Wilson, Archibald, fl. 1843.

Forecastle Journals
1842–1883
(bulk dates 1842–1843)

Abstract: This journal, named after the forecastle or upper forward deck of a sailing ship, was kept by American sailor Archibald Wilson during the period 1842–1843 and documents five trips taken while serving aboard the ships James Edwards, Pioneer of Alexandria, and James Perkins. The journal entries document meteorological conditions, events of the day, duties performed aboard the ship, Wilson's thoughts and mood, and his interest in literature. Clippings from an 1883 issue of the magazine Harper's Weekly are also pasted into the volume.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 097, Item 085
Creator: Wilson, Archibald, fl. 1843.
Title: Forecastle Journals
Inclusive Dates: 1842–1883
Bulk Dates: 1842–1843
Extent: 1 v. (94 p.) ; 20 cm.
Language: Materials mostly in English with one instance of French.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 097, Item 085, Archibald Wilson, Forecastle Journals, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary: Item 085: Shelved in SPEC MSS 097
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Biographical Note

Archibald Wilson, possibly of New York, New York, was a sailor in the 1840s and served aboard merchant ships that made domestic and international trips.

Sources:

Biographical information derived from collection.
Scope and Content Note

This journal, named after the forecastle or upper forward deck of a sailing ship, was kept by American sailor Archibald Wilson during the period 1842–1843 and documents five trips taken while serving aboard the ships James Edwards, Pioneer of Alexandria, and James Perkins. The journal entries document meteorological conditions, events of the day, duties performed aboard the ship, Wilson's thoughts and mood, and his interest in literature. Clippings from an 1883 issue of the magazine Harper's Weekly are also pasted into the volume.

The entries documenting Wilson's voyages were not daily and do not reflect the exact departure and arrival dates. The first voyage documented by Wilson was made aboard the James Edwards, commanded by James Webster, which traveled from New York, New York, to New Orleans, Louisiana. Entries were made from November 8, 1842, to December 20, 1842. In New Orleans, Wilson transferred to the Pioneer of Alexandria, commanded by "Graham," which departed on December 28 for Liverpool, England. The Pioneer arrived in Liverpool on January 30, 1843. On February 7, Wilson left Liverpool for Savannah, Georgia, aboard the ship Triton, commanded by Alexander Wilson. From Savannah, the ship traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, where Wilson transferred to the James Perkins, which left for Le Havre, France, on April 24. The ship arrived in Le Havre on May 31 and by June 16 was returning to the United States, bound for Hampton Roads, Virginia. The James Perkins arrived at its destination around August 2, and Wilson stayed aboard for another trip, this one to Boston, which lasted from August 6 to August 12.

The entries for each voyage documented Wilson's duties, which included shifts as helmsman, ship repair and carpentry, and drawing the sails. He also discussed his relationship with the crew on the various ships (which was not always amicable), events of note that occurred during the day, and his thoughts on various subjects. Wilson demonstrates his interest in literature by copying passages from works such as Homer's Odyssey. Some of his entries tend towards the introspective and sometimes melancholy, mentioning disappointment in current events and at missing holidays such as New Year's Day and the Fourth of July as a consequence of being on voyages.

After the main journal entries, Wilson included "A Journal of Remarkable Incidents at sea" in which he documented events observed between 1840 and 1842 while serving on several ships. The events include men falling overboard, seeing other ships in distress, and witnessing remarkable phenomena such a extremely large and bright meteor. At the end of the journal, Wilson gives a short summary of twelve voyages taken from November 8, 1839, to March 3, 1844, which include the 1842–1843 voyages described in the journal.

Hand-drawn illustrations of flags, ships, and geometric figures are interspersed throughout the journal. Wilson wrote a list of "lunar observation rules" along with instructions on how to find the true azimuth at any time. The volume also includes pasted-in clippings from an 1883 issue of Harper's Weekly. One set of clippings features an article on the levees of New Orleans and two illustrations of the levees. The other set of clippings features an illustration and description of the Savannah, Georgia, harbor. The last page of the volume contains a postcard with illustrations of several ship classes (Sloop, Brig, Bark, etc.). The postcard was distributed by the United States Mutual Accident Association, located in New York City.

This volume is bound with a leather spine and decorative gold tooling.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Wilson, Archibald, fl. 1843--Diaries.

Corporate Names

James Edwards.

James Perkins.

Pioneer of Alexandria.

Topical Terms

Merchant mariners--Diaries.

Transatlantic voyages--History--19th century.

Geographic Names

North Atlantic Ocean--Description and travel--Sources.

Form/Genre Terms

Diaries.

Clippings (information artifacts)

Freehand drawings (drawings)

Postcards.

Occupation

Merchant mariners.

Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 097 Diaries, Journals, and Ships' Logs collection.
Detailed Description of the Collection

Forecastle Journals, 1842–1883 [Item 085]