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Introduction

Southport has long been defined by its relationship to the water, in name as well as action. After purchasing the town lands in 1660 from the local Sasqua tribes, colonial settlers re-named the new town Mill River. In these early years, Mill River's primary industry came from its grist mills. Mill River was a farming community, but one that relied on the resources that the water provided, and one that was poised to make the river a much larger part of its life and economy.



After the Revolutionary War, Mill River emerged as a shipping center. Prior to the war, Mill River was a collection of about eight buildings, and one sloop sailed out of the Harbor to Boston and New York. The clearest indication of Mill River Harbor's growing importance comes with early improvements made to the Harbor. In October of 1799, the town of Fairfield voted to sink the channel of the Harbor to accommodate more and larger vessels. At this point, the Harbor had been busy enough to cause some commotion.

Before the 19th century, most commercial activity was done out of Fairfield. However, as Southport's farming and manufacturing grew, Mill River Harbor became a more important part of local commerce. The town exported a number of goods, and it was convenient for local farmers to take their goods to Mill River. The size of Mill River made it challenging for larger vessels to navigate, but ships of up to 100 tons could comfortably sail in and out. In 1825, the Mill River fleet consisted of one brig, five schooners, and twenty sloops, and some twenty commercial buildings lined the Harbor's west side. The captains of these vessels shipped grain, lumber, rye, flour, apples, hay, and other products to New York and to the southern states.

Successive improvements to the Harbor followed an upward trajectory in Mill River's importance as a shipping center. The outer breakwater was completed in 1831, which extended the mouth of the Harbor. This was also the year that Mill River was officially chartered as the Borough of Southport, a new name that reflected the growing town's recognition of its transition from a sleepy farming community to a bustling port town. By 1836 Southport had exploded to 60 or 70 dwellings, along with eight stores, a school, a post office, a bank, and a church. For a town of its

size, popular wisdom held that more shipping was owned in Southport in proportion to its population than any other port between New York and Boston.

The years after 1840, with the development of the famous Southport Globe Onion, were ones of even more prodigious growth and expansion. This exhibition will walk you through some of the history of Southport in its commercial heyday. We will explore the lives of Southport's captains and tradesmen, through the personal and professional traces they left behind. We are especially pleased to share a glimpse of one of Pequot Library's great treasures, the journals of Captain Jonathan Bulkley, which record life in Southport between 1802 and 1858. As you move through the exhibition, we invite you to reflect on what has changed between now and then; many early homes still stand, but the muddy, busy streets full of ox carts and sailors have faded into the past. Peel back the layers of Southport history with us!

SAILING TERMS:

Moor: fastening a boat by cable or rope to a shore or anchor

Windward: direction the wind is currently blowing

Leeward: opposite direction from where the wind is blowing

Astern: behind or beyond the back of a ship

Fleet: a group of ships

Yaw: to veer off course

Hull: the part of a boat's body that rests and floats in the water

Barnacle: a small shellfish which sticks to the bottom of ships

Bumboat: a private boat used for the selling of goods

Doubloon: a valuable Spanish gold coin

Ghost: to sail slowly when there is little or no wind

Grog: a mixture of rum and water given to seamen

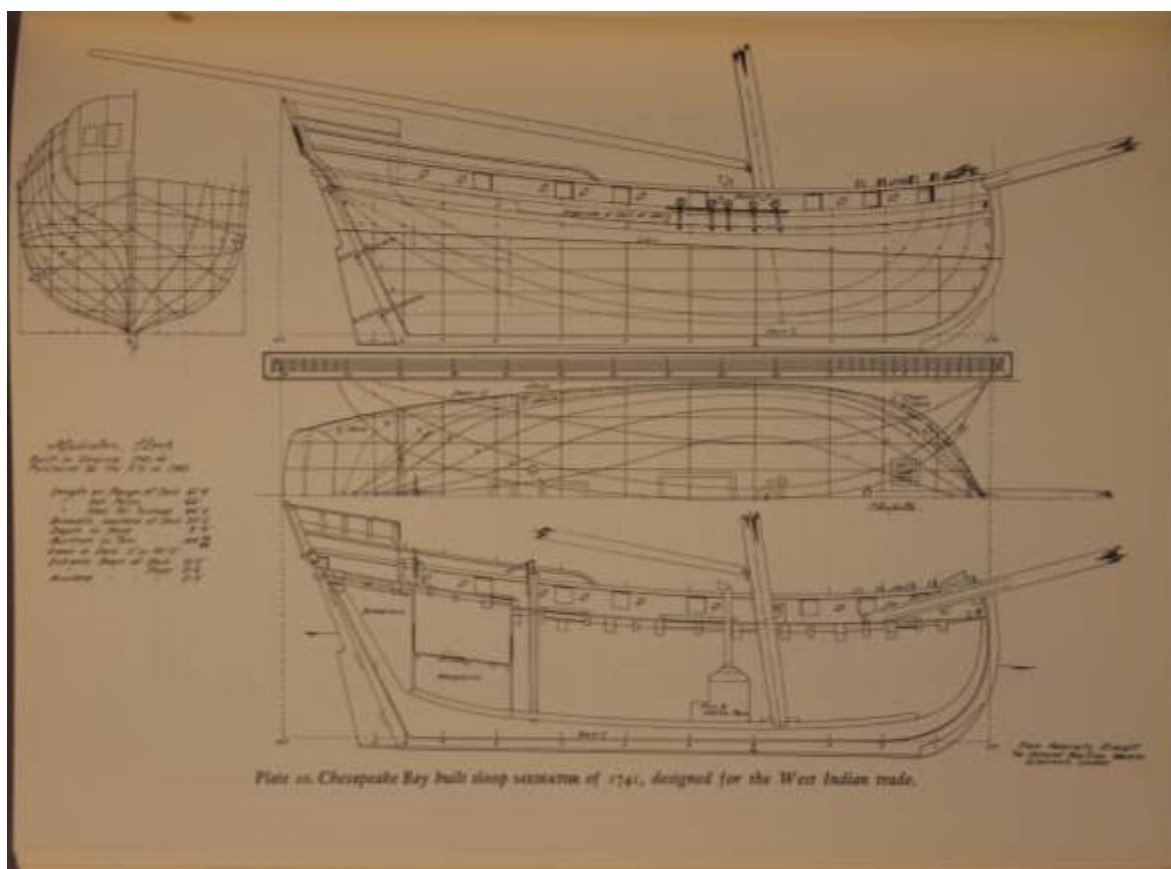
Old Salt: an experienced and/or old sailor

Scrimshaw: to adorn whalebone, ivory, shells, or other nautical materials with etchings

What is a Sloop?

A sloop, described as the purest type of sailing, is distinguishable by its single mast and shallow draft. The length of a 19th century sloop varied between seventy to ninety feet with an average length of fifty feet. During that time, an abundance of single-masted dredging sloops worked the Long Island Sound, with numbers reaching into the hundreds at the height of the oyster industry.

Schooners were the most common type of vessel sailing the Sound, distinguishable with their two or more masts and fore-and-aft sails. Yet the sloop remained popular especially for short voyages due to its speed and maneuverability. Packet service with regularly scheduled departures was established with sloops transporting people and light freight up and down the coastline.



Sailing in the 19th Century

Single-masted sloops made up the majority of market vessels in the Southport Harbor that sailed to New York once or twice a week. In 1870, the *Southport Chronicle* reported, “It was nothing to see the loaded wagons and ox carts lined from the Harbor, up Main Street and Pequot Avenue, all the way to the Bronson Road railroad bridge on each shipping day.” Because the onion season ended in the fall, shipping commenced at that time and continued well into the winter. Sailing at that time of the year was no easy feat. In January of 1804, Jonathan Bulkley wrote in his diary, “The Mill River froze over last Wednesday night and still continues to be froze so hard that no mast can get out. There is 3 vessels loaded and ready to sail but cannot get out on account of the ice.” Another weather-related complication was noted in the *Chronicle* in 1870 regarding the schooner the *S.E. Faulkner*’s narrow escape from destruction because of hurricane-like conditions.

Southport’s Place in Coastal Trade

In the early days of the nineteenth century, Fairfield was the center of coastal trade, but as the village of Mill River began to produce lucrative crops, it acquired prominence in its own right, becoming a center of commercial, maritime trade in the middle part of that century. In fact, it became so important, that the name of the village was changed from Mill River to Southport during that time. It produced a number of crops, from lumber to apples, but its most prolific export was the onion, and the town acquired national renown with the Southport Globe Onion.

These produce items were shipped out of the Harbor on sloops and schooners which traveled most frequently to New York and other domestic coastal cities. Because of the shallowness and smallness of Southport’s Harbor, larger vessels were precluded from coming and



going, which meant that longer, ocean voyages could not be undertaken.

When the Southport onion declined in the 1880s, maritime commerce settled on the Long Island Sound's rich supply of oysters. Although steamships came into vogue, these newfangled vessels were never popular in the smaller harbor. And so Southport's place in maritime trade diminished in the beginning of the twentieth century, but it should not be forgotten that the small village and harbor were instrumental in securing North America's place as a goliath of coastal commerce.

Commerce in the Harbor

In the 19th century, Southport was still primarily a farming community, but the Harbor provided the means by which local agricultural products reached buyers. Even after the introduction of the railroad in 1848, Southport's market fleet was still the most desirable way to ship goods. Not only were the captains of these ships known and respected members of the community, consisting of the Jennings and Meeker firms, among others, but cargo carried in sloops was packed in better insulation than in railway cars. This was especially important for crops like onions that were shipped in autumn and winter, and could freeze if not packed carefully. The capacity of the train, with its two large box cars, was 125 barrels, whereas larger sloops like the *Mary Elizabeth*, *Merchant*, and *Ganges* were refitted as coastal schooners with hold capacities of 1,500 barrels per voyage. Not to mention that the cost of operating a sloop was far cheaper than the cost of running a train.



In 1840, careful cross-pollination and breeding by local farmers created the Southport Globe Onion, the cash crop that would help Southport leave its mark on the country. The Globe Onion was a stable, high-yield crop, and though the price of onions would fluctuate from year to year, it became very popular very quickly among local farmers. In fact, Southport was known for a time as “The Onion Capital of the World,” although it also produced wheat, corn, rye, flax, pork and tanned leather. Furthermore, produce from other towns like Redding, Easton and Weston were shipped out of Southport, marking it as a hub of maritime commerce in the 19th century.

Southport in the Civil War

In the early days of the Civil War, Fairfielders believed that it would be a quick, easily decisive victory over the secessionists, and so many men enlisted at first; however, as the war went on and news of atrocious violence crept north, fewer men enlisted, and even bribed doctors and substitutes to evade the draft. Nonetheless, the civilians of Southport and the greater Fairfield area assisted the Union Army in many ways; the local ladies formed the Soldiers' Aid Society to send clothes, food and a number of other articles to the wounded and active soldiers. Onions, Southport's most prolific export, were all directed to the troops to support the war effort. Even local shipping companies did their part. For example, Wakeman, Dimon & Company, a Southport-based shipping line, was commissioned by the federal government to transport equipment and troops. A significant portion of Southport's commerce was redirected from its usual route, to the war down south.

Southport Then & Now

The shifting tides of commerce have preserved much of Southport as it was at the height of its importance in coastal trade in the 19th century. As Pequot's own Southport Walking Tour and the 1858 map of Southport on view in this Gallery aptly show, many of the homes in the village today are surprisingly similar to how they were more than 100 years ago. Instead, what has changed has been the more subtle transformation from a shipping hub into the quiet village we share today.

The images of the Harbor and of Sasco Hill on view in the Gallery show us how very different the landscape around the Harbor looks today from when it stood at the center of a thriving commercial port. Oliver Gould Jennings, who built the golf course that now occupies the land directly facing the Harbor, described the territory around it as "suitable only for gulls, shellfish, wading birds and mosquitoes". In fact, Sasco Hill used to enjoy the dubious nickname "Mosquito Hill."

Like the onion fields and marshland, the Harbor itself changed dramatically, and as its commercial importance declined it traded the onion warehouses and commercial offices for

Perry Green and the Pequot Yacht Club, which will be celebrating its centenary in 2020. Today, the Harbor still sits at the center of the community, but as a place of leisure.

Disaster on the Sound!

In the evening of January 13th, 1840, tragedy struck just outside of Southport Harbor. Residents could see a bright light on the horizon: it was the passenger Steamship *Lexington*, consumed in flames, drifting near Eaton's Neck. At the time that the fire broke out, low tide prevented the only vessel in the Harbor, the sloop *Merchant*, from coming to the rescue. By the time that Captain John F. Bulkley and his crew were able to set sail in search of survivors, 139 of the 143 crew and passengers had perished, and the steamship was at the bottom of the Sound.

The Steamship *Lexington*, commissioned in 1834 by Cornelius Vanderbilt, was one of the fastest and most luxurious passenger steamships operating on the Long Island Sound. Between 1834 and 1837, it transported well-heeled passengers between New York and Providence in lavish style. Vanderbilt then sold the *Lexington* in 1838, and the ship began transporting mostly railway passengers.

On the night of the disaster, the *Lexington* was hurrying to reach the railway station at Stonington, CT, where passengers would connect to Boston. The crew had been stoking the boiler, recently converted to burn coal rather than wood, to compensate for the rough waters. The boiler overheated, causing the smokestack to catch fire. The real danger came when flames spread to the 150 bales of cotton in the hold. After the cargo ignited, the flames spread quickly to the rest of the ship, and soon everything from the hold to the mahogany-paneled great state room were an inferno.

The first lifeboat was caught in the paddle wheel of the ship, and the next two capsized in the choppy, frigid water. With little other choice, the *Lexington's* crew and passengers clung to cotton bales awaiting rescue. To this date, it is still the worst steamboat disaster in the history of Long Island Sound.

List of Items

Letter from Gershom Burr, Lieutenant Colonel Commander of 4th Regiment of the Militia Force of Connecticut, on behalf of Ebenezer Huntingdon, Adjutant General of the Militia Force of Connecticut, to Jeremiah Sturges

June 20, 1813

Pequot Library Special Collections

During the War of 1812, the British enacted a blockade across Long Island Sound, appearing close to Mill River (later known as Southport) in 1813. It was during this war that Jeremiah Sturges organized the First Company of Defensive Independent Volunteers to protect Mill River against the threats posed by the British. He acted as captain of the unit, and by November 1812 it was fully equipped. The volunteer soldiers drilled under the willow tree near Molly Pike's inn, which was a popular watering hole for locals. In the featured letter, the Militia Force of Connecticut instructs Sturges to assemble his unit at the widow Pike's tavern so a list of volunteers can be constructed.

Letter from Simon Couch to his father

Greens Farms, June 18, 1779

Pequot Library Special Collections

In June 1779, the British invaded Fairfield, laid siege, and burned over 200 homes. In this letter to his father, Simon Couch, likely a sailor based out of Southport, recounts his experience of the siege:

“Hon^{ed} Father,

“I this moment Set myself Down to write a few Lines to you to Ease my troubled mind. Last Wednesday Morning, A Little Before Sunrise the Enemy Wak'd me out of my Sleep by firing 2 or 3 Guns at the Dore & Dashing in the windows but they Never Came In to the Room where I was, but went Through the Other Room and took Williams Gun and then Into the Kitchen and took my Saddle & bridle & then went and took the Cows out of the yard and then went to Morehouses and Got All they had & then Drove them Away to Frost (Foote?) Point...

Letter from Gertrude Stevens to Mrs. H.T. Bulkley

June 30, 1863(?)

Pequot Library Special Collections

The Soldiers' Aid Society of Southport assisted the Woman's Central Association of Relief, a division of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, with providing supplies to soldiers fighting in the

Union Army during the Civil War. In the featured letter, Gertrude Stevens of the Woman's Central Association of Relief, based in New York, thanks Mrs. Bulkley and the other ladies of the Soldiers' Aid Society of Southport for a number of supplies that were recently received. Stevens goes on to request several more items, particularly cotton socks and drawers, preserved fruits, jellies, and, most importantly, slings for the wounded.

Frank Leslie's Pictorial History of the American Civil War
Edited by the Hon. E.G. Squier
New York: Frank Leslie, 1862
Engraving of cooking in a Union Army camp, pg. 181
Pequot Library Special Collections

Onions were Southport's most common export to the Union Army during the Civil War. The allium was in high demand because it was believed to ward off scurvy, a disease rampant amongst soldiers and sailors fed a diet full of salted meats and lacking in fresh produce.

Letter from Wakeman, Dimon & Co. to Joseph Jennings & Son
New York, May 19, 1862
Pequot Library Special Collections

Wakeman, Dimon & Co. and Joseph Jennings & Son were two shipping companies based in Southport and run by local families. During the Civil War, Wakeman, Dimon & Co.'s vessels were commissioned by the federal government to transport equipment and troops for the Union Army. It is likely that Jennings & Son would have also assisted with the war effort, perhaps acting through Wakeman, Dimon & Co.; in the displayed letter, the Wakeman Company is writing about an enclosed check from the United States government for damage incurred to one of the Jennings' vessels.

Chesapeake Bay sloop *Mediator* of 1741, designed for the West Indian trade
Reproduced in: "The Search for Speed Under Sail, 1700-1855"
By Howard I. Chapelle
New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1967
Pequot Library Special Collections

Sloops like the *Mediator*, known for their speed and maneuverability, sailed along the United States' eastern seaboard and populated Caribbean harbors early in the 18th century. This sloop, the *Mediator*, was built in Virginia in 1741 for West Indian trade, and the British Royal Navy purchased her in 1745. She was lost later that same year off the coast of France or Belgium. A wooden model of the *Mediator* is displayed in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

Sloop in front of BCMMR

c. 1930s

Photograph

Pequot Library Special Collections

The building in the left foreground has had many purposes in its long life; originally intended as a shed in the late 18th century, it was used later as various stores and a meat market. By the latter half of the 19th century, it was used as a gentlemen's social club called the Bachelor's Comfort and Married Man's Retreat Club. In the 1920s, the Pequot Yacht Club rented it from the bachelors and opened it to Southport's sailing crowd. Hoyt O. Perry gave the land in the middle ground to the town in 1957. It's appropriately called Perry Green. Also, in the middle ground is the land given in 1957 by Hoyt O. Perry, Sr. to the town, appropriately called Perry Green. The sloop shown here is 'tethered' on what had been the Meeker docks, now the site of 825 Harbor Road.

View of river and docks looking east from Meeker Dock

October 1887

Photograph

Pequot Library Special Collections

The Meeker Dock and Onion Warehouse were an integral part of Southport's commerce in the latter part of the 19th century. In this photograph taken in October 1887, a schooner is docked, perhaps waiting to load up with onions for a voyage to New York City.

Coal sheds, harbor, and the schooner *Mary Elizabeth*

c. 1884 - 1905

Photograph

Pequot Library Special Collections

Likely taken between 1884 and 1905, this image gives an idea of Southport Harbor's appearance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The schooner *Mary Elizabeth* is moored, waiting for her next voyage, as the coal sheds loom nearby.

Problems in Geometry and Navigation

Simon Couch

1798

Pequot Library Special Collections

On this page of his manuscript navigational manual, Simon Couch has copied a set of common navigational problems for his own study. The particular problem he is working on here is one of Gerardus Mercator's sailing cases, a series of navigational problems that involve plotting the

course and distance between two positions in different latitudes. Mercator Sailing is similar to plane sailing, but it is used for sailing longer distances.

Problems in Geometry and Navigation

Cyrus Sherwood

1827

Pequot Library Special Collections

Cyrus Sherwood has copied his diagrams directly from Nathaniel Bowditch, as we can see by comparing the reproductions of the printed page and this leaf from his manuscript navigational book. Bowditch's *Practical Navigator* was a key reference work in the 19th century just as it is today, and students of navigation, like Sherwood, would have studied it closely as they learned the principles of sailing.

The New American Practical Navigator...

By Nathaniel Bowditch, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Second Edition, with many improvements

Newburyport, Mass: Printed by Edmund M. Blunt, proprietor

Sold by the Booksellers, ship-chandlers and mathematical instrument-makers in the United States.

Gedney King, No. 10, North Row, Boston, makes, sells, repairs, and imports Mathematical instruments, &c. as usual - sold wholesale and retail.

July 1807

Pequot Library Special Collections

Nautical navigation relies on mathematical methods, and one such method is called "sailings." There are several types of sailings, and this illustration from *Bowditch's Navigator* is for "plane sailing." The plane sailing method is used to find the course and distance between two positions on different latitudes. Because it is a simple form of navigation that considers the sea flat rather than curved, it is employed only to solve navigational questions for distances no greater than a few hundred miles involving a single course and distance.

Letter from C. Maxson Co. to Joseph Jennings & Son

Westerly, September 7, 1863

Pequot Library Special Collections

Captain Joseph Jennings (1803-1873) owned a shipping line and ran a store in Southport, eventually expanding the business with his son Captain Charles Jennings (1830-1903). Together, father and son oversaw the shipment of produce and general merchandise from Southport to New York City via coastal schooner, enacting a lucrative business. In the featured letter, it seems that Jennings expressed interest in one of Mr. Maxson's ships, *Young America*. Maxson discusses

all that the vessel offers, including its tonnage and storage space, and notes that its “sails are good.” He invites Jennings to visit the vessel in Albany and quotes him a price of \$11,000.

License Granted to Joseph Jennings & Son from the Town of Fairfield

June 30, 1863

Pequot Library Special Collections

This license granted the Jennings shipping company permission to “carry on the business or occupation of retail dealer onboard of sloop *Mary Elizabeth*,” which allowed father and son to transport and trade materials via this vessel. To learn more about the sloop (and, later, schooner) *Mary Elizabeth*, see the title wall and the case in the Perkin Gallery.

Freight Receipts for Joseph Jennings & Son

c. 1850

Pequot Library Special Collections

Captain Joseph Jennings (1803-1873) owned a shipping line and ran a store in Southport, eventually expanding the business with his son Captain Charles Jennings (1830-1903). Together, father and son oversaw the shipment of produce and general merchandise from Southport to New York City via coastal schooner, enacting a lucrative business. These freight receipts, recorded on scraps of paper, record and confirm the goods received from Captain Charles Jennings on various trade voyages. One reads as follows:

“Received of Charles Jennings One Hundred and one Dollars in full for Freight on one Hundred and One Tons Coal Per Schooner *Rebecca*. James Rose.”

Account Book, Jennings & Sherwood

April 1837

Pequot Library Special Collections

This account book is from a smaller shipping company formed between the Jennings and Sherwood families and active between 1835 and 1843. They dealt largely in southern trade routes, and they often imported goods like sugar and rum.

On these two pages of the account book, entries vary from individual orders from members of the community to cash payouts to the captains of the various sloops owned by the company. Compare the note “P. Cash 27th Trip” with how the bound waste books of sloop *Mary Elizabeth* in the case in this gallery are described. These payments to captains correspond directly to the records maintained in the waste books of each sloop and show the layers of accounting books that 19th century companies relied on.

Onion Fields, Sasco Hill

By Edward, Clinton, or Eugene Hall

c. 1890

Photograph

Pequot Library Special Collections

This view of the onion fields on Sasco Hill overlooking the harbor offers a panoramic view of the harbor, along with a two-masted schooner and a number of smaller sloops. It was taken shortly before a series of cutworm epidemics would destroy much of the globe onion crop and render these fields unproductive.

Account Book of Simon Couch

1742-1769, 1771-1792

Pequot Library Special Collections

This account book is an excellent example of the business of local farming. The members of the Couch family, like many Southport residents, were both farmers and sailors. This account book records the day-to-day income and expenses of the Couch farm, including odd jobs that Simon performed for members of the community, like making shoes. In addition to a snapshot of his business activities, these first pages of his account book offer a series of playful doodles and notes. Among his multiple signatures, you may notice a note that reads, “This is Rong Speld”!

Map of Fairfield and Southport

Published by Eneas Smith

c. 1858; on canvas

Pequot Library Special Collections

This original lithograph, dating to 1858, is believed to be the earliest known detailed map of Southport and shows the properties of Southport and Fairfield. Because the map depicts buildings in their “true shape” and gives the names of property owners, it was decided in 1986 that it should be reproduced and made more widely accessible to the community for its historical value. As such, Pequot Library agreed to loan its map to a team from the Fairfield Historical Society, Roger Ludlowe High School, and Andrew Warde High School so that it could be traced and later photographed. Teachers and students donated their time and services to complete the painstaking work of adding 156 houses and more than 200 legends to the Southport section alone. Researchers and community members alike are indebted to this team for their invaluable contributions to Fairfield’s historical resources.

Southport Savings Bank Banknote
c. 1864
Pequot Library Special Collections

The Southport Savings Bank was founded in 1854 to meet the needs of the growing harbor community. On its opening day, September 25, 1854, the total deposits amounted to \$920.20, with 23 depositors. Frederick Marquand, the uncle and guardian of one of Pequot Library's founders, organized the bank and was its first president, remaining so for 28 years. At the time of the bank's opening, all banks in the United States were local banks and thus issued their own currency; during the Civil War, banks went national and used only nationally issued currency. This bank note, from 1864, was still locally issued, as it took some time for the nationally issued currency to take full effect.

Soldier's and Sailor's Almanac for 1865

By the Protestant Episcopal Society for the Promotion of Evangelical Knowledge
New York: No. 3 Bible House, 1865
Pequot Library Special Collections

This almanac was intended to provide Christian advice to sailors and soldiers, offering prayers and practical advice. Included in this volume are a "Prayer against Profane Swearing" and "Danger from Ardent Spirits," along with remedies for the ingestion of poison. Featured on the title page is an image of the *USS Cumberland*, a ship that saw naval action during the Civil War and sank in 1862 after it was rammed by the Confederate ship the *CSS Virginia* in Newport News, Virginia. The deaths of most of the *Cumberland's* crew inspired a number of solemn poems and pictorial representations.

The New American Practical Navigator...

By Nathaniel Bowditch, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Second Edition, with many improvements

Newburyport, Mass: Printed by Edmund M. Blunt, proprietor

Sold by the Booksellers, ship-chandlers and mathematical instrument-makers in the United States.

Gedney King, No. 10, North Row, Boston, makes, sells, repairs, and imports Mathematical instruments, &c. as usual - sold wholesale and retail.

July 1807

Pequot Library Special Collections

Nathaniel Bowditch (1773-1838) was an American mathematician most well-known for his work on ocean navigation. As a teenager he taught himself algebra and Latin so he could read treatises on mathematics. Several years later he found work as a captain's writer and ship's clerk, embarking on a number of voyages that introduced him to the importance of ocean navigation. During that time he found a number of errors in contemporary navigation materials and decided

to publish his own work to assist sailors in celestial navigation. His work relies heavily upon geometry and constellations. Originally published in 1801, it is still published today, continuously updated, and used by all commissioned U.S. naval vessels. The displayed page is one of the many charts that help sailors employ the constellations to determine latitude and longitude.

Miscellaneous Receipts from George P. Jennings

c. 1906-1907

Pequot Library Special Collections

The Jennings family has had a significant presence in Southport for generations, and George Penfield Jennings was likely a relation of captains Joseph and Charles Jennings, who ran the shipping line Jennings & Son Company. George P. Jennings was a messenger and purchasing agent when he acquired the bound receipts displayed. The top one is from G. Furman & Co. Wholesale Commission, which sold poultry, game, calves, eggs, and produce in New York City. Note that G. Furman paid Jennings for several barrels of Southport onions.

Waste Books, Sloop *Mary Elizabeth*

March 31, 1862 - March 26, 1863

Pequot Library Special Collections

These portable notebooks were the basic building blocks of financial record keeping for a commercial sloop. In the waste book, ship captains would record day-to-day expenses and income as they went about their business. These entries were then transferred into the larger ledgers of the company, and completed entries were marked to indicate that they had been accounted for.

Each individual notebook in this set represents a single, week-long “trip” out of Southport Harbor. The format remains the same for each trip, and across all of the waste books of other sloops in the Southport market fleet in Pequot Library’s archives. They begin with goods received from individuals, total sales of different types of goods, incidental expenses, and freight taken on after selling their goods.

This set of notebooks is from before the *Mary Elizabeth* was converted into a schooner to be able to carry more cargo to accommodate the Jennings’ growing shipping business in 1884.

The Last of the Market Fleet, Southport, Conn.

Southport, Luin B. Switzer, [c. 1905]

Picture Postcard

Pequot Library Special Collections

Schooner *Mary Elizabeth* was the last of the Southport fleet to function as a regular market boat. In 1905 Charles Jennings, of Charles Jennings & Son (previously Joseph Jennings & Son), sold the ship, and Southport’s days as a commercial hub drew to a close.

This picture postcard is addressed to Mrs. H. T. Bulkley, née Rebecca Williams Pomeroy, the member of Southport's Soldier's Aid Society whose correspondence with the U.S. Sanitary Commission is on the wall in this gallery. Note that the front of this postcard reads "Comps of L.B.S." - almost certainly Luin B. Switzer, of Switzer's drugstore! Switzer's sold souvenir postcards of Southport at the pharmacy for many years. In 1905 these were advertised in the *Weekly Times* at "2 for 5 cents." You can see another one of Switzer's postcards on the invitation to the opening of this exhibition.

**Account Book, Joseph Jennings & Son
July 1842 - December 1844
Pequot Library Special Collections**

This account book of the Joseph Jennings & Son shipping company begins with a list of the crews of two different sloops in the Jennings fleet: Sloop Ganges and Sloop Fairfield. We see not only the names of the crewmen, but also their wages, which gives us a sense of the expense of operating a Southport shipping company as well as a picture of the income that ordinary citizens of the village earned as sailors.

**Journal of Jonathan Bulkley
Volume 2, 1844-1855
Pequot Library Special Collections**

Jonathan Bulkley was an important member of the Southport/Mill River community in the early 19th century. He was a sea captain, a farmer, a landowner, and a member of the Connecticut State Legislature. His journals, which he kept from 1802, when he was 16 years old, until six months before his death in January 1859, are an invaluable window into life in Mill River at a crucial stage in the town's commercial and social development. Bulkley gives information about the comings and goings of different ships, and of business in the community, but he also gossips about his fellow residents, speculates about national and world politics, and even offers lengthy reflections on the nature of life. In these entries, dated Dec. 28, 1845 to Jan. 1, 1846, he records business of the Congregational Church, the purchase of schooner *Empire* by Mr. Pike and Mr. Sturges, and reflects on the previous year, including a list of deaths in the village.

**Burning of the Steamer Lexington on Long Island Sound
By Captain John F. Bulkley of Westport
14 February 1891
Pequot Library Special Collections**

This is the firsthand account of the rescue attempt made by Captain Bulkley of the sloop *Merchant*, which he offered as an attempt to set the record straight on what actually happened the

night of the disaster. In it, Bulkley describes how he and other Southport residents, upon seeing the fire on the horizon, mobilized a rescue effort and set about locating survivors.

Also included in this volume are the accounts of Francis Jelliff, one of the Southport residents who volunteered to join sloop *Merchant's* regular crew in the rescue, and Wakeman B. Meeker Jr., the son of Captain Wakeman B. Meeker, who owned the shipping line of which *Merchant* was a part.

Jelliff was particularly shaken by the tragedy, and he concludes his description of the initial fire with the lines: "All do their utmost to save the burning vessel but alas of no avail lost. All lost. Lost. Lost."

Aids to Reflection

By Samuel Taylor Coleridge

London, Published by William Pickering. New York: Swords, Stanford & Co., 1839

Pequot Library Special Collections

Stephen Manchester, pilot of the *Lexington*, had this volume in his coat pocket as he clung to a bale of cotton in the Sound, awaiting rescue. He was one of the four survivors of the disaster and was rescued around noon on January 14th by Captain Bulkley and his crew. The other man floating on the same cotton bale with him, a passenger named Peter McKenna, was not so fortunate. McKenna succumbed to hypothermia before help arrived.

Manchester gave this book to the Rev. Nathaniel E. Cornwall, rector of Trinity Parish in Southport, in a gesture of thanks. Cornwall's daughter, Anna Bedinger Cornwall, presented the copy to Pequot Library in 1901.

The spots that you see on the title page are from the water damage sustained that night. In fact, the original binding was warped beyond repair from the salt water, and this copy's current marbled paper binding dates from 1855, when Cornwall had it rebound.

A Sermon, Occasioned by the Burning of the Steamer Lexington. Preached in St. Paul's Church, Boston

By John S. Stone, D.D.

Boston: Printed by Perkins & Marvin, 1840

Pequot Library Special Collections

The *Lexington* disaster captured the popular imagination, not only in the media, but in the pulpit. Steamboat disaster sermons were themselves a popular topic, not only because they offered an opportunity to reflect on themes of mortality, but because these disasters were shockingly commonplace. Between 1816 and 1848 in the United States alone, nearly 1,800 people were

killed in steamboat explosions. Despite the inherent danger of this method of transportation, steamboat travel had become relatively commonplace, and tragedies like the burning of the *Lexington* struck a very real chord. The *New York Morning Chronicle* reported on the Lexington that, “Every one feels that he might have been a victim of that dreadful catastrophe; or that he is liable to a similar fate whenever he journeys in a steamboat.”