A guide to the Alaska Packers Association Logbooks, 1876-1945

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A Guide to the Alaska Packers Association Logbooks

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Abstract: The Alaska Packers Association Logbooks (HDC 115, SAFR 14033) also includes miscellaneous papers including memoranda to ship captains, position reports, rules and procedures. The logbooks date from a voyage made by the SANTA CLARA (ship) in 1876 to one made by the BERING (freighter) in 1945. The collection is available for research use without restriction.
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Historical or Biographical Note
The Alaska Packers Association (APA) began with a prospecting mission by the schooner NEPTUNE to Bristol Bay in 1883. The Bering Sea's first modern cannery was established near Nushagak by the then Arctic Packing Company. On September 2, 1891 a meeting was held of several Alaska independent canners and the concept of an industrial association was approved. Incorporation of this association came on January 13, 1892. That year, 15 vessels were chartered for use. The next year, on February 9, 1893, the association reincorporated under the formal name of Alaska Packers Association, with the main office on Market Street, in San Francisco, California. Revenues from the sale of company stock were used to buy 28 canneries, 19 fishing stations, 19 steamers, 15 launches and hundreds of acres of land in Alaska.
The vessels were put to sea each Spring, sailing from San Francisco for the Pacific Ocean. Sailing vessels took about one month to arrive at the salmon fishing grounds, while steamers could speed to the fisheries in nine days. Summers were spent going back and forth from fishing grounds to canneries. The fleet returned to San Francisco in the Fall.
In the 1960s, APA moved their central office to Blaine, Washington, on Puget Sound, after having been sold to the Del Monte Corporation. [Source: Alaska Department of Education, Division of State Libraries and Museums. A Preliminary Inventory of the Alaska Packers Association Record Series on Microfiche].

**Collection Scope and Content**

The Alaska Packers Association Logbooks (HDC 115, SAFR 14033) also includes miscellaneous papers including memoranda to ship captains, position reports, rules and procedures. The logbooks date from a voyage made by the SANTA CLARA (ship) in 1876 to one made by the BERING (freighter) in 1945. The collection is available for research use without restriction.

The following kinds of information can be found in each type of logbook: (1) bridge log: distance, course, winds, force, weather, barometer, air, water, seas, clouds; (2) chief officer's log: weather, destinations, time, compass readings; (3) engine room/engineer's log: steam pressure, revolutions, temperatures, oil and fuel meters, some tell engineer on watch; (4) pilot house log: weather, destinations, time, compass readings; and (5) ship's log: time, course, winds, leeway, distance, latitude and longitude.

Each logbook has a slightly different style of writing and some record more information than others. Typical comments were about other vessels, condition of seas, weather, mention of brands of salmon loaded, drunkenness, and overtime. Less typical comments are about passengers on board, stowaways, volcanic ash in the air and water, sail handling, being icebound in Alaskan rivers, death at sea, fights, and relations with native peoples. Occasionally, there was an unusual event that merited comment. For example, in volume 31 it is mentioned that the Japanese jammed the radios; volume 56 discusses how the ARTIC towed the STAR OF ALASKA from San Francisco to Chignik; volume 197 discusses how the KVICHAK struck the ALMA (scow schooner) and turned her bottom up.

While in Alaska, other activities than fishing sometimes took place such as painting the vessels and minor repairs, going out to look or late vessels (the STAR OF FALKLAND was rescued on 5/23/1928, volume 31). Vessels, such as the ALITAK in volume 7 were sometimes left in Alaska for winter mooring.

Vessels were occasionally in drydock in San Francisco or Puget Sound, during which time not all logs would be kept. A few ships were in parades, like the Golden Gate Bridge Parade on 11/12/1936 mentioned in volumes 94 and 119.

Logbooks that predate APA ownership are for voyages to various places such as Hawaii, the Orient, and South America. Most are freighters, except for the passenger vessels LURLINE, MATSONIA and the PRESIDENT. Events that occurred during some of these trips are: the ABBY PALMER was in San Francisco during the 1906 earthquake and fire, at which time government officials requisitioned provisions and sails (volume 313, 4/22-23/1906). Volume 326 recounts how crew members of the ASTRAL went to the American Counsel in Kobe, Japan to complain of their poor treatment and were brought back to the vessel by police. Volumes 337 to 342 recounts incidents between 1943 and 1945, when the BERING was fired upon by Japanese aircraft. Volume 500 mentions the Krakatoa Island volcano (9/18/1883).

Please note that a detailed finding aid is available which includes an arrangement list, a folder number index, an index of previous names of APA vessels, a personal name index and an added entries index. The arrangement list has box and folder numbers, vessel name, logbook type and dates. The folder number index indicates the box number containing each folder. The personal name index is an alphabetical listing of surnames with volumes listed where names occur. The added entries index is an alphabetical listing of subjects, vessel names, corporate names, geographic names and document types with volumes listed where the entries occur. For access to this finding aid, please contact the Reference staff at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

**Collection Arrangement**

The logbooks are arranged alphabetically by vessel name within each series: Series 1, files 1 through 310, are from APA vessels. Series 2, files 311 through 515, are logbooks of vessels acquired by APA and are listed alphabetically by their name prior to APA ownership. This second set of logbooks are for voyages which predate APA ownership and the assumption is that these logbooks were acquired by APA at the same time the vessels were acquired. Some vessels have logbooks falling into both categories; for example, the BERING (freighter) and the BOHEMIA (ship).

For each vessel, the logbooks are arranged by type including bridge logs, chief officer's log, engine room/engineer's log, pilot house log and ship logs. Then within each type of logbook, volumes are arranged chronologically.