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Lot Chase Account Books

1837, 1848

2 volumes in 1 envelope

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Mariner from Harwich, Massachusetts who was involved in the cod and mackerel fishing industry in Barnstable County. Two account books include expenses, income, and final settlements with those involved with annual voyages of 1837 and 1848. They also contain lists of crewmembers and part owners, many of whom were members of the Chase family.

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Scope of collection

Lot Chase of Harwich, Massachusetts, was a mariner involved in the extensive cod and mackerel fishing industry located in

Barnstable County. When he captained the schooner Horace in 1837 he was fifty years old and he remained active in the industry at least through 1850. These were the waning years of the cod and mackerel industry's use of the traditional hook and line catching of fish. By 1853, the introduction of the purse seine method of capturing whole schools of fish began to transform local fishing from a small-scale labor-intensive enterprise into an expensive, capital-intensive industry which undermined the family-owned schooners of the sort captained by Lot Chase.

The two account books detail the expenses, income, and final settlements with those involved in the annual cod and mackerel voyages of 1837 and 1848. Included is an accounting of the large and small bills incurred to provision the schooner for each voyage -- custom-house expenses, wharfage charges, cook's wages, bait, supplies, and charges for errands -- divided among the crew and charged as a debit to each man's individual account. There is also a credit side for crewmembers based on the number of fish caught and other chores for which they received pay. A portion of the total income from each voyage (about one quarter) was set aside as the "schooner's share" to be divided by the owners. Thus, Captain Lot Chase, for instance, earned two owner's shares (one as captain and one as part owner) of the 1837 voyages plus money for the more than 4000 fish he caught.

For the year 1838, there were eleven crewmembers, five of whom were also part owners, enabling them to reap two sources of income from the voyages. There were also two part owners who were not on the voyages. In 1848, the crew totaled eleven, but divided the schooner's share among fifteen individuals, three of whom were investors, and one -- Captain Nathaniel Chase -- who handled all the shore duties, including the selling of fish.

Lot Chase's cod and mackerel business was certainly a family enterprise. The seven part owners of the schooner Horace who divided the profits from the 1837 voyages included six men with the surname Chase (residing in Harwich and Dennis) and a David Wixon who was a neighbor of Freeman Chase, one of the owners. In 1848, ten of the 15 principals connected with the schooner Cornelius shared the Chase surname. Another was Elijah Doane, Lot Chase's next-door neighbor, and the other four were married to either a Doane or a Chase.

Although Lot Chase was the captain, the shore-man Nathaniel earned the greatest gain from the voyages, suggesting that he was actually the driving force behind the enterprise, although that is not clear. Nevertheless, Nathaniel cleared \$923 in 1837 (a considerable sum for that time) but just \$287 in 1848, in part demonstrating the decline of the fishing industry in these years. Lot, on the other hand, cleared about \$150 in 1837 and about \$215 in 1848. Crewmembers netted between \$40 and \$200 after expenses for the 1848 voyages.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Second Life Books, Inc., Lanesborough, MA, 1988.

Processing Information

Processed by Ken Fones-Wolf, 1989.

Language:

English

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Search terms

Subjects

Barnstable County (Mass.)--Economic conditions--19th century--Sources.

Chase, Lot.

Chase, Nathaniel.

Cod fisheries--Massachusetts--Barnstable County--History--Sources.

Fisheries--Massachusetts--Finance--History--Sources.

Fisheries--Massachusetts--Equipment and supplies--History--Sources.

Fishers--Massachusetts--History--Sources.

Fishing--Economic aspects--Massachusetts--History--Sources.

Harwich (Mass.)--History--Sources.

Horace (Schooner)

Mackerel fisheries--Massachusetts--Barnstable County--History--Sources.

Contributors

Chase, Lot [main entry]

Genres and formats

Account books.

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