A guide to the John W. Dickie & Son records, 1900-1910

Processed by: Historic Documents Department Staff (Bailey), 2013.
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123
Phone: 415-561-7030
Fax: 415-556-3540
SAFR_Historic_Documents@nps.gov
URL: http://www.nps.gov/safr
2013
A Guide to the John W. Dickie & Son records

HDC0226

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service

2013, National Park Service

Title: John W. Dickie & Son records
Date: 1900-1910
Identifier/Call Number: HDC0226 (SAFR 16758)
Creator: Unknown
Physical Description: 15 items.
Repository: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123
Abstract: The John W. Dickie & Son records (SAFR 16758, HDC 226) consist primarily of correspondence and financial materials for the period following the San Francisco earthquake and fire, from 1906-1910. The collection is available for use without restriction.
Physical Location: San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department
Language(s): In English.
Access
This collection is open for use unless otherwise noted.
Publication and Use Rights
Some material may be copyrighted or restricted. It is the researcher's obligation to determine and satisfy copyright or other case restrictions when publishing or otherwise distributing materials found in the collections.
Processing Note
The descriptions in this collection guide were compiled using the best available sources of information. Such sources include the creator's annotations or descriptions, collection accession files, primary and secondary source material and subject matter experts. While every effort was made to provide accurate information, in the event that you find any errors in this guide please contact the reference staff in order for us to evaluate and make corrections to this guide.
Please cite the title and collection number in any correspondence with our staff.
Preferred Citation
[Item description], [Location within collection organization identified by Collection Number/Series Number/File Unit Number/Item Number], HDC0226 (SAFR 16758), John W. Dickie & Son records, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Acquisition Information
SAFR-00001
This collection was transferred from Golden Gate National Recreation Area to San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.
Historical or Biographical Note
John Watson Dickie was born to William and Jane Watson Dickie on April 17, 1842 in Dundee, Scotland. His father, William Dickie was a third generation shipbuilder and worked in the shipyards of Tayport, Scotland. John W. Dickie arrived in San Francisco from Tayport in 1870 with his parents, brother James S. and sister Ellen. His other brother, George W., preceded the family to San Francisco by one year. John Watson Dickie became a naturalized citizen of the United States on August 18, 1898.
John W. Dickie and his brother James S. founded the Dickie Brothers Shipyard in San Francisco in 1871. A year later on August 9, 1872, he married Jane Adamson. In 1877, the brothers began listing themselves as naval architects in the San Francisco City Directories. The shipyard flourished, and they built more than forty vessels, including the revenue cutter OLIVER WOLCOTT; BOLIVAR; steam schooners BONITA, IVALANI, CRECENT CITY; and the MEXICO, the largest wooden passenger ship built on the Pacific Coast at that time.
In 1881, they were asked to make repairs on the Mexican Gunboat DEMOCRATA, which was in the yard of the Union Iron Works next door. Determining that it would not be economical to repair the vessel, they were commissioned to build a new gunboat for the Mexican government that would bear the same name; they subsequently began construction. Unfortunately, the Mexican government did not honor the $350,000 contract and the firm was forced into bankruptcy. Ironically, the two Dickie brothers had not yet become naturalized citizens, as they were waiting to become financially stable before applying for citizenship; however, because they were not citizens of the United States, the U.S. government would not help them press their claim against Mexico.

Following the dissolution of the firm, which continued to be listed in the San Francisco City Directory until 1893, John W. Dickie worked independently as a shipbuilder in 1894, and was employed as a Superintendent at the Fulton Engineering and Shipbuilding Works between 1895 and 1899. He continued to maintain his own yard next to the Fulton yard. Between 1901 and 1915, he was involved in the firm John W. Dickie and Son. The son was David A. Dickie.

Most of Dickie's drawings, account records, and other office files were lost in the 1906 earthquake and fire. During the period between 1906-1907, John W. developed a lumber mill and shipyard in Raymond, Washington, on the Wallapa River. He felt that "We have a good thing, not so much in the shipbuilding as the mill part of it."

In a 1908 letter written to David W. Dickie (John W.'s nephew), by his father James S. Dickie, John W.'s brother and former business partner expresses concern over the future of the shipbuilding industry: "Many of the shipbuilders are in trouble, and I am sorry for poor John Dickie. I suppose he will be totally cleaned out which at his time of life is to [sic] bad."

Fortunately for John W., his brother's concerns did not manifest. [The quote can be found in HDC 128, folder 172.]

John W. Dickie married Jane Adamson on August 2, 1880 in San Francisco. They had eleven children, six of whom died within twenty-four hours of their birth. Five lived and of these, four survived into adulthood. The five surviving children of John W. and Jane Adamson Dickie were: William (b. 14 August 1876 -29 September 1882); John Adamson (b. 14 September 1877 - ); David Adamson (15 February 1880 - July 1968); Jane Dickie Hollingshead (b. 23 September 1882 - ); and Anna Margaret Dickie Miracle (b. 6 August 1885 - ). John W. Dickie passed away in August of 1927 at the age of 85.

David Adamson Dickie was born on February 2, 1880 [or February 15, 1800, above and per SSDI] in San Francisco to shipbuilder John Watson and Jane Adamson Dickie. He and his wife, Muriel, had two children, David J. and Gertrude. David A. began his career as a fourth generation of shipbuilders as a draughtsman for his father's firm, John W. Dickie, which became John W. Dickie & Son by 1907.

In 1915, David A. was working as assistant secretary and auditor for the Western States Life Insurance Company and was Secretary-Treasurer for this same company from 1928 to 1931. He probably died in July of 1968 at the age of 88.

**Collection Scope and Content**

The John W. Dickie & Son records (SAFR 16758, HDC 226) consist primarily of correspondence and financial materials for the period following the San Francisco earthquake and fire, from 1906-1910. The collection is available for use without restriction.

Folder 1 contains three items including some charred remains of an envelope labeled "specs that came through the 1906 fire in S.F.,” and two items relating to wages for shipyard workers.

Folder 2 contains John W. Dickie’s sketchbook of details for projects, primarily ink drawings and measurements. There is a 16 page alphabetical index of items for the 44 page volume. Some of the projects and clients included are: CAZADERO, for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company; NUSHAKAK and THETIS; and work for Sudden & Christiansen.

Folder 3 contains a letter copybook of business correspondences, inquires about projects to and from John W. Dickie, stock trading, subcontracts, estimates and price quotes, billing, and discussion of the development of the Raymond, Washington mill and shipyard. Some of the letters are copies and others are original letterhead tipped in. In one letter he sends his son and partner, David A., to Washington State to look for land suitable for a shipyard (pages 51, 54). Other interesting references are to a sailors strike (p. 16), labor and shipyard wages (pp. 15, 60-66, 71), damage caused by the 1906 earthquake and fire to vessels under construction (pp. 14-15), and to his office records (pp. 25, 37).

Folders 4 through 8 contain account ledgers. Folder 4 consists primarily of bills with many of the actual bills glued into the volume. The volume in folder 6 is a record of accounts payable, while the one in folder 8 consist primarily of invoices.

**Collection Arrangement**

This collection is arranged into eight folders.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

- Barges
- Dredges
- Dry Docks
Ferries
Lumber trade
Marine accidents
 Strikes and lockouts
Schooners
Shipbuilding
Steam schooners
Tugboats
Alaska Packers Association
Cazadero (built 1903; sidewheel ferry steamer)
Nushagak (built 1904; steam schooner)
Pacific Mail Steamship Company
Union Iron Works Co.