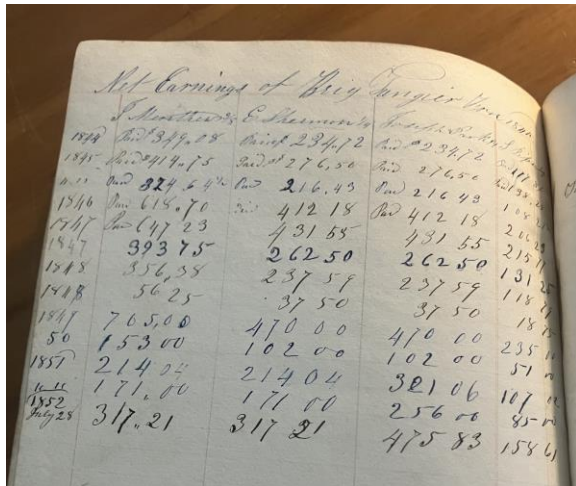


## Pulling a Story Out of Account Books

By Cipperly Good, the Richard Saltonstall Jr. Curator of Maritime History

Descendents of a local Searsport Sea Captain recently donated three account books to the Museum. At first blush, one might consider account books to be dry and of little use in telling interesting stories. I am about to prove that wrong.



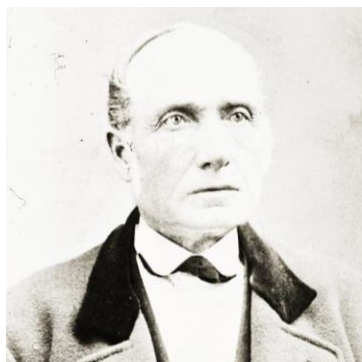
Year	Jeremiah Merithew	Elisha Sherman	Joseph Park	Solomon Piper
1844	2344.75	2344.72	2344.72	2344.72
1845	2414.75	276.50	276.50	276.50
1846	618.70	216.43	216.43	216.43
1847	47.23	412.18	412.18	412.18
1848	393.75	431.55	431.55	431.55
1849	356.58	262.50	262.50	262.50
1850	56.25	237.59	237.59	237.59
1851	765.00	37.50	37.50	37.50
1852	153.00	470.00	470.00	470.00
1853	214.04	102.00	102.00	102.00
1854	171.00	214.04	214.04	214.04
1855	317.21	171.00	171.00	171.00
1856		317.21	317.21	317.21
1857			475.83	475.83
1858				158.61

List of owners of the brig TANGIER from 1844 to 1852: Jeremiah Merithew, Elisha Sherman, Joseph Park, and Solomon Piper. LB2025.9.1.

The first account book includes accounts with the brig TANGIER as well as other vessels in which Joseph Park owned shares from 1842 to 1879. The 92' TANGIER was built in Searsport by masterbuilder Jeremiah Merithew (1792-1862) in 1842. It was jointly owned by Jeremiah Merithew (3/8 share), Elisha Sherman (1/4 share), Joseph Park (1/4 share), and Solomon Piper (1/8 share).

As Museum regulars know, Jeremiah Merithew's house sits in the middle of our campus at 4 Church Street. From his house on the hill, Merithew could look to the left to

observe his shipyard in the hollow at the foot of Elm Street and look to the right to see the Searsport Bank, which he founded in 1853 and served as its president until his death. Merithew made his money through his shipyard, where he built one ship, nine schooners, 16 brigs, and 13 barks between 1816 and 1874; he owned shares in many more either personally or through shares owned by the Searsport Bank. As a prominent businessman, Merithew earned the votes of his fellow citizens to become a member of the State legislature in 1858.



Joseph Park II (1816-1888). Ship Captain Collection, LB2008.3.251.

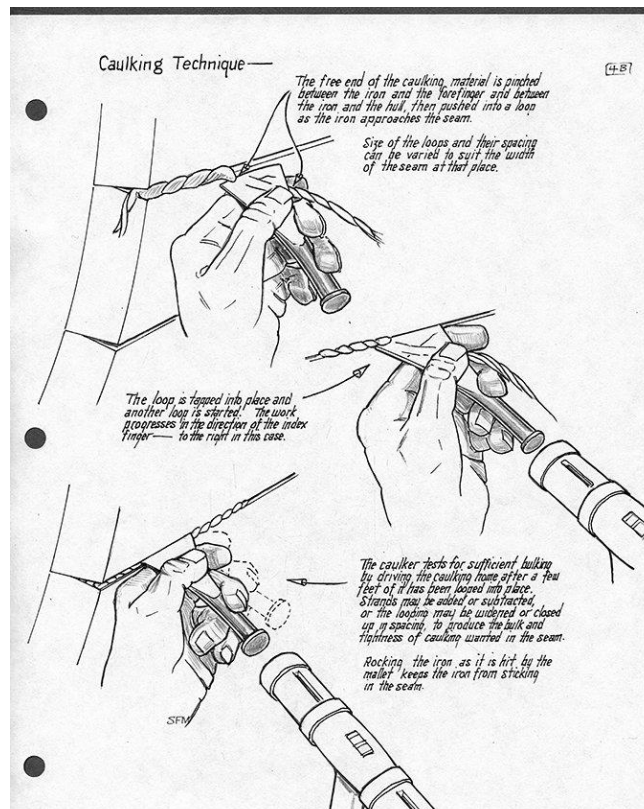
Joseph Park II (1816-1888) was TANGIER's first captain in 1842, and swapped command of it with his cousin Benjamin Bentley Park and others for the next eight years. When not on the TANGIER, he was on the schooner RAMBLER in 1843 and the brig DELMONT LOCK in 1853. Joseph continued to own shares in the TANGIER into the 1850s. As we will see with the later account books, he found his niche as a ship owner and "home office" coordinator for sea captain relatives. One such relative was his great-nephew and adopted son, Edwin Lancaster Griffin, whose mother was Joseph II's niece, Mary Polly Park

(1806-1848), and whose father, Captain Phineas Pendleton Griffin Sr. (1801-1846), died in Mariel, Cuba. Due to the couple's premature deaths, their three sons, who later became sea captains, and a daughter were adopted by relatives. Edwin Lancaster Griffin's descendants donated these account books to the Museum.

The third owner of TANGIER, Solomon Piper (1789-1866), was a Boston firewood merchant and director of the Freeman's Bank. Through one or both of these connections, Piper became an investor in Searsport vessels, and Merithew reciprocated by naming a schooner for him in 1845.

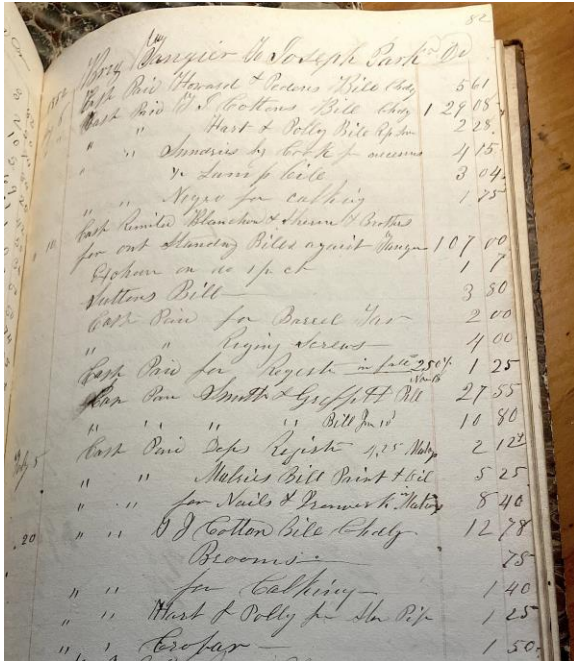
Finally, Elisha Sherman Jr. (1817-1858) was a Prospect resident who moved to Chelsea, Massachusetts, where he was a merchant. If you have any more leads on Elisha, we would love to know!

As I scanned the account book, a phrase kept jumping out at me: "Paid Negro for Calking." Deciding to dig deeper, I took my time looking for instances when the brig TANGIER was paying for caulking.



A quick definition of caulking first: large wooden vessels are constructed of planks of wood. To seal the seams between planks, material such as cotton or frayed ropes were driven into the gaps and covered with tar. Over time, the movement of the vessel shifted the cotton and leaks formed. The vessel was recalced to seal the seams. Samuel F. Manning Illustration Collection, LB2016.25.2043.

Date	Entry	Cost x Time	Profit/Loss
December 13, 1844	To cash paid for calking ports	1.75 x ½	-00.87 ½
December 14, 1844	Freight to Guadeloupe		+1408.38
January 27, 1845	To caking ports in Guadeloupe	1.86 x ½	-00.93
April 5, 1845	By freight to New York		+1500.00
April 5, 1845	By demerage of brig of the same		+100.00
April 26, 1845	Wilmington, Messrs. Potter and Kidder bill		-36.99
April 26, 1845	To cash paid for calking ports	2.00 x ½	- 1.00
May 15, 1845	By freight to Warren, R.I.		+1012.42
November 12, 1845	To cash paid for Calking ports	1.00 x ½	-0.50
November 12, 1845	By freight to Newport on lamp		-363.21
September 23, 1846	To expenses relating to death Capt. Griffin		
December 7, 1846	To cash paid for Calking ports	2.00 x ½	-1.00
February 17, 1847	to calking ports in Havana	2.00 x ½	-1.00
January 20, 1849	Havana; By 2 ½ months charter for Potter & Kidder		+1500.00
February 2, 1849	Cash price for calking [Rhode Island]		-3.20
March 13, 1850	By cash for Potter & Kidder ac charter		+1200.00
March 13, 1850	paid Negro for Calking		-0.75
May 5, 1850	By cash for P Kidder at charter		+1200.00
May 17, 1850	Paid cash for calker [Havana]		-1.00
July 3, 1850	By cash for Potter & Kidder at Charter		+1200.00
March 1, 1851	Paid Negro caulking [Wilmington]		-1.00
April 15, 1851	By 1 ½ months charter	600 x 1.5	+900.00
April 19, 1851	paid cash to Negro for calking [Wilmington]		-1.37
May 30, 1851	by 1 ½ months charter	600 x 1.5	+900.00
October 18, 1851	cash paid to Mr. Dolby for calking & carp'y [Boston]		-10.74
January 6, 1852	Cash paid Negro for calking [Wilmington]		-1.75
January 8, 1852	by 2 months charter at 600	600 x 2	+1200.00
February 20, 1852	Cash paid for calking		-1.40



Page from account book for the brig TANGIER. Note the entries for caulking the brig on January 6 and February 20, 1852. The owners could get away with a leaking vessel because the cargo of wood kept the brig afloat. LB2025.9.1.

As evidenced by the account book, the brig TANGIER and its owners Merithew, Sherman, Park, and Piper had a lengthy business contract with the lumber mills of Potter and Kidder in Wilmington, North Carolina prior to the American Civil War. Potter and Kidder was one of the largest manufacturers and dealers in yellow pine lumber in the South. The TANGIER headed south with a cargo of Maine lumber and continued with stops in Cuba, Guadeloupe, or Rhode Island to pick up other goods. With these frequent stops in Wilmington, it made sense to employ the local Wilmington caulking gangs to recaulk the seams that had loosened on the voyage down. Individuals of African heritage, whether enslaved or free, learned the caulking trade; in fact, Frederick Douglass was an enslaved caulker who used his maritime connects to

self-emancipate.



Bark Edward Kidder - Entering Boston Bay. Vessel File Photography Collection, LB1982.43.3.

Edward Kidder (1805-1885) was born in New Ipswich, New Hampshire and moved to Wilmington, North Carolina circa 1826. His partner was Captain Gilbert Potter (1788-1862) of New London, Connecticut. Kidder married his business partner's daughter Ann Potter in 1836 and father and son-in-law formed the business in 1839. Potter and Kidder put enslaved Africans to work in their lumber mill and placed newspaper ads like this [one](#) in the event that an enslaved person managed to

escape. After Captain Potter's death, Kidder went into business with Castine, Maine native Silas N. Martin as the firm of Kidder & Martin. When that partnership dissolved in 1870, he started a business with his sons as Edward Kidder & Sons, which continued to operate after his death.

The connection between Searsport and Edward Kidder did not end with TANGIER. Captain Joseph Park II named his son Edward Kidder Park (1849-1892) in honor of this fruitful contract. After the 179' bark EDWARD KIDDER was built in Newburyport, Massachusetts in

1874, a series of Searsport sea captains rotated command of the vessel. In addition to Amasa D. Field (1882-83) and Ira Blanchard Staples (1887), the bark's shipmasters included Joseph Park II's son Edward Kidder Park, great-nephew-in-law James Frank Peterson, Jr. (1877), adopted son and great-nephew Edwin Lancaster Griffin (1880-1894, with rotations of other captains during his tenure), great-nephew Joseph Henry Park (1889-1894), and the fiancé of his great-great niece, Ernest Steger, who drowned while in command (1894-1895).

The recent gift to the Museum also included the account book for the bark EDWARD KIDDER and its owners from July 28, 1882 to March 30, 1886. Many of the entries are with crew members, which give a fascinating account of the diversity of the crew and the ports where they signed on and off, or received advances on their pay for shore leave.

Date	Description	Amount
1882	Time Commenced Aug 5 <sup>th</sup> 1882 as Cabin Boy at \$15.00 per Month Time of Service	\$
1882	Dr. To Adv. "Cash New York	\$ 30.00
Dec 20 1882	" " " Batavia	f 4.50
1883	Jan 27 " " " Probolinggo	" 12.00
		" 16.50
	Charge 1 mo. Cash	\$ 6.60
		15.00

LB2025.9.2

On August 5, 1882, the captain of the bark EDWARD KIDDER signs on a cabin boy in New York who gives his name as Ah Foo. This was a common name meaning "wealthy" or "blessed" taken by Cantonese or Hakka immigrants to the Australian Gold Rush. Ah Foo is paid \$15 a month and takes advances on his wages at New York at the time of his signing, at Batavia [modern-day Jakarta in Indonesia] on December 20, 1882, and Probolinggo [sic] on the island of Java in current-day Indonesia on January 27, 1883. His net pay is \$6.60.

69

Augustus G. Gillott Steward  
In acct with Owners of Bark Edward Kiddie

1883	Time commenced Aug 23 1883		
	As Steward's Wages per Month	\$ 7.10.0	
	Time of service from Aug 23/83 to Nov 20/83 2 mos & 28 days @ 36 <sup>27</sup>		\$ 10 6 68
	Dr		
	To Advances in London	\$ 10.00	416 07
	"	my	29 75
	Keep money for		1 65
	Balance due		<u>29 21</u>

LB2025.9.2

Augustus G. Gillott signed on as Steward from August 23, 1883 to November 20, 1883. The steward oversaw the preparation and serving of meals, cleaning the officer's quarters, and provisioning the vessel. Gillott took an advance in London.

77

Sarah Gillirt Cook & Steward in acct  
with Owners of Bark Edward Kiddie

1883	Time commenced Nov 21 1883		
	as Cook & Steward at \$ 15.00		
	Term of Service		
	Discharged April 30 <sup>th</sup> 1884		
	Dr		
	To Advances in New York	\$ 70.00	\$ 70.00
	" " " Melbourne	\$ 21.00	
	" " " Newcastle	2.5.6	9 25
	" " " Padang	\$ 22.75	
	" " " Doctor	\$ 10.00	5 60
	" " " Penang		22.10
	" " " Singapore		2 30
	" " " Hospital to July 1 <sup>st</sup> 1884		1 94
	Stop acct		
	Paid off before the Census		

Sarah Gillirt Stewardess in acct  
with Owners of Bark Edward Kiddie

1883	Time commenced Nov 21 <sup>st</sup> 1883		
	as Stewardess at \$ 15.00		
	Term of Service		
	To Advances in New York	\$ None	
	" " Hospital money to July 1 1884		
	Paid off before the Census		

LB2025.9.2

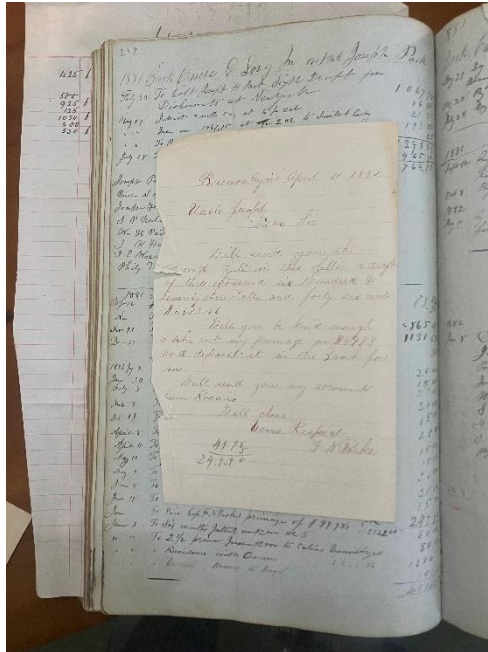
Although the new account keeper uses a different spelling of Augustus' name, it seems likely that A. Gillirt, who signed on a Cook & Steward, is one and the same. And this time, his wife Sarah signs on as Stewardess. In addition to his duties overseeing the culinary and housekeeping operations, Augustus is now doing the cooking duties and enlisted his wife to tend to the officer's quarters. Their term lasts from November 21, 1883 until at least July 1,

1884. Both accounts list an advance, or lack thereof, in New York. Then Augustus takes cash in Melbourne and Newcastle, Australia; Padang on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia; Penang on the Straits of Malacca in Malaysia; and Singapore. There is a doctor's bill in the middle of the voyage for Augustus and a hospital bill for both at the end of their account. Sarah is paid \$15 to Augustus is paid \$25.



*The bark CARRIE E. LONG was built in the neighboring town of Stockton Springs in 1866 for William Park, Joseph II's brother. William was its captain from 1866-1868 and commissioned this portrait (1997.14.1) of the bark sailing into Flushing (Vlissingen), The Netherlands. Joseph II and William's nephew John Fred Nichols Park had its command from 1882-1892.*

The last account book in the recent gift was that of Joseph Park II from 1847 to 1888. Tucked into the account book were two letters from his nephew F.N. (John Fred Nichols) Parke who had command of the bark CARRIE E. LONG, of which Joseph II owned shares. One will notice that F.N. uses the spelling of Parke for his last name; same family, different spellings. The Nichols/Nickels family of Searsport had a similar disagreement about the spelling of their last name. In the letters, F.N. Parke requests primage, defined as a small payment or percentage surcharge on freight paid to the ship's captain for the care of cargo. When we compare the letters to lines in the account books, we can see that he was indeed paid his requested amount.



LB2025.9.3

The account book entry:

Jun 11 1882 / To paid Cap FN Parks primage of \$4998 # 5c 252206 / 24.9.9.0. [This appears to be a conversion of US Dollars to a foreign currency that appears again in pencil at the bottom of F.N. Parke's letter.

The letter:

Buenos Aires April 11, 1882

Uncle Joseph

Dear Sir

Will send you the second bill in the letter a draft of three thousand six hundred seventy three dolls and forty six cents \$3673.46.

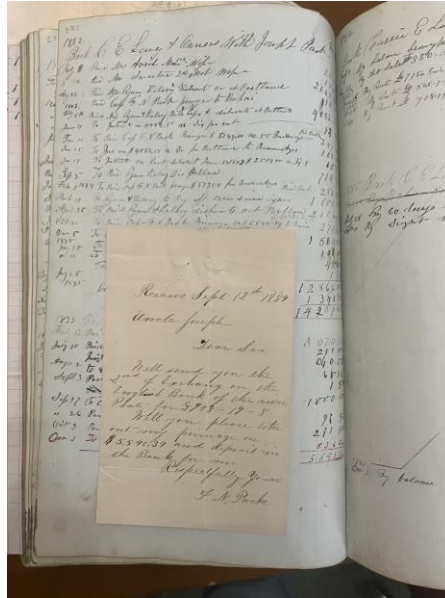
Will you be kind enough to take out my primage on \$4998 and deposit it in the Bank for me.

Will send you my account from Rosario.

Will close

Yours Respect

F.N Parke



LB2025.9.3

The Account Book entry:

Oct. 30 1884 / To paid Capt. F N Park primage \$5930# to Rosario / 277.01

Letter:

Rosario Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1884

Uncle Joseph

Dear Sir

Will send you the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Exchange on the English Bank of the River Plate for £ 908-19-8.

Will you please take out my primage on \$5.540.34 and deposit in the Bank for me.

Respectfully yours,

F.N. Parke

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Three different account books, three different stories of Joseph Park II and his extended family's role in Searsport's merchant marine economy. While Joseph was controlling the purse strings at home and taking care of the next generations, those nephews and great-nephews were exploring the world and getting involved in international trade. These accounts reveal Maine's place in the exploitation of global trade, slave labor, and an economic system based on shares in the profit versus wages. From our 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, it gives us food for thought. One never knows what we will find when we dive deeper into these account books.