

# CAPE ANN Museum

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### SCHOONER THREE BROTHERS & SCHOONER GOOD SUCCESS COLLECTION

- Creator:** Henry Thorndike (owner of the Three Brothers); William Homan (part owner); and Benjamin Giles (Master).  
William Allen; Joseph Allen (owners of the Good Success).
- Dates:** 1734-1736; 1809-1923
- Quantity:** 0.5 linear feet (1 document box)
- Acquisition:** Unknown
- Identification:** A15 ; Archive Collection #15
- Citation:** [Document Title]. The [name of collection] Collection, [Box #, Folder #, Item #], Cape Ann Museum Library & Archives, Gloucester, MA.
- Copyright:** Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Librarian/Archivist.
- Language:** English
- Finding Aid:** Peter J. Brown, 2004.

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#### Biographical Note

On July 7, 1809, the owners of the schooner Three Brothers filed a protest to the Spanish government of St. Domingo, Cuba. The vessel was captured en route to Jaga de Cuba. The charge brought on the crew of the vessel was attempt to trade in Spanish ports.

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The struggle to receive compensation, through the United States government, lasted until at least 1823, which is unfortunately the date of the last document in possession of the Cape Ann Historical Association, though the episode was not resolved until a later date.

The owner of Three Brothers was Henry Thorndike. When he passed away, his wife Elizabeth made claims to any compensation that was to be received. Benjamin Giles, who was the master and had one-third claim, hired Robert Rantoul of Beverly, Massachusetts to represent all parties with an interest in the schooner. Rantoul over the years routinely made requests to Congress to address the situation. These requests were made through William Reed, of the department of the Secretary of State. Rantoul also corresponded with Joseph Dane and Daniel Webster. The collection mostly contains responses to letters sent to Washington D.C. On a few occasions there is also a copy of the outgoing letter sent to Washington.

There are also three original documents concerning the sale of the schooner Good Success.

Further research at the Beverly Historical Society uncovered a cache of letters giving more information about the fate of the Three Brothers. The Spanish confiscated the cargo but released the vessel. Captain Giles sailed the vessel to Surinam where he took on his cargo of mahogany. While in Surinam, he asked four ships' captains to attest to the worthiness of the Three Brothers. They agreed that the ship was not seaworthy. Having provided a convenient excuse in case of a disaster, Captain Giles sailed the Three Brothers to Philadelphia, where he discharged his cargo, the arrangements made by "Willing and Francis" (see letter #5). The vessel was then sold for \$600, roughly 1/5 of its value before the voyage. The fate of the claim for cargo loss (valued at \$2,847 as of April 1809) is unknown.

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## Scope and Content of the Collection

The acquisition of these papers is unknown, and the accession # is also unknown. The letters give a clear picture of how the schooner trade operated and of the dangers in the Caribbean in the early part of the 19th century as a result of the ongoing conflict between the United States and Spain. An interesting sidelight to the claims filed by the heirs of the Three Brothers was the loss of important papers resulting from the British occupation and burning of Washington D.C. during the War of 1812.

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## Series Description

- I. Series I: Documentation concerning the Three Brothers
- II. Series II: Documentation concerning the Good Success
- III. Series III: Photocopy of documentation obtained from the Beverly Historical Society concerning the Three Brothers

## Container List

### Series I: (Folder #1)

1. Letter #1, May 29, 1809. Copy of orders from Henry Thorndike (owner of the Three Brothers to William Homan (part owner) and Benjamin Giles (Master) detailing profit percentages, fees, cargo, destination.
2. Letter #2, April 1809. Copy of invoice for Three Brothers.
3. Letter #3, July 7, 1809. Copy of the protest given to the St. Domingo government concerning the capture of the Three Brothers by the Spanish while attempting to trade in Spanish ports.
4. Letter #4, November 9, 1809. Letter from Henry Thorndike to Captain Giles informing him that he received his letter concerning the death of his son.
5. Letter #5, December 6, 1809. Current account of Captain Giles with Willing & Francis of Philadelphia, which includes an entry on Nov. 14, 1809 of credit for \$1,835.34 from the sale of 84 logs of mahogany, “per schooner Three Brothers”.
6. Letter #6, 1809. Letter written by Captain Giles to the Governor of St. Domingo requesting a speedy return of cargo so that it can be sold before it is spoiled and also the return of all books and charts.
7. Letter #7, February 28, 1810. Letter written to Captain Giles from J. Dane (attorney) representing Henry Thorndike and William Homan requesting clarification of accounts and asking why the mahogany purchased in St. Domingo is not accounted for. (see letter #5).
8. Letter #8., March 16, 1812. Letter to William Reed (Secretary of State) from Robert Rantoul (attorney) representing Giles and Homan asking Congress to address the problem of the Spanish government in Florida.
9. Letter #9, March 24, 1812. Reply of William Reed in response to above letter (#8).
10. Letter #10, 1819. Insurance claim based on 1819 treaty with Spain. Elizabeth Thorndike claimed that since her deceased husband was the sole owner of the Three Brothers, she should now receive all damages subject to the percentage claims of Giles and Homan.
11. Letter #11, April 6, 1819. Letter to Robert Rantoul from Benjamin Giles concerning claims against the Spanish concerning the Three Brothers.
12. Letter #12, May 12, 1821. Letter from William Reed (Sec. Of State) to Robert Rantoul concerning a letter sent about claims of the vessel Three Brothers.
13. Letter #13, June 30, 1821. Letter from B. Giles to R. Rantoul explaining that when he was in St. Domingo because of the capture of the Three Brothers, a sloop from Baltimore or Norfolk was also captured and brought to St. Domingo.
14. Letter #14, July 7, 1821. Letter from B. Giles to R. Rantoul suggesting that there be one agent to attend to the affairs of the Three Brothers. Giles then appointed Rantoul as his attorney.
15. Letter #15, July 26, 1821. Letter from Giles to Rantoul asking what he feels about the prospects of their claim application.
16. Letter #16, July 25, 1821. Letter from Giles to Rantoul informing him that he forgot

- to inform him that he had made a transfer of his shipment claim to Captain Verry of Salem but the transfer was never received and was then canceled.
17. Letter #17, September 8, 1821. Letter from Mr. Walkins (Secretary to the Commissioner under Article II of the treaty with Spain) acknowledging the memorial (claim) of Eliz. Thorndike and others.
  18. Letter #18, December 26, 1821. Letter from Joseph Dane to Robert Rantoul informing him that the memorial is decided to be good and only wanting documents to support the facts stated. The documents have not been found having been lost or misplaced during the British occupation of Washington D.C. during the War of 1812.
  19. Letter #19, January 9, 1822. Letter from Giles to Rantoul informing him that a Mr. King had requested the property of the Three Brothers and that a copy could be obtained at the Custom House in Salem.
  20. Letter #20, January 22, 1822. Letter from Giles to J. Dane informing Dane that no supporting documents can be found and requesting any information on the claims.
  21. Letter #21, January 28, 1822. Dane to R. Rantoul suggesting that it would be in the interest of the owners to have an agent present to represent their claim at the committee hearings.
  22. Letter #22, February 11, 1822. Copy of a letter to Daniel Webster asking him to represent the owners of the Three Brothers in their claim.
  23. Letter #23, March 13, 1822. Moody, Wyman & Co. forward a request from Rantoul to Daniel Webster.
  24. Letter #24, April 8, 1822. Letter of Giles to Rantoul stating that D. Webster informed him that nothing happened in the last meeting between the two commissioners and that there may be some success in finding their documents that were not burned by the British.
  25. Letter #25, May 25, 1822. Copy of letter from Rantoul to Webster informing him that papers have been misplaced and that his clients do not possess copies of them.
  26. Letter #26, July 10, 1822. Letter from A. Bliss to B. Giles informing him that the papers had been found but that the condemnation document from the Spanish courts is missing and must be found.
  27. Letter #27, February 19, 1823. Letter from Giles to Rantoul informing that D. Webster said that while the copy of the condemnation cannot be found, they had found a copy stating that they (commission) had received it.
  28. Letter #28, February 24, 1823. Copy of letter from Rantoul to John Lemon. Lemon's wife is the sister of B. Giles and he asked her to send along the papers in his portfolio labeled "Schooner Three Brothers".
  29. Letter #29, March 8, 1823. Copy of letter from Rantoul to Giles stating that he received the papers from Lemon but they didn't appear to be of much use. He also had no information on his (Giles) children.
  30. Letter #30, April 3, 1812. Copy of a receipt dated April 3, 1812 of the condemnation and a copy of the invoice dated April 1809 (see letter #2).
  31. Letter #31, no date. Information concerning American claims on Spain.
  32. Letter #32, April 10, 1823. Draft of affidavit to be signed by Eliz. Thorndike.

Series II (Folder #2)

1. Bill of sale for 2/3 of the schooner Good Success from John Millet to Joseph Allen on April 24, 1734 for 186 pounds.
2. Receipt of payment from Joseph Allen to William Allen of 120 pounds for 1/2 share of Good Success (1735).
3. Bill of sale for 1/2 of Good Success from William Allen to Joseph Allen c1736.

Series III (Folder #3)

1. June 6, 1809 document signed by four captains in Surinam testifying that the Three Brothers was not seaworthy.
2. October 1809. Henry Thorndike to Benjamin Giles. Requests Giles to take all possible care of Thorndike's son who was reported to be very sick. Thorndike said that \$800 was transferred to Giles and Giles was given permission to sell part of the mahogany if he needed money. He (Giles) was also given permission "as to the vessel you may do what you shall think..."
3. November 9, 1809. Henry Thorndike to Benjamin Giles. Thorndike acknowledged the death of his son, and requested Giles to buy "...two decent grave stones and have them put up as that is the best we can do for our deceased friend."
4. March 17, 1819. Robert Rantoul to the Rev. Elisha Williams. Reviewing the history of the claim.