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003-02-03
William H. Burgess and Harriet Dunbar Burgess Collection
circa 1850-1862

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Number: 003-02-03

Title: William H. Burgess and Harriet Dunbar Burgess Collection

Creator: Burgess, William H., 1832-1911
Burgess, Harriet Dunbar, 1839-1918

Dates: circa 1850-1862

Quantity: 1 box (1 linear foot)

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition: Purchased, 2015

Accruals: No accruals are expected.

Custodial history: Unknown.

Processed by: The collection was processed in 2018 by Angela DiVeglia.

Language: Materials are in English.

RIGHTS AND ACCESS

Access: This collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Providence Public Library, Special Collections department.

Preferred Citation: Researchers are requested to use the following citation format: *[item title], William H. Burgess and Harriet Dunbar Burgess Collection, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.*

Property Rights: Copyright has been assigned to Providence Public Library.

INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS

Separated material None.

Published descriptions Not applicable.

Location of originals Not applicable.

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| Location of copies | Not applicable. |
| Publication note | Not applicable. |
| Subject headings | Massachusetts -- History -- 19th century. New Jersey -- History -- 19th century. Rhode Island -- History -- 19th century. Sailors -- United States -- 19th century. Stella Polare (Ship) Weeks, Hiram, 1804-1864. Whalers (Persons) -- Diaries. Whalers (Persons) -- United States. Whaling -- History -- 19th century. Diaries. Daguerreotypes. |

SEE ALSO

003-01-02, Wh P7577 1856j, Nicholson Whaling Collection Logbooks, Providence Public Library
Polar Star whaling logbook, New Bedford Free Public Library
Polar Star whaling logbook, Sag Harbor Whaling and Historical Museum

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William Henry Burgess was born on January 4, 1832 in Providence, Rhode Island, son of Richard H. Burgess and Hannah W. Gladding Burgess. As a young man, he began working as a seaman. Burgess served as the third mate on the *Polar Star's* 1856-1860 whaling voyage out of New Bedford, Massachusetts; it is unclear if he was on the *Polar Star's* previous voyages. After the conclusion of this whaling voyage, William enlisted in the Civil War with Company H, Massachusetts 15th Infantry Regiment on May 25, 1861. He was promoted to corporal and on February 22, 1862 he mustered out and transferred to the U.S. Navy, serving with the Western Gunboat Flotilla, where he was a bosun mate on the *Judge Torrence*.

Harriet I. Dunbar was born in August 1839 in New Jersey, daughter of Amos B. Dunbar and Isabella Ward Dunbar, both natives of Massachusetts. After Harriet's mother's death, her father remarried, to Anna Eliza Denton Dunbar. Harriet had two siblings, Amos and Charles, the latter of whom died in early childhood. Her father was a straw hat maker.

William Burgess and Harriet Dunbar were married around 1865. They had four children: Henry G. Burgess (b. 1867), Ralph E. Burgess (b. 1881), Isabella Gladding Burgess Greene (b. 1871), and Ida Gertrude Burgess Langill (b. 1874). All four survived to adulthood, although Henry passed away at age 29. The family lived in Gardner, Massachusetts; William is listed in several censuses as working in a chair shop, and was listed as a mechanic in his later life, while Harriet kept house.

William H. Burgess died on May 16, 1911; Harriet died in 1918, and both are buried in the Green Bower Cemetery in Gardner, Massachusetts.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

This collection documents the lives of William H. Burgess, a seaman and whaler, and his wife Harriet Dunbar Burgess. William Burgess's life is predominantly captured through the text in his whaling journal/ commonplace book, which documents a whaling voyage on the *Polar Star* (leaving from the port of New Bedford, Massachusetts), and also includes verse, vocabulary words, and other tidbits from his life and interests. The collection also includes a printed book, purchased by William Burgess in Honolulu in 1854, which bears his stamp and inscription. Harriet Dunbar's life is less thoroughly documented, although the collection does include her manuscript friendship book, with handwritten verse inscribed by friends between the years 1853 and 1862. A number of the friends writing in the book are from the area around Newark, New Jersey, including Newark, Morristown, Elizabeth, and Leicester, while others are from New York and Massachusetts; enclosed between pages are some news clippings, images, and bookmarks.

The collection also includes daguerreotypes of William Burgess's and Harriet Dunbar Burgess's respective families, presumably taken in their respective home states of Rhode Island and New Jersey.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

The collection is divided into three small series based on item type.

Series 1: Daguerreotypes, circa 1850-1865

Series 2: Manuscript volumes, 1853-1862

Series 3: Published materials, 1843

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Tray 1

Series 1: Daguerreotypes, circa 1850-1865

| Item | Title |
|------|---|
| 1 | Oscar Burgess and Marcy (Mary?) Burgess: daguerreotype of teenagers in leather case |
| 2 | Richard H. Burgess: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 3 | Harriet I. Dunbar, Amos B. Dunbar, Henry A. Dunbar: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 4 | Richard H. Burgess: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 5 | Richard H. Burgess: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 6 | William Henry Burgess: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 7 | Amos B. Dunbar: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 8 | Charles (Charlie) Dunbar: daguerreotype death portrait of child in leather case |
| 9 | Unidentified man: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 10 | Ann (Anna?) Eliza Denton Dunbar: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 11 | Harriet Dunbar: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 12 | Harriet Dunbar: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 13 | William H. Burgess: daguerreotype in leather case |
| 14 | Unidentified baby girl: daguerreotype in gold frame |
| 15 | Unidentified baby girl: daguerreotype in gold frame |
| 16 | Unidentified baby girl: daguerreotype in gold frame |

Tray 2

Series 2: Manuscript volumes, 1853-1862

| Title | Date |
|---|-----------|
| William H. Burgess whaling journal and commonplace book | 1855-1857 |
| Harriet Dunbar Burgess friendship book of verse | 1853-1862 |

Series 3. Published materials, 1843

| Title | Date |
|--|------|
| <i>The Complaint: Or, Night Thoughts</i> , by Edward Young. Book with William H. Burgess' stamp and inscription. | 1843 |

