, later transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard); collecting marine hospital dues and enforcing quarantine laws (later transferred to the U.S. Public Health Service); collecting crew and passenger lists for vessels bound on international voyages; acting as the local U.S. Shipping Commissioner where no one had been formally appointed; and, until 1852, administering lighthouses. Particularly relevant in Maine, Customs Collectors also paid cod fishing bounties and oversaw bonded warehouses for salt imported for the fishing industry.

The Customs Service was administered by Collectors of Customs, who were appointed, and deputy collectors. Collectors were compensated by fixed fees on specific services and a percentage of money remitted to the U.S. Treasury. These were retained directly by customs collectors until 1849, when the U.S. Treasury began reimbursing collectors based on the transactions they reported. Collectors were paid on a salary basis for the first time in 1913.

There were fourteen customs districts in the state of Maine: York, Kennebunk, Saco, Portland, Bath, Wiscasset, Waldoboro (which included Rockland and Thomaston), Belfast (which included Camden and Searsport), Bangor, Castine (named the Penobscot District until 1866), Frenchman’s Bay, Machias, Passamaquoddy, and Aroostook. Kittery, Maine, was serviced by the customs district of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. These districts were consolidated in 1913 as part of a larger reorganization of the Customs service, with the new district headquartered in Portland.

Scope and Content:
This collection contains accounts, correspondence, vessel registration and enrollment forms, bonds for warehousing salt, marine hospital dues, and other records from U.S. Customs Districts. All but a few papers are from districts in Maine; the bulk are from the district of Castine. While the collection is organized by customs district, records generally address the topics listed below:
**Vessel Documentation:** Certificates of vessel registrations and enrollments, coasting and fishing licenses, and records of services performed provide a detailed record of most vessels active in the Castine district, from large ships to small fishing- and motorboats. Records often include notes of the vessel’s size, date and place built, captain, and owners. Similar records are also available for the districts of Bath, Belfast, and Waldoboro, though material from these districts is much less complete. Abstracts of vessels documented in the Frenchman’s Bay district in the early twentieth century are also part of this collection. Abstracts and accounts for fees and duties collected provide a less detailed, but broader, record of the vessels and trade conducted in the Castine district.

**Trade:** The bulk of the material related to imports and exports in this collection consists of detailed records about the importation of salt for the fishing industry to Castine during the early twentieth century. There are also abstracts of all imports and exports from the Castine (Penobscot) district in the 1820s and 1830s, and from Waldoboro district in the 1880s and 1890s. Other records include a folder of bonds for cargoes signed during the various embargos leading up to the War of 1812, and a detailed list of a cargo of high-end textiles and domestic goods landed from the wreck of the ship EAGLE, bound from Liverpool to New York, in 1835.

**Fishing:** Records of Maine’s nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fishing fleets can be found in several types of records in this collection. Fishing vessels, both large and small, are well documented in lists of licenses granted for fishing, which include details about the vessel as well as names of the owners and masters. The vessels and individuals involved in early twentieth century fishing industry in Castine and Bucksport are also extensively documented in records of salt imported for use in the fisheries. Thomas M. Nicholson’s Bucksport-based fleet of Grand Banks cod fishing schooners is particularly well represented in these. There are also scattered records of codfish bounties paid to fisherman in the early nineteenth century from multiple Maine customs districts.

**Mariners:** Though captains and shipowners make up the majority of mariners named in this collection, individual sailors are represented in crew lists collected for foreign voyages and in records related to marine hospitals. There are scattered records for marine hospitals from the Bangor, Bath, Belfast, and Castine districts, including, in some cases, the names of individual mariners and the reasons and length of their stays. Crew lists are limited to the Castine district; many of the surviving copies are for fishing trips to the Grand Banks.

**Agency History:** A significant portion of the records in this collection documents the internal function of the U.S. Customs Service. The bulk of these records consist of financial accounts from the Castine district, which document transactions with importers, vessel owners, and the U.S. Treasury, and correspondence addressed to the Castine customhouse from the 1890s through the end of World War I. The latter includes both directives from the Treasury Department and from individual mariners in the district. Circular letters and instructions from the Treasury, received in Bath, comprise some of the earliest records in the collection; Series III contains a more comprehensive collection of these general letters and regulations. Records from Bath and Machias include detailed correspondence from the mid-nineteenth century about issues like appointing new customs officers and constructing a customhouse in Bath, while the Progressive-era reforms of the agency are best documented in Castine.
Series Overview

Series I. Castine
  Vessel Documentation
  Imports, exports, and duties
  Fisheries
  Mariners and Marine Hospitals
  Accounts
  Correspondence
  Staff and Building Operations

Series II. Other Customs Districts
  Bath
  Belfast
  Frenchman’s Bay
  Machias
  Portland
  Waldoboro
  Wiscasset
  York
  Portsmouth, New Hampshire
  Districts outside of Maine

Series III. Circular Letters and Blank Forms
## Box and Folder List:

### Series I. Castine

#### Vessel Documentation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

List of registered sailing vessels documented in the district of Penobscot, 1796-1803 (compiled after 1881)

Receipts, Services Performed for Vessels (admeasurement, enrollment, licensing, certificates, and endorsements) at the following ports:

- **Brooklin, 1907-1910**
- **Bucksport, March 1906 – May 1907**
- **Bucksport, May 1907 – March 1909**
- **Bucksport, March – December 1909**
- **Bucksport, March 1910 – October 1911**
- **Bucksport, October 1911 – May 1913**
- **Castine, September 1908 – March 1909**
- **Castine, March – October 1909**
- **Castine, October 1909 – March 1910**
- **Castine, April – August 1910**
- **Castine, July 1910 – January 1911**
- **Castine, January – July 1911**
- **Castine, July – December 1911**
- **Castine, December 1911 – May 1912**
- **Castine, May – November 1912**
- **Castine, November 1912 – March 1913**

**OS1**

Quarterly statements of services performed for vessels, 1869-1871 and 1907-1912

**OS4**

- **1a** Annual Alphabetical List, sail-powered fishing vessels, 1899
- **1b** Annual Alphabetical List, sail-powered freight vessels, 1899
- **1c** Annual Alphabetical List, steam-powered vessels, 1899

### Vessels Over 20 Tons

- **MS 71** Abstract of Registers, Enrollments, and Licenses Issued and Surrendered, 1889-1898
- **MS 75** Abstract of Registers, Enrollments, and Licenses Issued and Surrendered, 1897-1910
- **MS 111** Abstract of Registers, Enrollments, and Licenses Issued and Surrendered, Brooklin, 1901-1902 (includes vessels under 20 tons)
- **MS 99** Quarterly Abstracts of registration, enrollments, and licenses, 1872-1889
- **MS 70** Abstract of permanent and temporary registers issued and surrendered, 1871-1888
MS 96  Bonds for vessel registry, Bucksport, 1875-1890
MS 97  Bonds for vessel registry, Castine, 1870-1875
MS 100 Bonds and oaths for vessel registry, Castine, 1875-1897

MS 271 Abstract of Permanent Enrollments Issued and Surrendered, District of Penobscot, 1817-1824
MS 77  Abstract of Permanent and Temporary Enrollments Issued and Surrendered, 1870-1889
Box 1 1 List of enrolled vessels, quarter ending March 31, 1900 (loose)
MS 82  Bonds and oaths for vessel enrollments, Bucksport, 1875-1882
MS 87  Bonds and oaths for vessel enrollments, Bucksport, 1882-1890
MS 86  Bonds and oaths for vessel enrollments, Bucksport, 1890-1897
MS 81  Bonds and oaths for vessel enrollments, Castine, 1875-1882
MS 80  Bonds and oaths for vessel enrollments, Castine, 1882-1892
MS 91  Oaths for vessel enrollments, 1897-1908
MS 92  Oaths for vessel enrollments, 1909-1918
MS 106 Bonds and oaths for registry and enrollments, Castine, 1874-1882 (bound miscellaneous documents)

MS 232  Coasting licenses issued, District of Penobscot, 1793-1795
MS 231  Coasting and fishing licenses issued, District of Penobscot, March – October 1852
MS 85   Coasting licenses issued at Castine, 1868-1870
MS 79   Abstract of coating licenses issued and surrendered, 1870-1889
MS 89   Master’s oaths for coating licenses issued at Bucksport, 1898-1909
MS 95   Master’s oaths for coating licenses issued at Bucksport, 1909-1913
MS 90   Master’s oaths for coating licenses issued at Castine, 1897-1908
MS 78   Abstract of fishing licenses issued and surrendered, 1870-1879

MS 107  Record of Endorsements issued 1875-1914
MS 296  Bills of sale for enrolled vessels, 1853-1855
MS 72   Bills of sale for enrolled vessels, 1860-1862
MS 73   Bills of Sale for Enrolled Vessels, 1863-1865
MS 74   Bills of Sale for Enrolled Vessels, 1869-1871
MS 380  Abstracts of vessel sales, 1850-1859
MS 399  Abstracts of vessel sales, 1859-1882

MS 195  Wreck Reports, vessels registered in Castine, 1873-1884
MS 249  Wreck Reports, vessels registered in Castine, 1884-1900

**Vessels Under 20 Tons**
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MS 294  Abstract of fishing and coating licenses issued and surrendered, vessels under 20 tons, 1870-1889
MS 84  Oaths for the renewal of licenses, coasting and fishing, Brooklin, 1907-1910
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MS 101 Oaths for licenses, coasting and fishing, Castine, 1895-1897
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MS 76  Bills of Sale for Vessels Under 20 Tons, 1869-1880
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  5  Motorboat licenses, fines and penalties, Deer Isle, 1910-1911
  6  Motorboat licenses, fines and penalties, Swan’s Island, 1910-1912, folder 1
  7  Motorboat licenses, fines and penalties, Swan’s Island, 1910-1912, folder 2
  8  Motorboat licenses, fines and penalties, out-of-state owners, 1910
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 10  Assessment of motor boats, Steamboat Inspection Service, Bangor, 1907

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18 Estimates for customhouse supplies and services, 1903-1907
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12 Department of Commerce, “Schedule B: Classification of Commodities,” June 9, 1915
13 Treasury Department, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances,” 1915
13 Treasury Department, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances,” 1917
MS 242 U.S. Customs Service, Circular letters from the Treasury Department (bound), 1793-1837
MS 113 U.S. Customs Service, Index to Laws Relating to the Treasury Department (Washington: GPO, 1876)
14 U.S. Customs Service, Circular: H.R. 250, “A Bill Further to establish the compensation of the officers employed in the collection so duties on imports and tonnage,” February 12, 1821
16 U.S. Customs Service, miscellaneous circulars, 1890-1957
MS 234 U.S. Customs Service, Bonds on Withdrawal of Materials for Construction or Repair of Vessels (blank)
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