

**Inventory of the  
Philip Purrington Papers  
In The New Bedford Whaling Museum  
Research Library**

**Title:** Philip Purrington Papers  
**Date Span:** 1787-1989  
**Mss Number:** Mss 188  
**Provenance:** Gift of Charlotte Purrington, Foster Purrington, Linda Purrington, and Celia Purrington (2002.47)  
**Extent:** 1.25 linear feet  
**Abstract:** Correspondence, research notes, personal papers, and family genealogies compiled by Philip F. Purrington, longtime curator of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society / New Bedford Whaling Museum  
**Processed by:** Mark Procknik, 2020  
**Repository:** New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library

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## Introduction

Materials in this collection were donated to the New Bedford Whaling Museum in 2002 by Charlotte Purrington, Foster Purrington, Linda Purrington, and Celia Purrington on 9 October 2002 as part of Accession 2002.47.

## Biographical Note

Philip Purrington served as a staff member of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society / New Bedford Whaling Museum for a total of 45 years. Born in 1912, Purrington served in the United States Navy during World War II and joined the Whaling Museum in 1945 following his wartime enlistment. He was named the Curator ten years later in 1955 and held that position until he was named Senior Curator in 1977. During his time as a curator, Purrington enlarged the Museum's photographic collection and introduced a wide range of photography services for the public. He also initiated an oral history program, recording interviews with former whalers and early participants in New Bedford's fishing industry. An avid researcher, Purrington was the author of numerous articles on whales and whaling in addition to the book *Four Years A-whaling*, the story of the whaler artist Charles S. Raleigh. He also edited the journals of Annie Holmes Ricketson and originated *The Bulletin from Johnny Cake Hill*, the Museum's newsletter. Purrington continued to work at the Museum up until his death in 1989 at the age of 77. Many recognize his commitment to the accurate portrayal of New Bedford's history as one of his most enduring legacies to the Museum.

## Scope and Content Note

Papers in this collection reflect the scholarly and genealogical research interests of Philip F. Purrington throughout his professional career as Curator of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society / New Bedford Whaling Museum with the bulk of the materials consisting of his research notes on a variety of topics related to whaling, maritime history, and Old Dartmouth, a region comprising of modern-day New Bedford, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Westport, and Acushnet.

Purrington's research focuses heavily on maritime history as he kept very detailed notes and documentation on a variety of topics including the Alabama Claims, the *Alabama* and *Shenandoah*, privateers, Benjamin Russell, the *Grand Panorama of a Whaling Voyage 'Round the World*, and John Manjiro. His research material related to Herman Melville consists of his research notes, articles, and transcriptions of newspaper articles concerning *Moby-Dick* and the churches, inns, and characters mentioned in the book. Although he kept a rather extensive research file on mutinies, the majority of his research was focused on the 1842 mutiny onboard the ship *Sharon* of Fairhaven. His documents related to abolition and slavery include an essay about the New York yacht *Wanderer* and her involvement as a slaver titled "The Perfidious *Wanderer*" along with his accompanying research notes on the yacht *Wanderer* and the subject. Purrington also kept a rather substantial file on Appleton Oaksmith, a noted slaver, in addition to compiling research notes on Benjamin Lundy, a Quaker abolitionist.

Purrington's papers further reflect his thorough research into whaling history with several files devoted towards whaling, whaling voyages, and ship captains. Purrington's essay on John Rumrill in 1985 discusses the young whaler's time on the ship *Statira*'s 1845 voyage, his desertion, and his time living among the natives of several Pacific Islands. Purrington also shares correspondence with Yale University in 1967 in response to Yale seeking advice for exhibiting ambergris. Purrington's papers also contain a legal document dated 1889 related to Captain A.F. Church of New Bedford and documents his employment in the United States Post Office. Collected documents pertaining to Captain Henry Clay include research correspondence and a typescript copy of his obituary originally printed in the *New Bedford Standard Times* in 1901. Purrington also displayed an interest in women who went to sea and compiled research notes pertaining to the subject in addition to an essay and accompanying documents about Annie Holmes Ricketson's life and travels. In addition to general research notes on the history of whaling, Purrington also kept files related to Arctic whaling, including the wreck of the *Isabella* in 1884 near Marble Island in Hudson Bay.

In addition to maritime themes, a sizeable portion of Purrington's research material documents several topics related to Old Dartmouth history, including the salt industry of Dartmouth (Massachusetts), documents related to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society from 1967 to 1977 including by-laws and job descriptions held by several members of the Museum's staff in the 1960s along with documentation on the 1977 New Bedford Gas explosion, documentation of Old Dartmouth families along with a plot plan of land held by the Russell and Ricketson families, and African-Americans in New Bedford with particular attention paid to John Mashow. In addition to his research notes on William Allen Wall, Purrington also personally collected a William Allen Wall bill of sale for portraits to Charles W. Morgan (1831) and a letter from William Allen Wall to Charles W. Morgan regarding expenses on studios in Europe (1832). Both documents are included in the collection. Materials related to Rev. Enoch Mudge consist of biographical sketches, research notes, documentation related to the Seaman's Bethel, and hand drawn street maps reflecting 19<sup>th</sup> century property owners of New Bedford and Fairhaven. William Le Baron Jenney documentation includes an article titled "Father of Skyscrapers" describing Jenney's contribution to United States architecture. William Tallman Russell research notes consist primarily of documentation of his spermaceti trade with Europe during the years 1827 to 1843.

Purrington's research notes on the Rotch family are fairly robust and contain typescript copies of correspondence primarily of William Rotch from 1814 to 1817, a copy of William Rotch's petition to the House of Representatives in 1801 regarding a canal from New Bedford to Middleborough, and a copy of Francis Rotch's initial text for a book about the whale fishery, and newspaper articles. Purrington's documentation on the New Bedford fishing industry includes 1964 earnings statements for the fishing boats *Teresa and Jean* and *Fleetwing*, weekly updates on the fishing market from February 1964 through April 1964, and several maps depicting Mattapoisett Harbor, the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, South America, and the World.

Purrington delivered several talks during his tenure as Curator of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, and several of his self-titled lecture notes are represented in the collection. "The Curator's Holiday" was a lecture he presented at the ODHS meeting on December 2, 1955, where he discusses his recent vacation spent traveling and visiting other Museums, noting specifically how their exhibits and displays compare to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society's. "A Minor to New Bedford" was the title of an undated lecture concerning the history of the Old Dartmouth region with special significance given to its whaling heritage. "The Stone Fleet" is another of his undated lectures with this one discussing the Stone Fleet. "Pennsylvania Talk" includes notes Purrington used for an undated whaling themed lecture apparently full of short stories and anecdotes. His remaining lecture notes refer to the history of whaling from colonial times through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century with various other lecture notes including documentation related to voyages of the ship *Arnolda* (on voyage 1852 to 1855) and ship *Arab* (on voyage 1842 to 1845).

In addition to Purrington's research notes and lectures, this collection also contains several pieces spanning the years of 1933 to 1989 that reflect his personal interests. These items include his general correspondence consisting of his personal letters and letters to friends and family members concerning genealogical research on the Purrington family. These materials also include a scrapbook and additional newspaper clippings documenting Purrington's life and career.

This collection also contains papers related to Purrington's personal and genealogical interests. These materials date from 1917 to 1983 and include a 1959 Old Dartmouth Historical Society membership card held by Purrington's wife, printed documentation on Joseph Purrington's genealogical line, and additional materials related to various members of the Purrington family.

### **Arrangement of Collection**

- Series A: Research Notes and Documents, 1787-1985
- Series B: Lectures and Lecture Notes, 1843-1955
- Series C: Philip Purrington Papers, 1933-1989
- Series D: Purrington Family Papers, 1917-1983

## Collection Inventory

### **Box 1**

#### **Series A: Research Notes and Documents, 1787-1985**

##### *Sub-series 1: Alabama Claims, 1861-1892*

Folder 1: Research notes on the *Alabama* and *Shenandoah*, 1861-1865

Folder 2: Research notes and documentation related to the Alabama Claims, 1873-1892

##### *Sub-series 2: Benjamin Russell and the Russell-Purrington Panorama, 1871-1962*

Folder 1: *Kutusoff* (Ship) and Benjamin Russell research notes, 1871

Folder 2: Benjamin Russell research notes, 1958

Folder 3: Russell-Purrington Panorama documentation, 1962

##### *Sub-series 3: Frederick Douglass, undated*

Folder 1: Research notes and documentation on Frederick Douglass, undated

##### *Sub-series 4: Herman Melville, 1951-1954*

Folder 1: Herman Melville research notes and correspondence, 1951-1954

Folder 2: Herman Melville and whaling documentation, undated

Folder 3: Notebook with notes on Herman Melville and *Moby-Dick*, undated

##### *Sub-series 5: John Manjiro, undated*

Folder 1: Manjiro, Whitfield, and the ship *John Howland* research notes, undated

##### *Sub-series 6: The Mayflower (Ship) and the Pilgrims, 1954*

Folder 1: *Mayflower* (Ship) research notes and correspondence, 1954

##### *Sub-series 7: Mutinies, 1842-1967*

Folder 1: Printed accounts related to the 1842 mutiny on the *Sharon*, 1842-1845

Folder 1: Research correspondence related to the *Sharon* mutiny, 1948-1967

Folder 1: Research notes related to the 1842 mutiny on the *Sharon*, undated

Folder 1: Documentation on mutinies, 1843-1889

##### *Sub-series 8: Old Dartmouth History, 1964-1982*

Folder 1: Research notes and documents on the New Bedford fishing industry, 1964

Folder 2: Research and correspondence on Old Dartmouth history and families, 1966

Folder 3: Research notes related to African-Americans in New Bedford, 1980-1982

Folder 4: American Revolution research notes, undated

##### *Sub-series 9: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1957-1977*

Folder 1: Old Dartmouth Historical Society documents, 1957-1960

Folder 2: Documentation related to the 1977 Gas Explosion, 1977

##### *Sub-series 10: Old Dartmouth Individuals, 1787-1965*

Folder 1: John Avery Parker documentation and research notes, 1787

Folder 2: Gideon Howland research and documentation, 1824-1830

Folder 3: Notes related to William Tallman Russell and trade with Europe, 1827-1843

Folder 4: William Le Baron Jenney research notes, 1953

Folder 5: Rev. Enoch Mudge research notes and correspondence, 1955-1956

Folder 6: Silliman B. Ives research, 1957

Folder 7: William Allen Wall research notes and correspondence, 1965

Folder 8: Original William Allen Wall documents, 1831-1832

Folder 9: John Goddard research notes, undated

## **Box 2**

### *Sub-series 11: Privateers, 1955*

Folder 1: Documentation on privateers, 1955

### *Sub-series 12: Rotch Family, 1801-1817*

Folder 1: Rotch family documents, 1801-1821

Folder 2: Rotch family research and correspondence, 1814-1817

Folder 3: Francis Rotch correspondence photocopies and images, 1815-1817

Folder 4: Francis Rotch research notes, undated

Folder 5: Nantucket history and the Rotch family research notes, undated

### *Sub-series 13: Salt Industry, undated*

Folder 1: Salt industry notes, undated

### *Sub-series 14: Ship Captains, 1889-1964*

Folder 1: Documents related to Captain A. F. Church of New Bedford, 1889

Folder 2: Research correspondence related to Captain Henry Clay, 1956

Folder 3: Captain John Kendrick research notes and correspondence, 1956-1963

Folder 4: Captain James McKenna research notes, 1964

Folder 5: Captain John A. Rogers research notes and correspondence, 1988

### *Sub-series 15: Slave Trade, 1962-1963*

Folder 1: Correspondence and printed documentation on the slave trade, 1962-1963

Folder 2: Research notes related to the slave trade, undated

Folder 3: Slavery research notes, undated

Folder 4: Appleton Oaksmith research notes, 1962-1963

Folder 5: Benjamin Lundy research notes, undated

### *Sub-series 16: Whaling and Maritime Research, 1824-1985*

Folder 1: Documentation related to maritime activities in South America, 1824-1875

Folder 2: Documentation on whales fighting back, 1841-1870

Folder 3: *Cadmus* (Ship) voyage narrative and research notes, 1843-1859

Folder 4: Documentation related to sea serpent sightings, 1857

Folder 5: Documentation related to Levi Small of the bark *Gratitude*, 1858-1862

Folder 6: Arctic whaling research and correspondence, 1959-1962

Folder 7: Correspondence and documentation on the whaling industry, 1960

Folder 8: *American Heritage* article review, 1960

Folder 9: Research notes documenting the *Viking* (Ship), 1965

Folder 10: Correspondence concerning ambergris, 1967

Folder 11: Correspondence with Ingeborg Van Erp, 1967-1968

Folder 12: Research notes and correspondence related to whaling in Hudson Bay, 1971

Folder 13: John Rumrill of the ship *Statira*'s 1845 voyage, 1985

Folder 14: Research notes related to the bark *Fearless* of Norway, undated

Folder 15: Research notes related to Dudley Choate of the *Jireh Swift*, undated

Folder 16: Research notes related to sealing voyages, undated

### *Sub-series 17: Women and the Sea, 1858-1917*

Folder 1: Documentation and research related to women at sea, 1858-1917

Folder 2: Annie Holmes Ricketson research notes, undated

### **Box 3**

#### **Series B: Lectures and Lecture Notes, 1843-1955**

- Folder 1: "The Curator's Holiday," 1955
- Folder 2: "A Mirror to New Bedford," undated
- Folder 3: "The Stone Fleet," undated
- Folder 4: "Pennsylvania Talk," 1955
- Folder 5: Lecture material on whaling voyages, 1843-1862
- Folder 6: Lecture notes regarding whaling history, undated
- Folder 7: General lecture notes, undated

#### **Series C: Philip Purrington Papers, 1933-1989**

- Folder 1: Purrington's general correspondence, 1960-1988
- Folder 2: Purrington's address book containing personal and business contacts, undated
- Folder 3: Scrapbook on Purrington and his curatorial career, 1945-1967
- Folder 4: Newspaper clippings on Purrington's life and career, 1933-1989

#### **Series D: Purrington Family Papers, 1917-1983**

- Folder 1: Mrs. Phillip F. Purrington's ODHS membership card, 1959
- Folder 2: Joseph Purrington notes and genealogy, undated
- Folder 3: Purrington family genealogy, 1917-1975
- Folder 4: Published material and obituaries related to Purrington family, 1973-1983



## Subject Headings

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 Douglass, Frederick, 1818-1895  
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 Families--Massachusetts--New Bedford  
*Fearless* (Bark)  
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Sealing  
Sealing industry  
Sealing ships  
Seaman's Bethel (New Bedford, Mass.)  
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*Shenandoah* (Screw sloop)  
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Ship captains' spouses  
Shipwrecks  
Slave trade  
Slave traders  
Slavery  
Small, Levi  
South America--Description and travel  
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*Teresa and Jean* (Fishing boat)  
Thompson, Absalom  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Claims  
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783  
*Viking* (Clipper ship)  
Wall, William Allen, 1801-1885

*Wanderer* (Yacht)  
Whale oil  
Whalers (Persons)  
Whalers' spouses  
Whaling--Arctic Ocean  
Whaling--Hudson Bay  
Whaling--History  
Whaling--Massachusetts--New Bedford  
Whaling--Massachusetts--New Bedford--History  
Whaling masters  
Whaling ships  
Whitfield, William H.  
Women and the sea