



BHC-MSS 0071

Guide to the Records of the U.S. Customs House, Fairfield District

By Meg Rinn, February 2020

Descriptive Summary

Creator: U.S. Customs House, Fairfield district

Title: Records of the U.S. Customs House, Fairfield district

Dates: 1793-1881

Quantity: 102 volumes, some bound, some housed in archival boxes

Abstract: Capturing the seafaring trade of Fairfield County, this collection from the U.S. Customs House represents some of the earliest material held by the Bridgeport History Center. The various licenses and accounts provide a year-by-year look into trade conducted along the Long Island Sound.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical information

Customs houses served as a port of entry and a means to track trade and collect revenue. This meant recording which ships were coming in and out, what was aboard them, and information about the vessel itself. Samuel Smedley served as the Customs House collector from 1789-1817 in Fairfield.

Over the years, Fairfield County became a very busy port, and the records that were created by customs officials reflect that fact. Material was organized by the customs house by the size of the vessel (over or under 20 tons). The house also regulated the fishing trade along the Long Island Sound.

Additional research is being conducted at this time.

Scope and Content note:

Most documents within the bound volumes of this collection are ship licenses, and name captains, what they were carrying, and information about the vessel itself. Information on steamboats appears at the end of the collection, as steamship lines began to flourish in the area towards the end of the 19th century. Between the license bonds for ships over and under 20 tons, there is a nearly century long uninterrupted record of commercial activity carried out along the coast of Fairfield County.

Arrangement Note:

The collection is arranged into 5 series, some with several sub-series. It is clear from the titles of bound volumes and the forms within that at some point, license bonds gained a distinction between vessels over 20 tons and under 20 tons. This is reflected in arrangement.

Series 1, License bonds, are essentially permission to be employed and carrying on trade. These

bonds were issued for only a year, and named owners, ship names, and eventually made a distinction between size. Subseries A represents license bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, whereas subseries B and C represent license bonds for ships over and under 20 tons, respectively. This distinction was made as trade grew, and there are many more bonds for over 20 ton vessels.

Series 2, List of renewed licenses granted, contains exactly that.

Series 3, contains subseries A, Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, and subseries b, Abstracts of licenses granted to enrolled vessels in the district of Fairfield for carrying on the coasting trade. The abstracts served as a quick way to look up enrollment information.

Series 4, Accounts, contains account information but the documentation begins only begins in 1869. They vary from being kept daily, weekly, quarterly, or daily.

Series 5, other, contains the correspondence between the office of Commissioner of Customs, Treasury Department, and Collector of Customs,

Administrative information:

Provenance: Unknown

See also

Ships' Papers Collections (MS 36), Fairfield Museum and History Center, Fairfield, Connecticut.

Preferred Citation:

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Names and Subject Tracings

Corporate names

United States. Collector of Customs (Fairfield, Conn.)

Subject tracings

Bonds

Bridgeport, Conn.

Customhouses

Fairfield, Conn.

Trade regulation

Detailed box and folder listing

Series I

Subseries A

Box 1, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1793-1795

Box 2, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1795-1798

Box 3, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1798-1800

Box 4, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1803-1804

Box 5, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1804-1808

Box 6, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1808-1813

Box 7, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1818-1819

Box 8, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1819-1822

Box 9, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1822-1825

Box 10

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1832-1836

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1838-1844

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1838-1844

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1838-1844

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1838-1844

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License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1845

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1846

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1847

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1848

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1849

License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1850

Box 12, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1857-1859

Box 13, License bonds for vessels employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1865-1869

Subseries B

Box 14, License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1797-1799

Box 15

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1841

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1842

Box 16

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1843

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1844
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1845
[duplicate licenses]

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1846
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1847

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1849-1850
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1850-1851

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1852
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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1854

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1852-1879

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1855
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1856

Box 22

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, Nov-December 1846 and March-April 1851
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1853
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1853-1854
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1854
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1857-1861

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1848
License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1851

Box 24

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1855-

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Box 25

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1859-1861

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1862-1865

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1861-1864

Box 28

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1865-1868

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1868-1870

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1870-1873

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1870-1872

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1871-1873

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1873-1875

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1873-1875

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1873-1874

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1874-1875

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1875-1877

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1875-1878

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1877-1879

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1879-1881

Subseries C

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License bonds for vessels under 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1854

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License bonds for vessels under 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1855-1864

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License bonds for vessels under 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1865-1870

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1871-1873

Box 44

License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1875-

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License bonds for vessels above 20 tons employed in carrying on coasting trade for one year, 1876-1877

Series 2, List of renewed licenses granted,

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1. List of renewed licenses granted, 1869-1872

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1793-1827

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1794-1798

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1799-1802

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1802-1805

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1805-1810

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1810-1815

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1815-1819

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1820-1824

Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1827-1830

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1832-1844

Box 55

Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1845
Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1846
Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1847-1851
Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1848-1850
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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1848-1850
Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1853-1854

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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1855-1859
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Enrollment bonds for ships and vessels employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, 1870-1875

Subseries B

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Abstract of licenses granted to enrolled vessels in the district of Fairfield for carrying on the coasting trade, 1794-1838

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Abstract of licenses granted to enrolled vessels in the district of Fairfield for carrying on the coasting trade, 1798-1839

Series 4, Accounts

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Accounts weekly, 1869-1872

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Accounts daily, 1873-1879

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Accounts monthly, 1869-1873

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Accounts monthly, 1873-1880

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Accounts current, 1870-1880

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Accounts quarterly, 1865-1877

Accounts daily, 1867-1873

Accounts weekly, 1876-1881

Box 66

2. Steamboat accounts, quarterly 1867-1871

Series 5, Other

3. Correspondence between the office of Commissioner of Customs, Treasury Department, and Collector of Customs, 1865-1881