A guide to the Pacific Queen (built 1886; ship, 3m) logbooks and Star of Alaska (built 1886; ship, 3m) documents, 1908-1950

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Abstract: Pacific Queen (built 1886; ship, 3m) logbooks and Star of Alaska (built 1886; ship, 3m) documents includes several donations from Rose Kissinger, former owner of the PACIFIC QUEEN. The PACIFIC QUEEN items are three logbooks including one visitors logbook. The STAR OF ALASKA items are one pilot house logbook dated 1926 to 1928 and nine folders of documents dating from 1908 to 1933. Kissinger owned the PACIFIC QUEEN from 1933 to 1954. The collection is available for research use without restriction.
Physical Location: San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department
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Acquisition Information
SAFR-00001
In 1988, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park acquired this collection from Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
Historical or Biographical Note
The original name of the PACIFIC QUEEN was the BALCLUTHA. Built in 1886 in Glasgow, Scotland, the BALCLUTHA was one of hundreds of ships that carried grain from California's San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys to Europe. The ship also carried European goods, such as pig iron and scotch whiskey, to San Francisco. In the mid-1890s, it traveled around the world, bringing goods from other ports, such as wool from New Zealand, back to England.
In 1899 the vessel was transferred to the Hawaiian registry and BALCLUTHA became part of the prosperous Pacific Coast lumber trade, sailing north to Puget Sound, then onto Australia. It was the last ship to fly the flag of the Hawaiian Kingdom.
In 1901, a special act of Congress admitted BALCLUTHA to the American registry so it could engage in trade between American ports. Subsequently, the Alaska Packers Association, a San Francisco-based firm that harvested and canned salmon, chartered the BALCLUTHA to carry supplies and men north to Alaska. After the ship ran aground in 1904, the Packers Association purchased the ship for $500. The firm did extensive repairs and renamed the vessel STAR OF ALASKA. It regularly carried supplies and cannery workers to Alaska in the spring and returned to San Francisco with cases of canned salmon in September. In 1930, STAR OF ALASKA was the only sailing ship the Packers Association sent to the salmon fishing fields (they once had a fleet of 35). The firm retired the vessel when it returned in September. Attracted by the knowledge that genuine full-rigged sailing ships were fast becoming obsolete, Frank and Rose Kissinger purchased the STAR from the Packers Association in 1933 for $5,000 and renamed it the PACIFIC QUEEN. The couple, who were married in 1932, lived on board, making it their home as well as their livelihood. They exhibited it as a "pirate ship" up and down the West Coast and leased it for use in films, the most famous being Mutiny on the Bounty. The International Exposition at Treasure Island in 1939 proved especially lucrative for the Kissingers', as the ship earned enough for them to pay off their debts. However, during World War II, with pier space at San Francisco's Embarcadero dedicated to the war effort, the ship was relegated to a mud flat in Sausalito. There, the PACIFIC QUEEN deteriorated and was nearly reduced to scrap metal for the war effort. After the war ended, the Kissingers were denied a berth on the Embarcadero, so they had the ship towed to Long Beach where they displayed her as the last of a dying breed of sailing ships. In the early fifties, they moved the ship back north, to Sausalito, and began restoring it to its former glory. Frank Kissinger died of a heart attack while working on the ship in November 1952. He left the PACIFIC QUEEN to Rose, who was one of the few women sailing ship masters licensed in the U.S. Kissinger, who was born around 1902 on a small farm in Michigan, taught navigation to Navy personnel during World War II and to Merchant Marines preparing for exams to earn their mates' or masters' papers. She developed a celestial navigation aid, which she patented in 1944, and which the Navy adopted in its instruction courses. In 1954, the San Francisco Maritime Museum bought the ship from Rose Kissinger for $25,000. With help from the local community, which donated labor, materials and money, the museum restored the vessel, rechristened her BALCLUTHA and put her on public display. BALCLUTHA became part of the National Park Service in 1978 and, in 1985, it was designated a National Historic Landmark. The vessel is truly a national treasure. The BALCLUTHA was one of the last deep-water, full rigged sailing ships to fly the American flag, and the last square rigger of the hundreds that called San Francisco its home port. Only five or six remain in the world, and most of those are floating museums in European ports. (taken, primarily, from "Balclutha History," http://www.nps.gov/safr/historyculture/balclutha-history.htm and scrapbook articles) Collection Scope and Content Pacific Queen (built 1886; ship, 3m) logbooks and Star of Alaska (built 1886; ship, 3m) documents includes several donations from Rose Kissinger, former owner of the PACIFIC QUEEN. The PACIFIC QUEEN items are three logbooks including one visitors logbook. The STAR OF ALASKA items are one pilot house logbook dated 1926 to 1928 and nine folders of documents dating from 1908 to 1933. Kissinger owned the PACIFIC QUEEN from 1933 to 1954. The collection is available for research use without restriction. Collection Arrangement Four volumes and nine folders of documents. Subjects and Indexing Terms Pacific Queen (built 1886; ship, 3m) Star of Alaska (built 1886; ship, 3m) Balclutha (built 1886; ship, 3m) Logbooks