

**Barnstable Historical Society Archives  
Thomas Harris Document Collection  
MC. 3**



*Captain Thomas Harris*

**Extent:** One Box

**Biographical Note:** Captain Thomas Harris, (1802 – 1889) went to sea when he was eleven years old. By the age of 22 he was master of his first vessel which was a coastal ship. He later moved on to be the Master of deep water vessels and became known for his “valor” in rescuing crews of ships which were in danger of sinking. His first rescue happened when he was Captain of the Perua and came upon a British ship, the Britannia, which was disabled in the mid-Atlantic. The storm prevented him from rescuing the crew for 48 hours as he stood by the ship. When the weather moderated he transferred the crew without incident onto the Perua. In appreciation for his efforts the British Admiralty awarded Captain Harris a gold medal. His next rescue came on a voyage between Boston and Trieste, he would rescue the crew of the Brig Mary Francis of Hamden, Maine. Once again despite a raging storm he was able to rescue all hands.

By the 1870s Harris had retired from the sea and as many captains had done before him became a local official. Starting his new career off as a deputy sheriff in 1874, he later was elected Sheriff of Barnstable County in 1881.

Thomas Harris married Mehitable Grey Nye (b. 1807, d. 1890) on April 26, 1826 and gave birth to Henrietta, 1826; Josephine, 1828; Lydia, 1830; Thomas Jr., 1832; Charles Andrew Cunningham, 1841; Sarah Annah, 1844 and Marcus in 1848.

**Scope and Content Note:** Organized as two series: Series one reflects his time as a mariner and covers the dates 1836 – 1854; Series two reflects his life on shore and covers the dates 1854 – 1880. Please note that Harris’s correspondence is divided by the two series.

**Creator:** Thomas Harris, Sr.

**Date:** 1838 - 1892

**Access:** Unrestricted; advanced notice is required to study material. Please contact curatorial staff by mail or phone for access. Please credit the Barnstable Historical Society Archives for publication purposes.

**Language:** Material is entirely in English

**Repository:** Barnstable Historical Society 3074 Main St. (POB 829), 6A, Barnstable, Ma 02630 508-362-2982

**Processed by:** Stephen Robert Lovell Farrar

**Box# Folder#**Series One: Marine Occupation

1	1	Letter Copybook, 1836 – 1848
	2	Pico Log, 1839 – 1840
	3	Pico Log, April 7, 1841 – October 10, 1841
	4	Pico Log, April 15, 1843 – April, 20, 1846
	5	Rescue of Brig Mary Francis, 1849. Handwritten account by Captain Thomas Harris
1	6	Bill of Sale for Bark Perua 1845.
	7	Appointment as Insurance Agent, 1854.
	8	Appointment as Commissioner of Wrecks, 1854

Series Two: Sheriff Occupation

	9	Correspondence, 1854 – 1865, with gaps
	10	Correspondence (four items), 1875, 1879, 1880,
1	11	Correspondence, undated
	12	Thomas Harris Deputy Sheriff appointment, 1874, 1878
	13	Thomas Harris Sheriff appointment, 1881
	14	Bonds to Sheriff Harris from his Deputy Sheriffs
	15	Justice of the Peace appointment papers, 1876
1	16	MSPCA appointment papers, 1877
	17	Notice of Sheriff's Sale, 1873 – 1877
1	18	Collections against debtors: payment receipts for Hinckley and Crocker

**Box# Folder#**

1	19	Sheriff's receipts, various
	20	Notice for collection of Debt
	21	Return of Complaints, blank forms
	22	Speech read at Hyannis Fire District meeting, 1892
	23	Prohibition Party, Slate of Candidates undated
1	24	Empty envelopes