A Guide to the Elisha Loomis journal

HDC0042

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service

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Title: Elisha Loomis journal
Date: 1824-1915
Identifier/Call Number: HDC0042 (SAFR 17612)
Creator: Loomis, Elisha
Physical Description: 9 items.
Repository: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123

Abstract: The Elisha Loomis papers (SAFR 17612, HDC 42) comprises a journal kept by missionary and printer, Elisha Loomis, documenting the time he spent on Oahu in West Hawaii from May 17, 1824 to January 27, 1826, as transcribed by Dr. W.D. Westervelt. The pages of the journal number to 101. The original manuscript is held by the University of Hawaii Library. The collection is open and available for use.

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], HDC0042 (SAFR 17612), Elisha Loomis journal, 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
Loomis lived from 1799 -1836, and had the various vocations of missionary, printer, linguist and educator. The journal kept by Loomis dates from 1824 to 1826 while he was posted on Oahu as a Congregational missionary. He did important work in putting the Hawaiian language into written form, and he created and printed dictionaries, hymnals and spelling books. He taught English to native Hawaiians and worked to convert them to Christianity. He returned to the mainland in 1827.

USS Flagship NEW YORK, armored cruiser, keel laid in 1890, launched in 1891 by William Cramp & Sons of Philadelphia. The ship displaced 8150 tons, and dimensions 384 x 65 x 23. Served initially in the Caribbean, and was the flagship of Admiral Simpson during the Spanish American war in 1898. The USS NEW YORK had a long and active service around the world. The ship was renamed the SARATOGA, and was in service in the Far East, and renamed again as the ROCHESTER, as such serving as an escort vessel during WWI. It was finally decommissioned in 1932 and remained at Olongapo (Subic) in the Philippines for the following 9 years. In December 1941, the ship was scuttled to prevent it from falling into Japanese hands.
USS PADUCAH, gunboat launched in 1904 by Charles L Seabury Company of Morris Heights, New York. Displacement 1,084 tons, measuring 200 x 35 x 13. Originally the PADUCAH was based in the Caribbean. During WWI the gunboat was moved to Gibraltar and served as a convoy escort. It returned to the United States at Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1919, and was decommissioned. The PADUCAH then had a new life serving as a gunnery training ship in Duluth, Minnesota, and later in Chesapeake Bay during WWII. The vessel was decommissioned in 1946 and sold to a private owner in Miami.

SMS Dresden, German small battle cruiser launched in 1909, built by Blohm & Voss, near Hamburg. Displacement 3600 tons, measuring 395 x 43 x 18.

Collection Scope and Content
The Elisha Loomis papers (SAFR 17612, HDC 42) comprises a journal kept by missionary and printer, Elisha Loomis, documenting the time he spent on Oahu in West Hawaii from May 17, 1824 to January 27, 1826, as transcribed by Dr. W.D. Westervelt. The pages of the journal number to 101. The original manuscript is held by the University of Hawaii Library. The collection is open and available for use.

The journal gives a very good picture of life in the islands at this time, both of native practices and of the experience of Americans and Europeans. Much of the entries during 1826 concern the hostilities between the crews of visiting ships and the missionary community. The missionaries had convinced native leaders that prostitution was sinful, and the native chiefs therefore declared the practice to be taboo. Crews of visiting ships arrived with much different expectations, to the point of threatening to kill the missionaries if they did not reverse the ban.

Aside from this late unpleasantness, life for westerners was very tied to the coming and going of ships, and Honolulu (spelled Honoruru in the journals) seems to have been a busy port, even in these early years, with vessels arriving from the east and west coasts of America, from Europe, and from Canton. Loomis regularly mentions the arrival and departure of vessels that would bring news and supplies.

A list of the ships mentioned follows, with the name of the captain, if given, following in parentheses.

Tarquin (Bunker)
Brig Tamehameha
Sultan
Octavia (Blanchard)
Schooner Washington
Boston
Lascar
Mentor
Thaddeus
Thomas (Coffin)
Russian Discover ship Enterprise (Kotzebue)
Brig Becket
Ship Almira
Hermaphrodite Schooner Convoy (McNeil)
Griffin Pierce
Factor
Royal George (Barney)
Rover
Bounty
Schooner Aster
Blond (Lord Byron)
Schooner Adonis (Coffin)
Parthian
Schooner Tartar (Morrill)
Phoenix (Stetson)
Deliverance
Equator
Dauphin
English ship Fawn
English ship Daniel (Buckle)
US Navy Schooner Dolphin (Percival)
America (Eldridge)
Aurora
Waverly
Harbinger

Unrelated to the journal are bulletins from the U.S. flagship NEW YORK 1898 and two letters. The bulletins report order of battles, arrangements of landing and daily highlights from two locations: off Santiago de Cuba and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The first letter is undated typed transcription addressed to Mr. Forsyth of the Union Iron Works in San Francisco. The second letter is dated June 2, 1915 and concerns the burning of the German steamer DRESDEN. It is a translation from a German seaman serving on the Dresden to an American friend on the PADUCAH. It describes the ship’s activity during WWI, and its eventual fate being scuttled in the harbor of Juan Fernandez, Chile, while under attack by British warships.

Collection Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two folders.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Missionaries
Loomis, Elisha, 1799-1836
Hawaii