

James G. Tarr & Bro. Wholesale Fish Dealers Gloucester, MA Archive Collection A06

Cape Ann Historical Association
27 Pleasant Street
Gloucester, Ma 01930

1.75 linear feet
4 manuscript containers

Accession No.1997.38
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By: Howard Thomas
Supervising Archivist: Ellen Nelson

Acquisition: This collection is the gift of Roland and Martta Blanchet of Rockport, Massachusetts

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Historical Background Note

The James G. Tarr & Bro. company were wholesale dealers in dry and pickled fish, specializing in mackerel and boneless cod, from 1855 to c.1910. At their height they occupied ten large buildings and spacious flake yards for drying the fish on five acres on Rocky Neck, and employed 75 workers.

Andrew Dodd and James G. Tarr started the business as Dodd, Tarr & Co., a grocery and supply store on Rocky Neck, and were soon joined by Stephen Dodd and David Tarr. By 1874 they had become James G. Tarr & Bro. By 1859 the business had grown to the point that they also owned several fishing vessels. As early as 1858, Dodd(s) and Tarr(s), with others, had owned shares together in fishing vessels. In the 1870 issue of *List of Vessels Belonging to the District of Gloucester*, Dodd, Tarr & Co. owned thirteen vessels and the Tarr Bros. owned five. A spot check of the years, 1870 to 1908, show that the Tarrs registered between eleven and twenty vessels each year, employing 225 hands. With Typical Yankee ingenuity, they also established a marine railway to service their own and others' vessels.

According to David Tarr's undated obituary, Andrew Dodd left the firm in 1864 and Stephen Dodd left in 1874. At this time the name of the firm became James G. Tarr & Bro. Advertisements in the 1875 *Gloucester City Directory* show Stephen Dodd & Co. as a wholesale fish dealer at the Gloucester National Bank Building and James G. Tarr & Bro. as wholesale fish dealers at Rocky Neck.

The James G. Tarr & Bro. Wholesale Fish Company was just one of the business activities in which the Tarr brothers were involved. The 1869 *Gloucester City Directory* lists James G. Tarr as being with Dodd, Tarr & Co., James G. Blatchford & Co., ship painters, and Tarr & Wonson.

Tarr & Wonson was the copper paint manufactory established at Tarr's wharf in 1863 by Augustus Wonson and James G. Tarr. An advertisement in Pringle's *History of Gloucester, Mass. 1623-1892* published in 1892, shows James H. Tarr (son of James G.) as the manufacturer of New England Brand Copper Paint.

An ad appears on the same page in Pringle's for Jas. G. Tarr & Brother, Wholesale Fish Dealers and includes the names of five Tarr men: James G., D. Sherman, B.N. (Benjamin), David, and T.L.

Scope and Content Note

This collection provides a vignette on the everyday operation of the Gloucester wholesale fish dealer, James G. Tarr & Bro., from 1894 to 1901.

This collection was received in a weathered cardboard carton containing papers haphazardly scattered and two full, moldy commercial organizers. The organizers were labeled "B" and "C" but the material stuffed into them and the other papers in the box had no apparent relationship to these letters. The names of all the firms and individuals represented in the carton fall between the letters "A" and "N" of the alphabet and the dates range from 1894 to 1901 with one exception. This indicates that this group of papers is a small part of the Tarr Company's complete office filing system and it also indicates that the Tarr Company probably used an alphabetical, chronological filing system.

We have arranged these papers in subject series which may or may not have been used by the Tarr Company while at the same time trying to maintain an alphabetical, chronological arrangement within each series.

Series Listing

Series 1 General Correspondence

- A. Accounts
- B. Credit companies' reports
- C. Rail shipment notices
- D. Items regarding vessels and fisherman
- E. Solicitations from other businesses
- F. Personal
- G. Outgoing – copies

Series 2 Traveling Salesmen's correspondence and orders

- A. Lane, Albert W. (Bert)
- B. Babson, N.H.

Series 3 Merchandise broker's correspondence and orders

- A. Edward J. Davis, broker
- B. Miscellaneous wholesale fish dealers

Series 4 Miscellaneous

Container List

Series 1 General Correspondence

Box 1

Folder 1

A. Accounts

Folder 2

B. Credit Companies' reports

Folder 3

C. Rail Shipments

Folder 4

D. Vessels and fishermen

Folder 5

E. Business and solicitations

Folder 6

F. Personal

Folder 7

G. Outgoing

Series 2 Traveling salesmen, correspondence and orders

A. Lane, Albert W. (Bert)

Folder 8 February 16, 1900 to April 11, 1900

9 May 4, 1900 to August 16, 1900 (includes note from Mrs. Lane Feb. 9, 1901)

B. Babson, N.H.

Folder 10 July 13, 1899 to March 31, 1900

11 April 2, 1900 to may 15, 1900

Box 2

- Folder 1 May 2, 1900 to June 30, 1900
- 2 July 1, 1900 to July 25, 1900
- 3 August 2, 1900 to August 16, 1900

Series 3 Merchandise Brokers

A. Edward Davis

- Folder 4 February 1 1894 to December 1, 1894
- 5 January 14, 1895 to December 21, 1895
- 6 January 1, 1896 to July 17, 1896
- 7 March 3, 1899 to March 12, 1900

B. Miscellaneous wholesale fish dealers (arranged alphabetically by company then chronologically within company)

- Folder 8 Akron Grocery Co. to Ayer & Andrews Co.
- 9 Babcock, Hurd & Co. to Barton & Wheadon

Box 3

- Folder 1 Bateman & Co. to E.H. Betts
- 2 Bliven to G.F. Burton
- 3 S.D. Chamberlin & Sons to C.H. Critchett
- 4 C.E. Crouse & Co. to C.A. Curtze
- 5 Davis Brothers to A.W. Doolittle
- 6 Dries back to Dwyer & Vhay
- 7 E.E. Eagle to H.C. Fisher

Box 4

- Folder 1 Jobst, Bethard & Co. to Judge & Co.
- 2 C.T. Keene to Krause, Ingham and Hiester
- 3 Lackawanna Store Assn., Ltd. To S. H. Levin's sons
- 4 Likens' to Geo. T. Moon (also includes Phelps, Brace & Co. and Riggs Market
- 5 Single items from other fish dealers

Series 5 Miscellaneous

- Folder 6 Office supplies
- 7 Fish price list
- 8 Boston Fish Bureau report
- 9 Tarr Company advertisements
- 10 Stock certificate book