

Record Unit #139

U.S. Customs House and Custom Collectors, District of Edgartown 1785-1989

By: Nancy Young

Descriptive Summary

Repository: Martha's Vineyard Museum

Call No.

Title: U.S. Customs House and Custom Collectors, Martha's Vineyard

Creator: Nancy Young

Quantity: 3 cubic feet

Abstract: This collection of original records and documents from the Port of Edgartown Custom House includes ship manifest, protests, court records, and Treasury accounts as well as reports and accounts of Lighthouses in the district. Most documents are original or noted if not.

Acquisition Information: _____ acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum in _____ by _____.

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Index Terms

Cooke, Jr., Thomas

Custom House, Holmes Hole

Custom House, Port of Edgartown

Custom Records, Edgartown

Custom Collectors, U.S. District of Edgartown

Light Vessels, Cape Cod

Light Vessels, Nantucket

Lighthouses, Cape Cod

Lighthouses, Nantucket

Lighthouse, Martha's Vineyard

Marine Hospital, Martha's Vineyard

Norton, Constant

Pease, John

Pease, Joseph Thaxter

Superintendent of Lights, District of Edgartown

Thaxter, Leavitt

Vinson, John

Series and Subseries Arrangement

Series I: Custom Collectors' correspondence 1806-1880

- Subseries A: Treasury Office
- Subseries B: Comptroller's Office
- Subseries C: Commissioner of Customs
- Subseries D: First Auditor
- Subseries E: Register Office
- Subseries F: Miscellaneous Correspondence

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- Subseries C: Court Judgements

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Series VI: Acquisition of Custom House Records by MVM 1920-1932

Historical Note:

Professor Morrison author of "Maritime History of Massachusetts" said in 1921 that he considered "the Edgartown Custom records of considerable importance for the movement of shipping."

The Vineyard's first Custom Collector was Matthew Mayhew, son of Governor Thomas Mayhew, who received his commission from Britain in 1671. Edgartown this became a Port of Entry and center of a customs District under the Crown until 1774, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from 1774 until 1789, when the United States Customs Service was established by Congress. Custom Collector was a political

patronage appointment even on the Island and most Collectors were important party supporters.

The first Federal Collector, John Pease, 1789-1909, and his successors were responsible for enforcing Customs regulations on Martha's Vineyard, No Man' Land, the Elizabeth Island and Falmouth. In 1913 when Edgartown ceased to be a Port of Entry the position of Collector was abolished.

The Collector's job was to assess and collect duty on imported articles, to prevent fraud and smuggling, and control carriers, persons and articles entering the United States. The Collector received a commission on the fees paid to the Treasury. Until the beginning of the 20th century, custom duties were the government's main source of income.

Masters of incoming vessels not owned by Edgartown citizens had to leave copies of their manifests with the Edgartown Collector, and sail to the port of delivery of their cargo with hatches sealed, usually with a Custom Inspector aboard. Damaged vessels seeking a harbor of refuge were exempt from the entry fee and this led to many legal disputes.

A few years into the 19th century, the Collectors were required to assess fees for the care of the sick and disabled seamen and Marine Hospitals.

As Superintendent of Lights, the Collector was responsible for maintenances of Light houses, light vessels and other aids to navigation in their districts.

The Custom District of Edgartown had no Customs House per se. Until 1849, each Collector used an office in his home. The second floor room in the Museum's Thomas Cooke House was traditionally the Customs office used by the second federal Collector Thomas Cooke, Jr. The Customs Service rented an office from 1849-1913, on the second floor of the building on the northwest corner of Main and Water Streets.

Scope and Content Note:

The earliest document in the collection is a Protest from 1785 concerning the storm damaged Brig *Thomas*, filed in Edgartown by a Notary Public. Other protests relate in detail the voyages and causes of the damage that made ships seek shelter.

The collection is rich in documents from the term of the second Collector, 1809-1830, Thomas Cooke, Jr. These include Custom House accounts, ship manifests with cargo lists for vessels arriving from out of the country, and coasters, along with the accounts and paurolls of the deputy Collectors who went on board the vessels. There are lists of forfeited good in Court Judgements, their auction sale prices, and the legal expenses involved.

Hezekiah Joel, Chappaquiddick Indian, presented his bill to Dr. Cooke for writing letters, power of attorney, traveling off-Island to settle claims, and paying claims. His own fee had to be paid not to him but to the Guardians of the Indians.

Joseph Thaxter Pease, 1845-1849 and 1853-1855, had complaints filed against him in Washington accusing him of ordering unnecessary ship surveys to enlarge his fee. From his terms we also have correspondence and accounts of building new Light

House and navigational aid along with Light House Keepers' reports (including those of two female keepers).

Included in the collection are letters to President Lincoln from Vineyard Republicans urging John Vinso's appointment as Collector. Collector Vinson's 1861 Commission, signed by President Lincoln, but dated after his assassination, is in the collection.

The voluminous and often fault-finding correspondence from the U.S. Treasury and the accounting required of the Collector by Washington is well documented starting in 1800 and continuing into the late 1800's.

More Superintendent of Lights records, mostly from Joseph Thaxter Pease's term, are in RU212 Lighthouses. Original Custom House ledgers and an original certificate signed by Pres. Abraham Lincoln attesting to ship as American can be found elsewhere in the Library. Florence Kern's histories of the individual Collectors are in the "Intelligencer."

Most documents are original or noted if not.

Series I: Custom Collectors' Correspondence: 1800-1880

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Subseries A: U.S. Treasury: 1833-1856

Folder 1: 1833,1836 JPN

Folder 2: 1843 JTP

Folder 3: 1846 JTP

Folder 4: 1847 JTP (includes letter complaining of his forcing ships to pay entry fee)

Folder 5: 1849 JTP

Folder 6: 1850 JTP

Folder 7: 1855 & 1856 CN

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Subseries B: Comptroller's Office 1800-1849

Folder 8: 1804, 1806 JP

Folder 9: 1845 JTP

Folder 10: 1846 JTP

Folder 11: 1847 JTP

Folder 12: 1848 JTP

Folder 13: 1849 JTP

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Subseries C: Commissioner of Customs: 1849-1850

Folder 14: 1849 JTP

Folder 15: 1850 JTP

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Subseries D: First Auditor 1845-1850

Folder 16: 1845 JTP

Folder 17: 1846 JTP

Folder 18: 1847 JTP
Folder 19: 1848 JTP
Folder 20: 1849 JTP
Folder 21: 1850 JTP

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Subseries E: Register Office: 1845-1848

Folder 22: 1845 JTP
Folder 23: 186 JTP
Folder 24: 1847 JTP
Folder 25: 1848 JTP

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Subseries E: Miscellaneous Correspondence: 1845-1880

A. Holmes Hole Custom House: 1845-1846

Folder 26: 1845 JTP
Folder 27: 1846 JTP

B. General Correspondence: 1845-1880

Folder 28: 1845, 1846 JTP
Folder 29: 1850 LT
Folder 30: CN

C. Letters of Recommendation: 1861

Folder 31: 1861 JV (letters and petition to Pres. Lincoln recommending John Vinson as Collector)

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Series II: Custom Collector Accounts: 1809-1865

Subseries A: Receipts 1809-1860

A. Edgartown

Folder 1: 1809 TC, Jr.
Folder 2: 1813 TC, Jr.
Folder 3: 1823 TC, Jr.
Folder 4: 1846 TC, Jr.
Folder 5: 1849 TC, Jr.
Folder 6: 1858 TC, Jr.
Folder 7: 1860 TC, Jr.

B. Holmes Hole

Folder 8: 1821 TC, Jr.
Folder 9: 1822 TC, Jr.
Folder 10: 1823 TC, Jr.
Folder 11: 1825 TC, Jr.
Folder 12: 1848 JTP

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Subseries B: U.S. Treasury Dept. 1812-1855

A. Treasury Drafts

Folder 13: 1847, JTP

- Folder 14: 1848, JTP
- Folder 15: 1855, JTP
- B. Treasury Reports**
 - Folder 16: 1854, CN
 - Folder 17: 1855, CN
- C. Bonds Payable- Correspondence**
 - Folder 18: 1813, TC, Jr.
 - Folder 19: 1845, CN
- D. Bonds Payable**
 - Folder 20: 1812, TC, Jr.
 - Folder 21: 1826, TC, Jr.
 - Folder 22: 1827, TC, Jr.

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Subseries C: Court Judgments with legal fees 1809-1865

- Folder 23: 1809 TC, Jr.
- Folder 24: 1810 TC, Jr.
- Folder 25: 1811 TC, Jr.
- Folder 26: 1812, 1813, TC Jr.
- Folder 27: 1814, TC, Jr.
- Folder 28: 1815 TC, Jr.
- Folder 29: 1816 TC, Jr.
- Folder 30: 1817 TC, Jr.
- Folder 31: 1818 TC, Jr.
- Folder 32: 1819 TC, Jr.
- Folder 33: 1821 TC, Jr.
- Folder 34: 1826 TC, Jr.
- Folder 35: 1865 JV

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Series III: Marine Hospital, Ill and Disabled Seamen: 1821-1849

Subseries A: Patients lists: 1821-1849

- Folder 1: 1821 TC, Jr.
- Folder 2: 1822 TC, Jr.
- Folder 3: 1823 TC, Jr.
- Folder 4: 1843 LT
- Folder 5: 1844 LT
- Folder 6: 1845 JTP
- Folder 7: 1847 JTP
- Folder 8: 1848 JTP
- Folder 9: 1849 JTP

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Subseries B: Accounts: 1844-1857

- Folder 10: 1844, LT
- Folder 11: 1845 JTP

Folder 12: 1846 JTP

Folder 13: 1847 JTP

Folder 14: 1846 JTP

Folder 15: 1853 Notebook "Money for Sick and Disabled Seamen," JTP

Folder 16: 1855, 1857 CN

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Series IV: Superintendent of Lights 1843-1850

Subseries A: Superintendent's Correspondence: Light Houses 1843-1847

1. General Correspondence

Folder 1: 1846 JTP

Folder 2: 1847 JTP

Folder 3: 1850 JTP

2. Individual Light House Correspondence

Folder 4: Cape Pogue Light, 1843 LT

Folder 5: Cape Pogue Light, 1845 JTP

Folder 6: Cape Pogue Light, 1846 JTP

Folder 7: Chatham Light, 1846 JTP

Folder 8: Cutterhunk Light, 1845, 1847 JTP

Folder 9: Edgartown Light, 1845 JTP

Folder 10: Holmes Hole Light, 1845, 1846 JTP

Folder 11: Monomoy Point Light, 1845, JTP

Folder 12: Monomoy Point Light, 1846, JTP

Folder 13: Monomoy Point Light, 1847, JTP

Folder 14: Nantucket Light, 1845, 1846 JTP

Folder 15: Nobsque Point Light, 1845 1846 JTP

Folder 16: Point Gannon Light, 1845 JTP

Folder 17: Point Gannon Light, 1846 JTP

Folder 18: Pollack Rip Light 1845 JTP

Folder 19: Tarpaulin Cove Light, 1845 JTP

Folder 20: Tarpaulin Cover Light, 1846 JTP

Folder 21: Tarpaulin Cover Light, 1847 JTP

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Subseries B: Superintendent's Accounts: Light Houses, 1845-1849

1. General Accounts

Folder 22: 1845, 1846 JTP

2. Individual Light House- Accounts

Folder 23: Cape Pogue Light, 1845 JTP

Folder 24: Cape Pogue Light, 1846 JTP

Folder 25: Cape Pogue Light, 1849 JTP

Folder 26: Chatham Light, 1846, 1847 JTP

Folder 27: Cutterhunk Light, 1845 JTP

Folder 28: Cutterhunk Light, 1846 JTP

Folder 29: Cutterhunk Light, 1859 JTP

Folder 30: Edgartown Light, 1845, 1846, 1849 JTP
Folder 31: Holmes Hole Light, 1845 JTP
Folder 32: Holmes Hole Light, 1846 JTP
Folder 33: Holmes Hole Light, 1849 JTP
Folder 34: Hyannis Light, 1849 JTP
Folder 35: Monomoy Point Light, 1845, 1849 JTP
Folder 37: Point Gannon Light, 1845, 1846 JTP
Folder 38: Tarpaulin Cover Light, 1846, 1847, 1849 JTP
Folder 39: West Chop Light, 1846 JTP

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Subseries C: Superintendent's Correspondence: Light Vessels 1845-1850

Folder 40: Cross Rip Vineyard Sound, 1845 JTP
Folder 41: Cross Rip Vineyard Sound, 1846 JTP
Folder 42: Sow and Pigs Floating Light Vessel 1847, 1850 JTP
Folder 43: Tuckernuck Shoal Floating Light Vessel, 1846 JTP

Subseries D: Superintendent's Accounts: Light Vessels 1845- 1849

Folder 44: Cross Rip Light Vessel, 1845 JTP
Folder 45: Cross Rip Light Vessel, 1846 JTP
Folder 46: Cross Rip Light Vessel, 1849 JTP
Folder 47: Sows and Pigs Floating Light Vessel, 1846 JTP
Folder 48: Sows and Pigs Floating Light Vessel, 1847 JTP (includes expenses for installation)
Folder 49: Sows and Pigs Floating Light, 1848 JTP
Folder 50: Sows and Pigs Floating Light, 1849 JTP
Folder 51: Tuckernuck Shoal Floating Light Vessel, 1845 JTP
Folder 52: Tuckernuck Shoal Floating Light Vessel, 1846 JTP

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Series V: Custom House Documents 1785-1858

Subseries A: Protests 1785

Folder 1: 1785 JP

Subseries B: Reports 1809-1847

Folder 2: 1809 Weighers Reports TC, Jr.
Folder 3: 1809 Surveyor Reports TC, Jr.
Folder 4: 1847 Treasury Circular listing amount of duty

Subseries C: Seamen's Certificates 1800-1829

Folder 5: 1800 JP
Folder 6: 1829 TC, Jr.

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Subseries D: Registers of Oaths (sworn by owners of vessels) 1850-1858

Folder 7: 1850 LT (copies)
Folder 8: 1851 LT (copies)
Folder 9: 1852 LT (copies)
Folder 10: 1853 LT (copies)

Folder 11: 1854 JTP (copies)

Folder 12: 1855 CN (copies)

Folder 13: 1856 CN (copies)

Folder 14: 1857 CN (copies)

Folder 15: 1858 CN (copies)

Subseries E: Coaster Manifests listing cargo 1811-1829

Folder 16: 1811 TC Jr.

Folder 17: 1812 TC Jr.

Folder 18: 1813 TC Jr.

Folder 19: 1815 TC Jr.

Folder 20: 1818 TC Jr.

Folder 21: 1821 TC Jr.

Folder 22: 1822 TC Jr.

Folder 23: 1823 TC Jr.

Folder 24: 1825 TC Jr.

Folder 25: 1826 TC Jr.

Folder 26: 1829 TC Jr.

Subseries G: Permanent Registers of Vessels as listed in Custom House ledgers in the Museum 1820-1853 (copies)

Folder 27: Permanent Register of Vessels employed in the Foreign Trade, 1833-1844 JTP (copy)

Folder 28: Permanent Enrollment of vessels in coasting trade and fisheries 1819-1853 (copy)

Folder 29: Permanent Enrollment of vessels under 20 tons in coasting trade 1820-1828 (copy)

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Series VI: Publications 1896-1989

Folder 30: "Notes on the Collection of Customs and the Massachusetts Custom Houses" compiled by the Historical Activities Committee of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, Massachusetts, 1970

Folder 31: "The Pennsylvania Packet" Aug. 7, 1789 (1973 reprint)

Folder 32: "The First Officers of the United States Customs Service appointed by President George Washington in 1789," Michael N. Ingrisano, Jr. 1987

Folder 33:

a. List and dates of terms, 1789-1896 of Edgartown Custom Collectors, by John W. Pease, Oct. 5, 1896 (Handwritten mss.)

b. Excerpt from "A Biographical Directory of the U.S. Customs Service 1771-1989" 2nd vol., Wash. DC 1989 (copy) with listing of all Edg. Collectors.

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Series VI: Acquisition of Custom House Records by MVM 1920-1932

Folder 34:

a. Note on location of Edgartown Custom House records, Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings, 1920-1921, vol. LIV pp 330-331 (copy)

- b. Feb. 2, 1939, Letter from Archivist of N.B. Custom House to Henry beetle Hough re Edgartown Custom House records (copy)

Folder 35:

- a. Notes and receipt on sale of CH records to MVM, 1929, 1932 (copies)
- b. "Custom Records Saved by Society, V.G., Oct. 31, 1930 (copy)

Series VI: Oversize Documents

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Custom Collectors' Correspondence: continued

Comptroller's Office: continued

Folder 1: 1800 JP

Folder 2: 1804 JP

Folder 3: 1808 JP

Folder 4: 1809 JP

Folder 5: 1820 JP (final settling of his acct. as Collector)

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Custom Collector Accounts: continued

Receipts: continued

Folder 6: 1813 TC, Jr.

Folder 7: 1814 TC, Jr. (Hezekiah Joel; receipted bill for work at CH)

Payroll:

Folder 8: 1856 CN

Folder 9: 1858 CN

Folder 10: 1860 CN

Treasury Dept: continued

Folder 11: 1800 JP

Folder 12: 1804 JP

Folder 13: 1806 JP

Folder 14: 1807 JP

Folder 15: 1809 JP

Folder 16: 1825 TC, Jr.

Folder 17: 1836 CN

Folder 18: 1846 JTP

Folder 19: 1849 JTP

Folder 20: 1855 CN

Folder 21: 1856 CN

Debentures:

Folder 22: 1822 TC, Jr.

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Marine Hospital, Ill and Disabled Seamen 1821-1849 continued

Accounts: 1844-1857 continued

Folder 24: 1845 JTP

Folder 25: 1846 JTP

Folder 26: 1847 JTP

Folder 27: 1849 JTP
Folder 28: 1855 JTP
Folder 29: 1856 CN

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Custom House Documents 1785-1858, continued

Subseries G: Bills of Sale

Folder 30: 1806 JP
Folder 31: 1809 JP
Folder 32: 1810 TC, Jr.
Folder 33: 1811 TC, Jr.
Folder 34: 1844 JTP

Subseries H: Custom Collectors' Commissions

Folder 35: 1791 thru 1903 (photocopies)
Folder 36: Deputy Collector Commissions 1821 TC, Jr. 1842 LT (photocopies)
Folder 37: John Vinson's Commission as Collector, 1861 signed by Pres. Abraham Lincoln dated July 30th, after his assassination

Series VI: Oversize Documents, continued

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Custom House Documents 1785-1858, continued

Entry of Merchandise:

Folder 1: 1811 TC, Jr.
Folder 2: 1818 TC, Jr.
Folder 3: 1821 TC, Jr.
Folder 4: 1822 TC, Jr.
Folder 5: 1826 TC, Jr.
Folder 6: 1840 JTP

Protests:

Folder 7: 1805-1806 JP
Folder 8: 1809 TC, Jr.
Folder 9: 1810 TC, Jr.
Folder 10: 1811 TC, Jr.

Ship Manifests: listing masters, and cargo

Folder 11: 1809 TC, Jr.
Folder 12: 1810 TC, Jr.
Folder 13: 1815 TC, Jr.
Folder 14: 1816 TC, Jr.
Folder 15: 1817 TC, Jr.
Folder 16: 1818 TC, Jr.
Folder 17: 1819 TC, Jr.

Holmes Hole Custom House:

Folder 18: 1849 JTP: Return of monies
Folder 19: 1825 TC, Jr.: Ship arrivals

Miscellaneous

Folder 20: Temporary ship registration 1844 LT

Folder 21: Certificate of embarkation in Spanish 1849 JTP

Folder 22: Certificate in 4 languages attesting to ship as American, signed by
Pres. Millard Fillmore 1851, JTP

Superintendent of Lights**Accounts:**

Folder 23: 1845 JTP

Folder 24: 1849 JTP, TC Jr.