A guide to the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company records of Roger D. Lapham, 1914-1952

Processed by: Maritime Research Center, Historic Documents Department (Bailey), Apr 2016.
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
2016
Title: American-Hawaiian Steamship Company records of Roger D. Lapham
Date: 1914-1952
Date (bulk): 1940-1942
Identifier/Call Number: HDC1744 (SAFR 24680)
Creator: Lapham, Roger D. (Roger Dearborn), 1883-1966
Physical Description: 466 items.
Repository: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123
Abstract: American-Hawaiian Steamship Company records of Roger D. Lapham (HDC1744 SAFR24680) includes newprint and magazine clippings of articles and images, telegrams, official and other correspondence including unsolicited information from passengers, and ephemeral items such as a business card and a vessel schedule card. The collection dates inclusively are 1914 to 1952 but the bulk falls between 1940 and 1942. Some of the files seemed to be for accumulating photographs of the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company vessels although no photographs are present in these materials. Among these same vessel files are telegrams that report torpedoed vessels, personnel lost and salvage efforts. There is also a typescript by Lorena Reed Protheroe and correspondence between her and Lapham from 1932 to 1937. The typescript is titled "Betsy Crosby: Cape Horner." See History for a biography of Protheroe. The collection is available for research use.
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], HDC1744 (SAFR 24680), American-Hawaiian Steamship Company records of Roger D. Lapham, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Acquisition Information
SAFR-02346
Field collection
Historical or Biographical Note
American-Hawaiian Steamship Company was founded in 1899. The company was a major carrier for intercoastal trade. The immediate predecessor to American-Hawaiian was the California Line of 1855, comprised of clipper ships. Roger D. Lapham (1883-1966) was a ship owner and executive, and was President of American-Hawaiian Steamship Company from 1925-1943. He served as the 32nd Mayor of San Francisco, California from 1944 to 1948. Lt. Lorena Reed Protheroe
Roger D. Lapham, 1914-1952


In 1925, Roger Lapham became president of the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company and served in this position for 18 years. He was succeeded by Gary W. Cook, who transferred the company’s headquarters from New York to San Francisco. He also established company offices at most of the ports where vessels of the company called, stressed the importance of giving a dependable schedule, set shipping dates months in advance, and appointed Thomas G. Plant as Operating Manager (The Story of American-Hawaiian, 5). After two years as president, Cook resigned as president to become Chairman of the Board.

The American-Hawaiian Steamship Company had seven directors: George S. “Dearborn and his partner Henry Jackson; Wallace Flint and W.D. Burnham of Flint and Company; Andronicus Chesebrough and Oscar Sewall of Williams, Dimond and Company; and James H. Post of the National Sugar Refining Company. Dearborn was elected president, Flint the first vice president and treasurer, Chesebrough second vice president, Jackson secretary, and Burnham manager” (Cochran, 345). "Flint, Dearborn and Company became General Agents at New York with Williams, Dimond and Company, General Agents for the Pacific Coast. . . . Mr. H.E.D. Jackson became Traffic Manager, building up the new steamer service” (Pruner).

In 1900, George Dearborn’s brother-in-law, Lewis H. Lapham, purchased Charles R. Flint’s interest and Flint, Dearborn and Co. changed to Dearborn and Lapham (Pruner). “In the American-Hawaiian home office there was a smooth-functioning division of responsibility. Dearborn formulated the general strategy of the company, planned for its long-term growth, and coordinated the work of the various departments. Henry Jackson supervised relations with the shippers, especially those of general cargo, and with the other East Coast agencies. Lapham was the chief authority on finance. . . . Operations were under the charge of . . . William Dickson Burnham” (Cochran, 346-347).

The first four ships of the American-Hawaiian line were CALIFORNIAN (built 1900; freighter), built at Union Iron Works in San Francisco, and AMERICAN (built 1900; freighter), HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter), and OREGONIAN (built 1901; freighter), which were built at the Roach Shipyard in Chester, Pennsylvania (Colcord, 77).

One of the early innovations of the company was the development of the Lassoe-Lovekin oil burner in the early 1900s, which saved money and shortened the sailing time of the vessels. The burner was developed by American-Hawaiian’s Marine Engineer Valdemar Lassoe and Luther D. Lovekin of the New York Shipbuilding Company. The burner was first installed in 1902 in the freighters NEVADAN (built 1902; freighter) and NEBRASKAN (built 1902; freighter), and was very successful (Cochran, 349). “The Lassoe-Lovekin oil burner revolutionized the industry and made possible the 50 day journeys [around Cape Horn using the Straits of Magellan] which caught the attention of the U.S. Navy, convincing them to convert their fleet to oil burners” (“Who was Captain Burnham,” 2).

On May 9, 1905, American-Hawaiian Steamship Company signed a contract with the Tehuantepec National Railway, in which it agreed to abandon the Straits of Magellan route and would ship all cargoes across Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, Mexico by rail (Cochran, 353). When American political troubles with Mexico closed that route, American-Hawaiian returned to the Straits of Magellan route. The Panama Canal opened for traffic in August 1914 and American-Hawaiian began routing its ships via this route (Ships of The American-Hawaiian Steamship Co.).

“When the United States entered World War I in the spring of 1917, about 25 percent of the deadweight tonnage of large sea-going freighters under U.S. registry was owned by American-Hawaiian” (Cochran and Ginger, 343). After America entered the War, 18 American-Hawaiian ships were requisitioned by the government (Colcord, 217). After WWI, American-Hawaiian Steamship Company “never returned to the Hawaiian run, which had been so instrumental in its early prosperity and growth. . . After 1918, public policy became the crucial factor [for its effectiveness], and many government actions altered the situation in intercoastal trade” (Cochran, 363).

In May 1920, George S. Dearborn died and was succeeded by his son, Henry Dearborn. In March 1923, Henry resigned and was succeeded by Gary W. Cook, who transferred the company’s headquarters from New York to San Francisco. He also established company offices at most of the ports where vessels of the company called, stressed the importance of giving a dependable schedule, set shipping dates months in advance, and appointed Thomas G. Plant as Operating Manager (The Story of American-Hawaiian, 5). After two years as president, Cook resigned as president to become Chairman of the Board.

In 1925, Roger Lapham became president of the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company and served in this position for 18 years (“American-Hawaiian Steamship Co. History”; “Ex-Mayor Lapham of San Francisco”).

In February 1928, American-Hawaiian and Matson Navigation Company jointly purchased 21 vessels from the Government and organized the Oceanic & Oriental Navigation Company (O&O), which was “created to take over the operation of government-owned freighters in trans-Pacific service from the financially troubled Swayne and Hoyt Company” (McMillan).
Matson managed the ships operating from California to Australia and New Zealand, while the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company operated the ships going to China (McMillan). The flag was a red-white-blue horizontal tricolor with the initials O&O in black on the center stripe. The company operated until 1938, at which time the vessels were dispersed between the two companies.

In April 1929, American-Hawaiian purchased seven vessels from the Williams Line and organized the Williams Steamship Corporation, which operated in the South Atlantic Intercoastal Service as a "B" Line (Pruner). Williams Steamship Corporation vessels provided "regular freight service between Pacific Coast ports and the South Atlantic ports of Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, South Carolina, Wilmington, North Carolina, Savannah and Jacksonville, with Eastbound service to Puerto Rico (The Story of American-Hawaiian, 6).

During WWII, the company operated many Liberty and Victory ships under the War Shipping Administration. "In 1942, the United States Government requisitioned the entire fleet for the war effort and once again the intercoastal trade became dormant. In the late fall of 1945, American-Hawaiian reestablished its intercoastal service, handling a fleet of vessels as General Agents for the War Shipping Administration - later the United States Maritime Commission. In the summer of 1947, this arrangement was discontinued by the Commission, and the Company [employed] vessels chartered from the Government on a bareboat basis" (American-Hawaiian Steamship Company, 1). Roger's son Lewis A. Lapham became the company's last president in 1947.

Intercoastal service was suspended in March 1953 due to growing operating costs. "A very bitter takeover battle ensued in 1955 until [Daniel] Ludwig gained majority control [of American-Hawaiian]. . . In 1956, Ludwig sold off or otherwise disposed of the fleet of American-Hawaiian, the company henceforth surviving as a real estate venture but still retaining some of the tax advantages steamship companies enjoyed" (De La Pedraja Toman, 241).

Sources:


"American-Hawaiian Steamship Co. History." Typescript, 3 pages [HE753 A38 pam]

Biography: Roger Dearborn Lapham was born on December 6, 1883 in New York City, to Antoinette N. Dearborn Lapham (August 8, 1861-May 16, 1956) and executive Lewis Henry Lapham (born March 1858). He had three siblings: John H. Lapham (July 1885-August 2, 1956); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).

Roger attended Harvard and graduated in 1905 with a major in humanities (Starr, 92). He married Helen B. Abbot (September 13, 1884-June 12, 1975) on October 30, 1907 (Western Edition Notables of the West, 618). They had four children: Lewis Abbott Lapham (March 7, 1909-December 20, 1995); Elinor Lapham (Ford) (June 22, 1889-March 1, 1983); and Ruth Lapham (Lloyd) (July 30, 1896-October 8, 1984).
In 1943, Roger agreed to run for Mayor of San Francisco, with the caveat that he would only serve one term. He was elected and served as the 32nd Mayor of San Francisco from 1944-1948 ("Ex-Mayor Lapham of San Francisco"). In April 1945, Lapham presided over the founding of the United Nations at the first meeting of the United Nations Conference on International Organization. The meetings were held at the War Memorial Opera House.

In July 1946, Lapham increased streetcar fares, which led to a recall election attempt (the first in San Francisco history). The recall was fought by all four daily newspapers and failed by 32,000 votes at a special election. One of Lapham's most controversial propositions as Mayor was his January 27, 1947, message to the Board of Supervisors to "get rid of its cable cars as soon as possible," due to their cost and risk of the cables breaking (Rice). This proposition was met with much resistance from the public and was unsuccessful. That same year, Lapham installed San Francisco's first parking meter (San Francisco City Guides).

After his term as Mayor, he acted as chief of the post-war Economic Cooperation Administration for China, and later Greece. Roger Lapham died in San Francisco at the age of 82 on April 16, 1966.

Sources:


United States Obituary Collection about Carol Lapham Valentine. Source Citation: Newspaper: Santa Barbara News-Press; Publication Date: 21 Mar 2009; Publication Place: Santa Barbara, CA, USA. Retrieved on March 21, 2013, from Ancestry.com

Biography: Lorena Reed graduated from high school in Richmond, Maine in 1914. She studied acting at the Leland Powers School of Theater in Boston, Massachusetts before pursuing her interest in radio. She subsequently graduated from the Eastern Radio Institute in Boston in 1917 earning a first grade commercial radio operator license. Her expertise extended to all branches of wireless telegraphy, in particular, vacuum tubes.

Her employment history includes Wellesley College where she was an instructor in radio physics under Professor Louis McDowell, Physics Department. She taught courses at the Cambridge Radio School and at Harvard Radio. She taught Morse code to Naval Flying Cadets. She held a position in the test laboratory in Medford, where she worked on radio apparatus for the government.

The Women's Radio Corps (WRC) was established in World War One by Edna Owen (Mrs. Herbert Sumner Owen) and others of influence in the field of wireless communications. The U.S. Bureau of Navigation licensed wireless operators, both women and men. Lorena Reed became one of a minority of women to work for the WRC when the Boston branch opened. In 1918, she became commander there with the rank of Sergeant. Hired as second lieutenant in the Radio corps of the U.S. Signal Corps she later worked at the Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C.

She married Owen Glendower Protheroe in 1918 in Cleveland, Ohio. They had one child, a daughter named Polly (Polly P. Roberts of Richmond, Maine). They resided in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico (19 years), Australia, Papua New Guinea and Oklahoma.
In 1923, Protheroe took the U.S. Steamboat Inspection Pilots Examination and acquired a license to operate vessels of up to 65 feet in length. She received her 10th renewal of the license in 1973. She maintained the license for 50 years.
In 1941, she was a guest lecturer at the Cosmopolitan Club in Bath, Maine. She spoke about her life in Puerto Rico.
In World War II, she served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) a unit of the United States Army. She was the first WAC from the state of Maine.
Protheroe's military awards include the New Guinea Campaign Medal, the WWII Victory Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Service Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Unit Citation, the Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon, the Victory Ribbon, the WAC Service Ribbon and the Victory Ribbon.

Sources:
www.americanwomeninwwi.wordpress.com
Cambridge Chronicle, 18 January 1919, article, "A Radio Girl"
The Lewiston Daily Sun 18 February 1974, obituary

Collection Scope and Content
American-Hawaiian Steamship Company records of Roger D. Lapham (HDC1744 SAFR24680) includes newprint and magazine clippings of articles and images, telegrams, official and other correspondence including unsolicited information from passengers, and ephemeral items such as a business card and a vessel schedule card. The collection dates inclusively are 1914 to 1952 but the bulk falls between 1940 and 1942. Some of the files seemed to be for accumulating photographs of the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company vessels although no photographs are present in these materials. Among these same vessel files are telegrams that report torpedoed vessels, personnel lost and salvage efforts. There is also a typescript by Lorena Reed Protheroe and correspondence between her and Lapham from 1932 to 1937. The typescript is titled "Betsy Crosby: Cape Horner." See History for a biography of Protheroe. The collection is available for research use.

Collection Arrangement
Folder 1 is arranged chronologically and by chapter. Folders 2 through 40 arranged alphabetically by vessel name.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Administrative records
Lapham, Roger D. (Roger Dearborn), 1883-1966
American-Hawaiian Steamship Company
Typescripts
Maritime history