

Vessels owned by Burnham Brothers at Gloucester, 1838 – 1844

From ledger “Record of Vessels” kept by the Town of Gloucester, ca. 1806-1844

This manuscript ledger contains lists of vessels owned by Gloucester citizens at intervals varying from one to four years, two-year intervals being the most common. This ledger was searched to find vessels owned by the brothers Parker and Joseph Burnham who, with their brother Elias, may also have built them on speculation. All but two were sold when new.

The record ends with the 1844 listing; no ledger continuing these listings has been found to date. The vessels listed are only enrolled, not being required to be formally registered as they were not engaged in foreign trade. (Formal registration required the papers to be filed in Washington, as well as at the local customs house. This could lead to loss of enrollment documents in the event of a fire or other mishap at the local customs office.) Vessels under 20 tons were not subject to enrollment and are traceable only through city/town records such as this ledger. – E.R.

1838: (schooner) “Sachem”: Parker Burnham Jr. (blt. Essex), age 1 yr., 27 tons
Sold to Albert, George, John & Wm. Perkins

1839: (schr.) “Amaranth”: Parker Burnham Jr. 1/8, 7/8 in Essex (blt. Essex), age 2 yrs., 65 tons

1840: (schr.) “Oasis”: Parker Burnham Jr. and Parker Burnham [Sr.] & Jos. B. Burnham, age 1 yr.
32 tons (blt. Essex. Sold)

(schr.) “Tasso”: Parker Burnham ½ and Joseph B. Burnham ½ (new, 1841), 65-63/95 tons
(blt. Essex?)

1844: (boat) “Arraby”: Parker Burnham, (new), 13 tons

(boat) “Eureka”: Parker Burnham, (new), 11 tons

(schr.) “Tasso”: Parker Burnham Jr., ½ and Joseph B. Burnham ½, 3 yrs., 65-63/95 tons

Note: the above schooner “Tasso” is very possibly the vessel depicted in Inv. 291.

No other published records of shipbuilding on Cape Ann list vessels built by Parker Burnham, Sr. or his sons, leaving further research to be done at the National Archives, New England Branch at no small expenditure of time.

Erik Ronnberg