Merchant Mariners Muster
(database at Maine Maritime Museum)

Data Entry Instructions

Nathan Lipfert 2014

Crew of the four-mast steel bark *Arthur Sewall* at Hiogo, Japan, 1902

The Point:

      The point is to take information about mariners which is found in various kinds of documents and type it into a database, so that people can find it. The database will be accessible on the Museum's website. All the data fields will be searchable. Data about sailors is difficult to find, and we wish to make it available to scholars, students, family researchers, and others. People will be able to learn some things about the sailors from the database, and there will be information in the database about where the original documents are, so the researcher can always get back to the originals.

The Basics:

- The name of the database is the Merchant Mariners Muster. We will call it 3M for short.

- The beginning of this project is being sponsored by a grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
- As part of this CLIR grant, we will enter data from 45 different manuscript collections that all have mariner-related documents. Later, we will go back and enter data from other collections we have. Since we are always getting new collections, the project will never end. No, never.

- You will be assigned one of the collections to work on, and you will have access to the detailed finding aid already created, and to the collection itself.

Getting Started:

1. You will need to obtain the finding aid (we call them inventories) for the collection you have been assigned. You can have it in hard copy or on screen as a Word document. READ IT, so you know what the heck is going on.

2. You will need to get the manuscript collection itself. They are in numbered sequence on the shelves of the library.

3. Each of the collections which have been processed by the archivists as part of the CLIR project have documents which discuss or describe individual named seamen or mariners. The folders in which appropriate documents reside are marked with a pencil dot in the upper right.

4. For each record in the database, you need to have a name for the mariner. If the document does not indicate the sailor's name, then it does not become an entry in the database.

5. For a few of the fields in the database, you may need to do a small amount of supplementary research, probably within the manuscript collection. This would be for things like the name of the vessel, captain, ports of departure and arrival, etc. You will be shown how to do this.

6. The worst of it is going to be reading the handwriting, and deciding whether to trust the spelling. You will get better at this with experience, and the handwriting will get easier to

read when you have spent more time with a particular writer's documents.

7. If at any time in this process you do not understand what is going on, please ask a question of a staff member or a more experienced volunteer.

8. PREPARATION - Very few of the documents you will be working with do not have anything to do with a specific voyage. You will probably want to establish ahead of time the outline of the voyage your document is about: vessel name and rig, captain's name, port and date of departure, port and date of arrival. These might be findable in the document you have in your hands, but you may have to look through other documents of the same collection to find the details. The database is also going to ask you for the vessel's date of construction, because vessel names get repeated so often. If your document and associated documents in the collection do not give the actual dates of the beginning and end of the voyage, you will just have to leave those fields blank. You may have trouble determining one or both of the ports, also, so those fields may have to be blank. A few documents – seamen's protection certificates, for example – do not refer to specific voyages at all, and you will just leave all the voyage fields blank.

9. Have no fear. You will be an expert soon.

Doing the Work:

1. You will be assigned a user name and password. You will be shown how to get to the 3M database on the Internet. The address is http://dev1.mainemaritimemuseum.org/admin/. This address will bring you to a window where you can sign in. Do not do this until you have been briefed on the whole process.

2. When you have signed in, you will see what is called the Dashboard. Down the left side of your screen are links to all the types of information that can be recorded in this database. Do not be intimidated. You will probably only ever open one of these links.

3. And, the one you open is in the **Mariner** section, and is called **Financial Records.** If you click on it, you will see a list of all the mariners whose data has been added to the database, with the

most recent at the top. Just leave them alone, and open up your own record, to start typing in your first sailor's information. Do this by clicking on the blue button in the upper right labeled **Add Financial Record**.

4. It may take a few seconds, but a blank record will open up for you. The first thing to enter is your Document. If you hit the down arrow in the Document field, you will see a list of all the documents that have been entered previously. But yours won't be in there, because you haven't entered it yet. So what you need to do is click on the plus sign in the black circle, to the right of the field. This will open up a new blank Document page.

5. DOCUMENT: The first field is Document Type. If you are lucky, yours will be on the drop-down list. If not, please discuss with Nathan about adding a type to the drop-down list. If you do not know what type of document you are looking at, please ask Nathan. Then add the date of your document. This field is equipped with a little perpetual calendar thingie, but you may find it is quicker to just type in the date, in the format mm/dd/yyyy. Then move to the Voyage field. Again, your voyage won't be in there yet, so click on the little plus sign to open up a Voyage page.

6. VOYAGE: The first field is the vessel, and your vessel probably won't be in there. Check first (if it IS in there, be sure it is the right one of that name), but you will probably be clicking on the little plus sign again.

7. VESSEL: Type in the name. Usually, the captain is pretty good about spelling the name of his vessel accurately. If you have any doubts, go to the ship registers in the Reading Room – they have the names spelled the way they are officially on the registers or enrollments. Is it Benjamin F. Packard, or Benj. F. Packard, or B. F. Packard? Look it up in the register. It will be fun.

8. Other Names means indicating when a vessel had a different name before or after your present voyage. If you don't know this to be true, just go to the next field. Rig should be indicated in your document; choose from the drop-down list. If you think your rig is not on the list, ask Nathan. For any type of powered vessel, choose Steamer, and give the details in the Notes field. For the Official Number field, which applies mostly

to American vessels after 1868, you will be trained to find the number. The Year Built field will also be something you learn how to find. The Notes field is for anything you think needs explaining here. Don't use it unless you have to. Click in the little Active box, then hit SAVE in the lower right.

9. VOYAGE: Back to Voyage! Your ship name will appear in the Vessel field. Now you can type in the captain's name, if you have it, which you usually will. Then the type of voyage, from the drop-down list. 99% of these will be Merchant voyages, cargo ships. You may run into a collection of fishing records, and there are a very few naval records here. Then fill in the ports of departure and destination if you have them, from the drop down menu. These should be the first port of the document, and the last port. If you need to add a port, you should be able to figure out how to do that by now! Add the dates if you have them. In the Notes field, list all the stops of the voyage. Click in the Active box, then hit SAVE in the lower right.

10. DOCUMENT: Now you should be back to your Document series of fields, with the Voyage field filled in, automatically. The next field is Citation. This is very important, because it ties all this information back to the document you are getting it from. You need to enter the manuscript collection number, the box number, and the folder number for the document you are working from. It will look something like this: MS-243 b2f7. Once you have entered it (hit the plus sign!), it will become part of the drop down list, and you will find it there if you enter another voyage from the same document (perhaps an account book). If you need to put something in the Notes field, go ahead. Click in the Active box, then hit SAVE, lower right.

11. FINANCIAL RECORD: Now you should be back at your Financial Record entry, with the Document field automatically filled in. Your next blank field is for Mariner. Hit the little plus sign, because chances are your guy isn't in here yet.

12. Mariners' Names: Spelling these guys' names is going to be tough. If you think they wrote their own names in the document you are looking at, then that would be as definitive as we are going to get – use that spelling. If the captain or agent wrote the name, then we should get suspicious, especially with foreign names. Many times, as you might imagine, they just didn't seem to care how the name should be

spelled. If you have no other evidence, in another document perhaps, of how the name is spelled, then you should just use the spelling in your document. Do your best to get familiar with the handwriting, so you know how the man makes his letters.

13. Mariners: Now you have a bunch of fields where you can enter detailed information on the mariner. Only do this if the document you have shows this information. Do not stop to do research on a person's birth date, or birth place, even if you know it can be found. Now is not the time! Fill out what you can, click in the Active box and hit SAVE.

14. Back to the FINANCIAL RECORD. Here is where you enter any financial information relating to the mariner which is on the document you are working on. This is where your head really starts to hurt. You only have so many fields, and so you do what you can. Once in a while, you'll get to use a lot of the fields. So, start with Rank, and choose from the drop-down list. On that list, only use Captain for military rank. For merchant vessels, always use Master. If your document has a rank that is not on the list, it will probably need to be added – ask Nathan. Entry Date refers to the date the mariner signed on the vessel. If this date is not obvious on your document, leave it blank. The same goes for Entry Port – the place the ship was at when the guy signed on. Discharge Date and Port are for when and where the guy left the vessel and was paid off. Length of Service also would be indicated on the document, usually in months and days. Payment means the total amount the mariner earned during the time he/she was on the vessel. Just enter the number, no dollar signs or words. Currency refers to the money with which the mariner was paid – when a ship paid off crew in a foreign port, often they used the currency of that port. If you find documents giving pay in foreign currency (like English pounds), you will need to convert to US dollars for entering Payment and other fields in the area. Talk with Nathan when this happens. Anything you do in this regard must be mentioned in the Notes field. Unusual Payment regards anything you may find that does not really fit the fields as designed. This is a text field, so you can say anything. Wages per Month also should be on your document. Just a number. Generally mariners are paid by the month, but occasionally they agree to receive a set dollar amount for sailing a vessel to a particular place – in that case, enter the amount under Wages per Run. If it is a fishing voyage, and they

6

are being paid a lay or percentage, or by the number of fish caught, put this under <u>Unusual Payment</u>. <u>Advanced before Voyage</u>, <u>Charged to Slops Account</u>, <u>Allotments to Creditors</u>, <u>Advanced Abroad</u>, <u>Hospital Money</u>, <u>Shipping Fee</u>, <u>Fines & Forfeitures</u> are all things you might find on your document, and you should fill them in the appropriate fields, in US dollars. <u>Balance Due</u> will also be on there, indicating whatever part of his pay the seaman had not already blown through. Then you have the Notes field to explain all the irregularities. In this area, I find there often is something to explain. Click in the Active box. Hit SAVE! You have done one. Actually, if you are entering a batch of mariners from the same document, you can hit the SAVE AND ADD ANOTHER button instead. You will easily be able to repeat all the document/voyage/vessel data, and add another Financial Record for the next mariner on the crew list or whatever it is.

15. You MUST fill out a Financial Record for every mariner, EVEN IF YOU DO NOT HAVE FINANCIAL INFORMATION ON THE MARINER, because this is what attaches the mariner's name to the citation and whatever else there is. This is crucial.