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2012
A Guide to the Robert S. Benner photographs of boatswains' whistles

P76-082L

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service

2012, National Park Service

Title: Robert S. Benner photographs of boatswains' whistles
Date: 1976-1995
Identifier/Call Number: P76-082L (SAFR 23340)
Photographer: Benner, Robert S.
Physical Description: 718 items.
Repository: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123

Abstract: The Robert S. Benner photographs of boatswains' whistles, 1976-1995, (SAFR 23340, P76-082L) are comprised of 712 photographic prints and 6 inventories of photographs of boatswains' whistles in the donor's personal collection. The collection has been processed to the series level and is open for use without restrictions.

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
Robert S. Benner donated the photographs in this collection in 11 installments over the years 1976-1995. Many of these accruals were cataloged and described as separate collections over the years. These accruals have been recataloged and incorporated into this collection (SAFR 23340, P76-082) since the provenance for all of the accruals was the same. By forming one large cohesive collection rather than many disparate ones, it more easily illustrates the breadth and scope of the whistles that Benner collected and better represents his complete physical collection.

Each accrual has been placed into a series. The series are in chronological order of when we received each group of photographs. Every photograph and inventory has been assigned an item number (from 1 to 718). These numbers reflect the physical number of items in the collection, and are unrelated to Benner's inventory numbers (Benner's inventory numbers can be found in the title field).

P77-024 (SAFR- 00001, GOGA-00789); P78-426 (SAFR- 00001, GOGA-00789, SAFR 19468); P92-077 (SAFR-00001, GOGA-00789, SAFR 18423); P84-045 (SAFR-00001, GOGA-00789, SAFR 13876); P84-111 (SAFR-00001, GOGA-00789, SAFR 14321); P85-126 (SAFR-00001, GOGA-00913, SAFR 17018); P88-081 (SAFR-00002, SAFR 1); P01-007 (SAFR-00110, SAFR 19632); SAFR-00784; SAFR-00939 have been incorporated into the collection P76-082 (SAFR 23340).

Acquisition Information

**Historical or Biographical Note**

Biography: Robert S. Benner lived in Los Angeles with his wife Carol Joyce Benner, whom he married in 1947. They were married for 63 years until her death on July 6, 2010. They had two children named Ray Benner and K.C. Boelsems. There is a boatswain whistle in this collection that has the inscription: “LT. ROBERT S. BENNER USNR 440326 WORLD WAR II-KOREA”. This is presumably the donor's name and U.S. Naval Reserve number, but this could not be confirmed.

Definition of a boatswain and boatswain whistle: A boatswain is the officer of a merchant ship who controls the work of other seamen and is in charge of the sails, rigging, anchors, cables and all work on deck of a sailing ship. Historically, a boatswain would use a whistle to give orders throughout a ship, but they are now used mostly for ceremonial purposes. There are many alternate spellings of boatswains' whistles (sometimes referred to as boatswains' calls or boatswains' pipes) which include: bosun, bo's'n, and bos'n. The Art & Architecture Thesaurus definition of a boatswains' whistle: Metal whistles traditionally used on ships by boatswain's mates to relay orders or to pipe senior naval officers aboard; they were grasped in the hand when blown, the pitch rising or falling as the hand was opened or closed.

**Collection Scope and Content**

The Robert S. Benner photographs of boatswains' whistles, 1976-1995, (SAFR 23340, P76-082L) are comprised of 712 photographic prints and 6 inventories of photographs of boatswains' whistles in the donor's personal collection. The collection has been processed to the series level and is open for use without restrictions.

This collection contains black-and-white and color photographs of boatswains' whistles that Robert S. Benner collected from 1969-1995. Benner assigned each of his whistles a unique number in his inventory. The photographs in this collection show the left side of each whistle, its inventory number and a ruler in the shot.

This collection also contains his inventories and they include information about the whistles such as when they were obtained by Benner, the gun type, shackle, keel, buoy, type of metal, the country of manufacture, and the maker. Countries of manufacture include the United States, Asia (Benner uses the word "Orient" sometimes), China, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan. Dates (when known) that the whistles were manufactured range from 1772-1981. Some of the boatswain whistle makers include AB; A.E.C.; AS; BA; BAC; Peter, Ann & William Bateman; BA; A. Cole; D&F; EJH/NH; Gemsco; G U; Gorham; H&T; HC RC; Hudson; J Hudson & Co.; Nauticalia; R&B; Sammv; SR CB; TW; and Yapp & Woodward.

**Collection Arrangement**

This collection has been arranged into 11 series. Each series represents an accrual from the donor and the series are arranged in the order that the accruals were received, starting with 1976 and ending with 1995. The photographs in each series are in original order (numerical by Benner's inventory number).

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Boatswains' whistles
United States. Navy. Boatswains
Black-and-white prints
Color prints (photographs)
Series 01. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #6-113, 1976

Box 1, Box 4
Series 01. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #6-113, 1976

Extent: 75 items (73 black-and-white photographic prints, 3 x 4.5 in.; Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection (11 pages); Inventory of boatswains' whistles in the British Maritime Museum in the Spring of 1976 (1 page))

Scope and Content Note

Items 001-075.

Items 001-073: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 6; 8; 9 (2 photographs); 10; 12; 14; 16; 17 (2 photographs); 18-20; 26-29; 32-34; 38; 40; 43; 46-48; 50; 52; 53; 55; 56; 58; 60-64; 66; 68; 69 (2 photographs); 70; 73; 74; 80-84; 88; 91-93; 95; 98-104; 106; 110; 111; 113; group of whistles 17, 43, 102 and 100; group of whistles with dragons on them: 88, 60, 50, 84; groups of whistles, including some outside on a table and a camera/mirror set up for photographing them. The photographs of the whistles were taken by hanging the whistle in front of the mirror; both the front and back can be seen. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.

Item 074: Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection, #1-152 (11 pages)
Whistles #1-152 were obtained by Benner from 1969-1976. Countries of manufacture include the United States, England, Hong Kong, Germany, and Asia (Benner uses the word "Orient"). Boatswain whistle makers include Peter, Ann & William Bateman; G U; Gorham; H&T; JH & Co.; and Yapp & Woodward. Dates (when known) that the whistles were manufactured range from 1840-1971.

Item 075: Inventory of boatswains' whistles in the British Maritime Museum in the Spring of 1976 (1 page)
Donor sent materials on October 29, 1976.
This was the only accession originally cataloged as P76-082L.

Arrangement
Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.

Box 1, Box 4
Series 02. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #1-152, 1977

Extent: 153 items (152 color prints, 3.5 x 5 in.; Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection (14 pages))

Scope and Content Note

Items 076-228.

Items 076-227: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 1-152. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.

Item 228: Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection, #1-160 (14 pages)
Whistles #1-160 were obtained by Benner from 1969- November 1977. Countries of manufacture include the United States, England, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, and Asia (Benner uses the word "Orient"). Boatswain whistle makers include Peter, Ann & William Bateman; G U; Gorham; H&T; JH & Co.; and Yapp & Woodward. Dates (when known) that the whistles were manufactured range from 1772-1977.

Donor sent materials on December 2, 1977.
Old collection number: P77-024 (no catalog number).

Arrangement
Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.
| Box 1, Box 4 | Series 03. **Boatswains' whistle photographs, #153-193, 1978**  
**Extent:** 41 items (40 color prints, 3.5 x 5 in.; Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection (4 pages))  
**Scope and Content Note**  
**Items 229-269.**  
Items 229-268: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 153-183; 185-193. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.  
Item 269: Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection, #141-194 (4 pages)  
Whistles #141-194 were obtained by Benner from 1977-July 1978. Countries of manufacture include the United States, England, Germany, Japan, and Asia (Benner uses the word "Orient"). Boatswain whistle makers include BA; GU; H&T; J Hudson & Co.; R&B and SR CB. Dates (when known) that the whistles were manufactured range from 1780-1977.  
Old collection and catalog numbers: P76-426 (SAFR 19468).  
**Arrangement**  
Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.  
| Box 1, Box 2, Box 4 | Series 04. **Boatswains' whistle photographs, #194-289, 1982**  
**Extent:** 97 items (96 color prints, 3.5 x 5 in.; Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection (15 pages))  
**Scope and Content Note**  
**Items 270-366.**  
Items 270-365: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 194-289. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.  
Item 366: Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection, #1-250 (15 pages).  
Whistles #1-250 were obtained by Benner from 1969-1980. Countries of manufacture include the United States, England, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Asia (Benner uses the word "Orient"). Boatswain whistle makers include AB; AS; Peter, Ann & William Bateman; BA; A. Cole; Gemsco; G U; Gorham; H&T; Hudson; JH & Co.; Nauticalia; R&B; Sammv; SR CB; and Yapp & Woodward. Dates (when known) that the whistles were manufactured range from 1772-1979.  
Donor sent materials on August 16, 1982.  
Old collection and catalog number: P82-077 (SAFR 18423).  
**Arrangement**  
Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.  
| Box 2 | Series 05. **Boatswains' whistle photographs, #79, 290-364, 1984**  
**Extent:** 77 items (77 color prints, 3 x 5 in.)  
**Scope and Content Note**  
**Items 367-443.**  
Item 367: Photographs of whistle with inventory number: 79. Whistle is engraved with "RSB" on the keel. These initials possibly stand for Robert S. Benner?  
Items 368-442: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 290-364. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.  
Item 443: One photograph of an unidentified whistle, possibly held in a museum (annotation on the back of the print is smudged). This whistle does not have a Benner inventory number.  
Donor sent materials on April 20, 1984.  
Old collection and catalog number: P84-045 (SAFR 13876).  
**Arrangement**  
Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number. Unidentified whistle at the end of the numerical run.  

Series 06. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #365-391, 1984

Box 2, Box 4  
Extent: 28 items (27 color prints, 3.5 x 5.25 in.; Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection (2 pages))

Scope and Content Note
Items 444-471.

Items 444-470: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 365-391. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.
Item 471: Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection, #361-394 (2 pages). Whistles #361-394 were obtained by Benner in 1984. Countries of manufacture include the United States, England, and Asia (Benner uses the word "Orient"). Boatswain whistle makers include A.E.C.; D&F; G U; H&T; HC RC; JH & Co.; and Yapp & Woodward. Dates (when known) that the whistles were manufactured range from 1802-1930.
Donor sent materials on August 28, 1984.
Old collection and catalog number: P84-111 (SAFR 14321).

Arrangement
Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.

Series 07. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #392-419, 1985

Box 2, Box 4  
Extent: 29 items (28 color prints, 3.5 x 5 in.; Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection (3 pages))

Scope and Content Note
Items 472-500.

Items 472-499: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 392-419. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.
Item 500: Inventory of boatswains' whistles in Benner's collection, #379-422 (3 pages). Whistles #379-422 were obtained by Benner from May 1984- April 1985. Countries of manufacture include the United States, China, England, France and Germany. Boatswain whistle makers include BAC; D&F; EJH/NH; G U; H&T; HC RC; JH & Co.; TW; and Yapp & Woodward. Dates (when known) that the whistles were manufactured range from 1802-1981.
Donor sent materials on August 30, 1985.
Old collection and catalog number: P85-126 (SAFR 17018).

Arrangement
Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.
Box 2

Series 08. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #391, 416-500, 1988

Extent: 86 items (86 color prints, 3.5 x 5 in.)

Scope and Content Note

Items 501-586.

Item 501: Photograph of whistle with inventory number: 391. The left side of the whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.

Items 502-586: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 416-500. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.

In the collection file for this accession, there is a typed list from the donor titled "Features that do not show in the pictures" and it contains the following information:

500: Stamped on keel: Bowdich 4
498: Stamped on buoy with anchor and crown. All other examples of this design, anchor only.
495: Stamped on keel: Tiffany Studios, Broadway, N.Y. Note: This German design shows up with various designs of stamping, many of questionable background.
494: As 495: Carnarvon.
491: Round USN style but no other construction on hand. Wiggle work on keel. Dealer indicated that it was European. ???
489: Round USN style: Made of MONEL. Only one in collection. I have also seen a miniature so made. Mark: Y.T.K.
488: Keel engraved-left: H. Oddy '23. -right: Tampa Sterling Oscipee
481: Keel stamped -right: Man smoking a pipe in a letter "C"
472: Hand made over size German style call some 14 inches long (363 mm). Made by Willy Disselhoff as a gift to me. He also has a collection of calls. Saw service in WWII on German Battleship Adm. Sheer.
445: As 495 keel stamped -right: Lvd C Co/80 "BUND"
444: As 495 keel stamped -right: Lvd C Co/79 "BUND"
443: As 495 keel stamped -right: Lvd C Co/78 "BUND"
442: Keel scratched -right: I.L. WILL B.M. -left: WENTWORTH
437: Keel marked -right: E. WILLEY -left: Made into a pin by applying a pin and catch.
428: Unusual keel stamping.
424: Note deep notch in back of keel.

Donor sent materials on September 2, 1988.

Old collection and catalog number: P88-081 (SAFR 1).

Arrangement

Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.
Series 09. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #501-533, 1989

Scope and Content Note

Items 587-623.

Items 587-588: 2 photographs of whistle with inventory number: 501. The left side of the whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle. One photograph is a closer shot than the other.

Items 589-592: 4 photographs of whistle with inventory number: 502. The left side of each whistle is in view and there are some close-up detail shots of the whistle. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.

Items 593-623: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 503-533. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.

In the collection file for this accession, there is a typed list from the donor titled that contains the following information:

#504: Indonesia Call. Traded for on training sail ship, KRI DEWARUCI, in San Diego, CA, USA.
#521: LARGEST CALL---- Weight 2.8 oz. troy, silver chain 4.5 oz. troy or 6.13 oz. troy total. It is spectacular. After 20 years of collecting and 520 other calls something like this turns up. No marks but is most likely French. 212 mm long.
#522: This is a standard U.S. Navy silver call. It has had a lot of use, but what makes it interesting is the fact that it has *nine* different names scratched on it. Name calls are not common, then only with one name.
#523: Swedish call. German design. Note three crowns. Traded for on Swedish sail training in San Diego, CA, USA.
#530: Plastic.
#531: Plastic.

The large picture is a call that came up in an auction at Christies in New York this past spring. Joseph Steward II London 1762. It sold for $3500.00 plus 10%. I bid this amount by mail but they gave it to a floor bidder. At least I got a couple of 8 x 10 photos of it. Is this the same as the one you have or a year later? My picture of yours does not show the hall marks. This was a very nice example.

Donor sent materials on September 15, 1989.

No old collection number or catalog number; this accrual was not processed before integrated into this collection.

Arrangement

Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.

Box 3

Series 10. Boatswains' whistle photographs, #534-567 and Boatswains' whistles being used, 1991

Scope and Content Note

Items 624-663.

Items 624-660: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 534-536; 537 (4 photographs); 538-567. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.


Donor sent materials on September 20, 1991.

No old collection number or catalog number; this accrual was not processed before integrated into this collection.

Arrangement

Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.
Box 3


Extent: 55 items (55 color prints, 3.5 x 5 in.)

Scope and Content Note

Items 664-718: Photographs of whistles with inventory numbers: 568-622. The left side of each whistle is in view. There is a ruler in the photograph next to the whistle.

Donor sent materials on September 20, 1991.

No old collection number or catalog number; this accrual was not processed before integrated into this collection.

Arrangement

Original order: numerical order, by Benner's inventory number.