

Sturgis Library Archives

MS. 161 Charter Party Document for Schooner Harmony, 1818

Extent: 1 document in multi-folder box.

Scope and Content Note: The collection consists of a multi-page charter party document for the Schooner Harmony of Barnstable, dated 1818. A charter party (also written as charterparty or charter-party) is a maritime contract between a shipowner and a "charterer" for the hire of either a ship for the carriage of passengers or cargo, or a yacht for pleasure purposes. The ship's owners, Preserved Fish and Joseph Grinnell, were entering into the charter party with merchants Wm. (William) Terrill and John W. Kearney for a trip from New York to Pernambuco, Brazil and back. Pernambuco was historically a major supplier of sugar and cotton.

Historical and Biographical Information: Preserved Fish was a prominent New York City shipping merchant. He originally prospered as a merchant in New Bedford, Massachusetts, but had a political squabble and left for New York. He, along with Joseph Grinnell, controlled a potent shipping firm named Fish & Grinnell – later Grinnell, Minturn & Company – which had its beginnings in his efforts to expand his whale oil market. In 1812, he became a director of Bank of America, founded after the charter of the First Bank of the United States was not renewed. He also was one of the 28 brokers of the New York Exchange Board, which later became the New York Stock Exchange.

After his resignation from Fish & Grinnell and a brief retirement from business, he served from 1836 to his death as President of the Tradesman's Bank as well as president of the Bank of America, which was unrelated to the current institution of that name. He was also involved with Tammany Hall: along with Gideon Lee, another banker, his faction controlled the Democratic Party in New York City at the time that the Locofoco reformers attempted, unsuccessfully, to take it over. He was one of the leaders in the movement opposed to sabbatarianism in the United States.

Joseph Grinnell was a U.S. Representative from Massachusetts, a friend of Abraham Lincoln, and the brother of Moses Hicks Grinnell, a United States Congressman representing New York, and a Commissioner of New York City's Central Park. He became a successful merchant and shipper and was subsequently appointed as president of the New York Chamber of Commerce. However, unlike his brother Joseph Grinnell, who represented Massachusetts for four terms as a Whig, Moses did not stick to a single political party. He was first a Democrat, then became a Whig in the 1830s, was an "out-and-out Native American party man" the 1840s, and in the 1850s joined the newly founded Republican Party, for which he served as a presidential elector in 1856.[1][2]

In February 1860, president-elect Abraham Lincoln, on his way to Washington, D.C., visited the Manhattan home of Grinnell's daughter, whose father had invited many of New York City's most prominent businessmen to meet the first Republican president. Grinnell subsequently wrote Lincoln with introductions for others, becoming something of a conduit of political power, if not a wielder of such himself.

Grinnell was Collector of the Port of New York from March 1869 to July 1870, and the Port's Naval Officer of Customs from July 1870 to April 1871. Perhaps best remembered for his work as Central Park Commissioner during the early years of the urban park's design and construction.

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Charter-Party Document for Schooner Harmony, 1818

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Acquisition: Purchased from Ryan Cooper, Maritime Antiques, 2016.

Processed by: Lucy Loomis, December 2019.

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