A guide to the Ships' papers, 1851-1893

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A Guide to the Ships' papers

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Abstract: This collection of Ships' papers (SAFR 13558, HDC 13) consists of various documents that date from 1851 to 1893.
Physical Location: San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department
Language(s): In English.

Access
This collection is open for use unless otherwise noted.

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Preferred Citation
[Item description], [Location within collection organization identified by Collection Number/Series Number/File Unit Number/Item Number], HDC0013 (SAFR 13558), Ships' papers, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Acquisition Information
SAFR-00001

This collection was transferred from the Golden Gate National Recreation Area museum collection to the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park museum collection.

Historical or Biographical Note

Vessel Histories

Vessel histories follow for these vessels: the AMERICA, a steamship built in 1854; the C.D. BRYANT, a wooden bark built in 1878; the schooner DASHAWAY, built in 1859; the FAVORITA, a clipper ship, built in 1862; the ORIENTAL, a bark built in 1848; the NEVADA, a wood hulled steamship built in 1865; one of the brigs named ORIENTAL; the PARAGON, a British ship built in 1837; the clipper ship TAM O'SHANTER, built in 1875; and the downeaster UNDAUNTED built in 1869.

The AMERICA was a steamship built in 1854 by Edwards in Niagara, Ontario. The ship was rated at 1683 tons and measured 286' x 38' x 14'. It was originally built for work on the Great Lakes. In 1858, the AMERICA was chartered by the US Government War Office to support the Paraguay Expedition. It was later used for operations in Mexico. By 1862, she was back in commercial service and transferred to the Pacific, originally with Peoples Line. Later work was under Central American Transit and finally, Pacific Mail. The ship carried passengers between California and central America for overland transport and relay to New York. On April 3, 1869, the AMERICA caught fired and burned in San Juan del Sud, Nicaragua. The collection contains a blank ticket issued by C.A. Transit for passage from San Francisco to New York, via Nicaragua, from 1866. Details of this ship's history are found in Early American Steamers, Vol. I by E. Heyl.
The C.D. BRYANT was a wooden bark built in 1878 in Searsport, Maine, in the style known as a downeaster. The bark was built by Josiah Dutch, and had a capacity of 929 tons. After launching, the C.D. BRYANT sailed immediately for the west coast, from where it traded for many years. The C.D. BRYANT was based out of San Francisco. It was sold to E.E. Kentfield of San Francisco in 1886; and to Captain Alex Woodside in 1916. The ship was accidentally set on fire in Honolulu in July, 1901, by crew members who broke into the whiskey stores; and was only saved from being a total loss by assistance from the tug FEARLESS and the Honolulu fire department. The last recorded voyage of the C.D. BRYANT began in January, 1920, from San Francisco to Suva. From there, the ship went to Newcastle, Australia, and carried coal to Iquique. On October 7, 1920, she pulled into Callao "leaking badly." The last intelligence on the ship was that she was laid up at Port of Spain, in 1922.

The collection contains a class certificate issued in 1893.

There were at least three ships with the name DASHAWAY trading around the year 1860. The papers in these records relate to the schooner DASHAWAY, built in 1859. Its hull was laid in Redwood City, California, and the ship was brought to San Francisco to be rigged. The ship was rated at 226 tons, made of oak, and measuring 100 feet in length. It was one of two ships built that year in Redwood City, the other ship was the HARWIEF, of the same dimensions. The ship was owned by R. Kentfield of San Francisco, and its first master was Captain Woodley. The DASHAWAY traded up and down the coast from San Francisco, carrying wood and agricultural products. In December 1864, enroute from Eureka to San Francisco, the ship was wrecked at Big Flat, 22 miles south of Cape Mendocino. The wreck was found on January 3d, 1865. No bodies were found, those lost included Captain Keisey, his wife and child, another couple, and 9 crewmembers. Collection contains an 1863 newspaper clipping from Alta California, advertising a sailing from San Francisco to Humbolt.

The FAVORITA was a clipper ship, built in 1862 in Mystic, CT. The ship's first owner was J.A. McGaw. The FAVORITA was rated at 1231 tons, and dimensions were 188' x 37' x 24'. The ship was built to trade between its home port of New York, San Francisco, and the United Kingdom. She was sold in 1874 to Pray & Dickens, also of New York, and to German owners Schilling & Meinke in 1879. The FAVORITA continued to trade until 1891, when it was reported to be hulked in East Africa. The collection contains a bill of lading for 9 boxes of tacks, shipped from New York to San Francisco in 1870.

The LINDA was a common name and numerous ships called LINDA existed in the 1850s. The collection contains a customs entry from 1851, at the port of San Francisco, for a shipment of silk and an incense burner from Canton. The most likely match for this ship is of a bark built in Philadelphia in 1848. This was a ship of 242 tons, owned by W. Raw & Co., home port Whitby. The NEVADA carried passengers between California and Central America for overland transport and relay to New York. The ship was built by Jeremiah Simonsen in New York in 1865. It was a wood hulled steamship of 2145 gross tons; measuring 286' x 41' x 26'. The ship was first named PAOU SHAN and was intended for the China trade. It was renamed the NEVADA in 1866, when purchased by William Webb, who deployed it in his North American Steamship Company. The operating line went through several name changes, including California, New Zealand and Australia Steamship Co., and later Pacific Mail Steamship Co. In the 1870s, the NEVADA was reconditioned and sold to Japanese owners (the predecessors of the modern NYK Line.) It operated between Japan and Shanghai. It was eventually scrapped sometime between 1885 and 1890. The collection contains a blank ticket (no passenger name) issued by Opposition Line for passage from San Francisco to New York, via Panama, from 1866.

Details of this ship's history are found in Early American Steamers, Vol VI by E. Heyl.

The ORIENTAL was a brig of 140 tons capacity. In 1849, it made a voyage from East Machias, Maine to San Francisco. The ship carried 60,000 feet of lumber, other building materials, a crew of 12, and 11 passengers for the gold fields in California. Its Captain was W. C. Talbot. The ship departed on September 15, 1849, and arrived on March 4, 1850; a passage of 148 days. There is a detailed account of the voyage, based on ship logs and a journal kept by one of the passengers, and recounted in the book Time, Tide and Timber. The arrival of the vessel and the sale of the lumber was the start of the major lumber and agricultural products trade that was to dominate the San Francisco market for the next 50 years.

The FEARLESS was a British ship built in 1837 in Liverpool, owners were Clint & Co of that city. The FEARLESS was mentioned in the San Francisco Daily Herald on December 30, 1854. The last reference to the FEARLESS in Lloyd's register was in 1879. The collection contains a receipt issued on July 12, 1851 by the US Consul in the Phillippines to the master John Payne, of the FEARLESS and the Honolulu fire department. The last recorded voyage of the C.D. BRYANT began in January, 1920, from San Francisco to Suva. From there, the ship went to Newcastle, Australia, and carried coal to Iquique. On October 7, 1920, she pulled into Callao "leaking badly." The last intelligence on the ship was that she was laid up at Port of Spain, in 1922.

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The collection contains a class certificate issued in 1893.
The name UNDAUNTED has been used many times for both American and British vessels. The downeaster UNDAUNTED was built in 1869 in Bath, Maine, in the yard of E.A. Sewall. The ship was rated at 1764 tons, and had dimensions of 207' x 41' x 27'. It was owned originally by Prescott & Chapin, and kept its home port as Bath for many years. The UNDAUNTED traded between New York, Boston, San Francisco and the UK. After a long career, like many of the clipper ships the UNDAUNTED was eventually dismasted and was converted to a barge in 1903. Its final demise came in December 1913, when it foundered off Fork River, New Jersey. The collection contains a bill of lading issued in 1873 for a shipment of brimstone, whiting and potash from New York to San Francisco.

Collection Scope and Content

This collection of Ships' papers (SAFR 13558, HDC 13) consists of various documents that date from 1851 to 1893.

Types of documents include a bill of lading, a certificate of classification, consul documents, receipts and blank tickets. Vessels that are named on the documents are AMERICA (built 1854; passenger vessel), C.O. BRYANT (built 1878; bark), DASHAWAY (built 1893; schooner), FAVORITA (built 1862; ship), LINDA (built 1848; bark), NEVADA (built 1865; passenger vessel), ORIENTAL (brig), PARAGON (built 1837; ship), TAM O'SHANTER (built 1875; ship) and UNDAUNTED (built 1869; ship). The collection is processed to the collection level and is available for research use without restrictions.

Collection Arrangement

Ten items arranged in one folder.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Ships' papers

Bills of lading

Certificates