



The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Mercantile collection

1726-1950 [bulk 1750-1900]

MssCol 24608

Summary

Title: Mercantile collection

Date: 1726-1950 [bulk 1750-1900]

Size: 3.06 linear feet (7 boxes, 1 oversize folder)

Source: The Mercantile Collection was compiled over time from various purchases and donations made in the late-19th and 20th centuries, including transfers from the Duyckinck Collection, the Emmet Collection, the Ford Collection, the Sabin Collection and the Thomas J. Taylor Collection.

Revision History: Revised by Susan P. Waide

Abstract: The Mercantile Collection, 1726-1950, is a synthetic collection documenting mercantile and other business activities from the early-17th to the mid-20th centuries, especially in the northeastern United States. It consists of papers and records created by persons, firms, and companies engaged chiefly in trade, finance, insurance, mining, railroad management, shipping, and whaling. A few items pertain to manufacturing and real estate. Transatlantic commerce in the colonial and early-national period, and the early railroad industry in America, are strongly represented. Notable material includes the assorted papers of New York City and Philadelphia merchants, among them members of the Pemberton family of Philadelphia; Vice-Admiralty court proceedings; and the incomplete ledger of an 18th-century New York City druggist.

Preferred citation: Mercantile collection, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English Includes items in Dutch, French, German, and Spanish.

Processing note: The collection received an accession-level description in 1986. In 2017-2018 a number of small collections were removed for separate description and access, and the main finding aid was revised. The collection's original arrangement in two series was retained.

Arrangement: Two series: I. Personal and corporate names; II. Subjects, titles and formats

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Account books
Accounts
Business records
Commercial correspondence
Insurance policies
Legal instruments
Menus
Photographs
Property records
Shipping records
Stock certificates
Technical drawings

Subjects

Banks and banking -- United States
Insurance -- United States
International trade
Mercantile system
Merchants -- Great Britain
Merchants -- United States
Mining corporations
Pharmacy -- New York (State) -- New York -- History -- 18th century
Privateering
Prize law -- Great Britain
Railroads -- Cuba
Railroads -- United States
Real property -- United States
Shipping -- United States
Whaling

Occupations

Businessmen
Mariners.
Merchants.
Ship captains.
Shipowners.

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.) -- Commerce
Philadelphia (Pa.) -- Commerce
United States -- Commerce
United States -- History -- 1783-1865
United States -- History -- 1865-
United States -- History -- Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775
United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783

Names

Duyckinck collection
Emmet collection
Ford collection
Sabin collection
Thomas J. Taylor collection

Container List

Personal and corporate names

- b. 1 f. 1 **Albany Steam Boat Association extract of minutes 1829**
Extract of minutes 1829 September 26, signed and attested 1829 November 18.
- b. 1 f. 2 **Ayres, Howard, papers relating to uniform bills of lading 1936-1937**
- b. 1 f. 3 **Beekman, Theophilus and David Squire, instructions and agreement 1786**
May 10
Agreement at New York between Theo's [Theophilus] Beekman, owner of schooner Betsey, and David Squire, schooner captain, beginning with Beekman's instructions regarding whaling venture, once the crew was completed at Sag Harbor.
- b. 1 f. 4 **Beverley, William, letters sent 1744-1745**
Leaf (4 pages) from letterbook, 1744 November 6- [1745 N.S.] January 26, copying letters and bills of exchange written at Virginia to Clement Plumsted via William Black; Thomas and John Blackhouse (also Backhouse); and Richard Hill.
- b. 1 f. 5 **Breslau Lot-Besitzer Union Circular No. 1 1881 November**
Printed constitution and notice in German of the Breslau Lot Owners Association of Breslau (now Lindenhurst), Suffolk County, Long Island.
- b. 1 f. 6 **Compagnie Autrichienne-Américaine, Plan d'une compagnie de commerce pour l'Amérique Settentrionale 1785 July 27**
Printed prospectus (3 pages) dated Trieste, 27 Juillet 1785, for a commercial company plying between the ports of Trieste and Philadelphia; this copy signed by the associators Belletti, C. de Maffei, G.[George] Simpson, and [Ambroise] de Strohlendorf, with notes on verso of third page.
- b. 1 f. 7 **Cripps, John S., letters received 1784-1788**
Two letters from Joseph Webb at Boston, 1784 to Messrs. John S. Cripps & Mey, merchants at Charleston, S.C., and two letters to John S. Cripps from John Webb, 1787 and 1788.
- b. 1 f. 8 **Davies, Julien T., "Suggestions on the Taxation of Shares in National Banks at their Actual Value" 1875 December 4 (Signed manuscript draft.)**
- b. 1 f. 9 **Elliot C. Brown Company financial records 1910-1936**
Tax filings and checks of New York City firm; jury duty notice.
- b. 1 f. 10 **Estwick, R.R., letter at Barbados to Thomas Willing at Philadelphia 1751**
November 4
- b. 1 f. 11 **Foster Machine Co. brochures circa 1892**
Mockup versions of two illustrated promotional brochures for Foster Machine Co. of Westfield, Mass., builders of textile machinery.
- b. 1 f. 12 **Hill, T.O. (Thomas Olney), invoices and receipts 1880-1892**
Personal and household items bought at New York City and Lansingburgh, N.Y.
- b. 1 f. 13 **Hobart, Enoch, letter and document 1745, 1753**
Articles of agreement at Philadelphia for the construction of a brigantine between shipwright Joseph Lynn and Enoch Hobart, mariner, witness James Peller, 1753 September 28; letter of James Peller at Philadelphia 1744/5 March 20 to Hobart at Jamaica.
- b. 1 f. 14 **Hopkins, Selden R., "Examinations" circa 1900**
Manuscript and revised drafts of article on the benefit of frequent examinations of banks by bank examiners.
- b. 1 f. 15 **J.N. & S. Washburn (Taunton, Mass.), letters and insurance policies 1833-1842**
- b. 1 f. 16 **Jones, Thomas, Jr., letter and document 1796, 1801**
Letter at New York to Joseph [Ireland], 1801; statement of property belonging to Jones and the estate of his father, 1796, including brewery equipment, a house on the Bowery, and leased property in London.
- b. 1 f. 17 **Leahy, Patrick, apprenticeship indenture 1819 June [26?]**
For seven years service with Thomas Hussy, stonecutter, of the Little Island, Ireland.

Personal and corporate names (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 18 **Leonard, Jonathan, letter** 1815 February 17
Draft or copy of a letter by steel manufacturer Jonathan Leonard of Canton, Ohio, to an unidentified recipient containing his observations on politics, westward expansion, and the state of American manufacturing. The letter begins with text copied from John Filson's published history of Kentucky.
- b. 1 f. 19 **Liberty Park Mutual Homestead Association (Camden, N.J.)** 1884-1888
Articles of incorporation, 1884, signed by shareholders; Constitution and By-laws of "The Liberty Park Mutual Homestead Association No. 2", signed by shareholders, circa 1885; annual reports and other printed matter. Most items have bilingual text in English and German.
- b. 1 f. 20 **Lisle, John and John Lisle Jr. memorial to Don Joseph Ygnacio de Viar**
undated
Petition to Don Joseph Ygnacio de Viar (José Ignacio de Viar), chargé d'affaires from the King of Spain to the United States from 1789 to 1791, and in the mid-1790s. The document, signed by Philadelphia merchants John Lisle and John Lisle Jr., seeks his assistance in the release of Captain Joseph Lisle and crew held prisoners at Cartagena under suspicion of illegal trade.
- b. 1 f. 21 **McDowell, William O., letters and documents** 1869-1893
Relating to the New York and Oswego Midland Railroad Co. and other investments.
- b. 1 f. 22 **Mechanics & Farmers Bank (Albany, N.Y.), letters received** 1818-1836
Letters to Thomas H. Olcott, Cashier.
- b. 1 f. 23 **Mills & Ryerson records** 1821-1828
Signed lease agreements, invoices, receipts, and other items of New York City real estate firm.
- b. 1 f. 24 **Monroe County Historical Association (Pa.), "Old Family Customs"** circa 1938
Lecture on home weaving and dyeing, with particular reference to coverlets.
- b. 1 f. 25 **Morris, Cadwallader and Samuel Cadwallader Morris (C. & S.C. Morris) bills of lading** 1764-1770
Philadelphia merchants; sewn booklet of bills of lading.
- b. 1 f. 26 **Newburgh Whaling Company documents** 1837, 1839
Stock certificate to Charles Ludlow and his promissory note.
- b. 2 f. 1 **Pacific Mail Steamship Company menu and table cards** 1876
Bill of fare for S.S. Colima (R.R. Searle, commander) with two table cards, for S.S. Colima and S.S. Acapulco.
- b. 2 f. 2 **Palmer's News Room transcript of Ocean Telegraph dispatch** 1858
Contemporary carbon copy of the "second news despatch" over the Atlantic Cable, dated London August 27th [1858], and stamped Palmer's News Room [Boston, Mass.]
- b. 2 f. 3 **Parker, Cortlandt, letters to Abram S. Hewitt** 1874-1875
Two letters dated 1874 October 5 and 1875 Jan 30, regarding the financial condition of Montclair Railway Co., with plan (1 p.) for reorganization of the railroad 1874, December 23.
- b. 2 f. 4 **Pemberton, James, letters received and document** 1765-1770
Letters, 1768-1770, addressed to various partnerships of James Pemberton, Philadelphia merchant, including Henry Styles, Enoch Hobart and John Bringham. Six letters are from merchants at Lisbon, Madeira and Cadiz, and two letters are from ship captain George Stevenson at Barcelona and Madeira; also, a protest sworn at Madeira by Henry Styles and others regarding damage to the brig Hannah, 1765.
- b. 2 f. 5 **Polly (Schooner) shipping documents** 1789 September
Manifest of cargo on voyage from St. Thomas to New York, Adam Todd Sr., master, with five entry of merchandise certificates signed by consignees.
- b. 2 f. 6 **Poor's Manual of Railroads, letters received** 1896-1897
Letters to managing editor John P. Meany; chiefly updates for the next issue.
- b. 2 f. 7 **Robbins, Frederick A., papers** 1876-1920
Personal and business papers of Frederick A. Robbins of F.A. Robbins Press Works, San Francisco, comprising correspondence, agreements, mortgage documents, receipts and personal checks, travel documentation, sample die cut, and two letters and a receipt from his father N.B. Robbins in Hamilton (Canada), 1878-1881.

Personal and corporate names (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 8 **Schultz, George W., "The Peekskill Blast Furnace and others" 1893, circa 1938**
Manuscript essay circa 1938 by George W. Schultz, who purchased the furnace in 1893 and dismantled it as well as other sites mentioned within; also two mounted photographs of the furnace as it appeared in 1893, and copies of two illustrated drawings of early iron forges, and one entitled 'The Lawsuit,' by Schultz.
- b. 2 f. 9 **Sibley, Richard C., correspondence with Alfred E. Smith 1927-1929**
Copies of Sibley's correspondence with former New York State governor Alfred E. Smith and others regarding his Sibley System of rail freight transfer for the Port of New York, represented by Metropolitan Railway Transfer, Inc. Some typescripts were enclosed in his letter to Smith, 1929 March 12. A signed letter from Smith to Sibley, 1929 May 6, returns the material sent to him.
- b. 2 f. 10 **Sidler, Emil, employment record 1906-1914**
Record of his service as cook on ships of the Norddeutscher Lloyd (Bremen) line.
- b. 2 f. 11 **Skidmore & Wilkins 1823-1841**
Letters, orders and invoices addressed to New York City dry-goods merchants Skidmore & Wilkins, later Skidmore & Co., for cloth, clothing and haberdashery items; also, a pencil portrait of a man.
- b. 2 f. 12 **Smith, Jeffery, receipts 1774-1811**
Receipts to Jeffery Smith, farmer of Smithtown, Suffolk County, Long Island, for payments, goods, and subscriptions.
- b. 2 f. 13 **Starbuck, Benjamin, list and news of American whale ships in the Pacific 1838 April 26**
Tabulated list of American whale ships anchored at the Port of Payta [Paita, Peru], January 1, 1838 to April 26th; news of whale ships on the coast of Gappan [Japan], September 26th, 1837; and News of whale ships on the coast of Peru; signed and dated at Payta, on one folio sheet.
- b. 2 f. 14 **Stead, Benjamin, letters 1762, 1775**
Letters written at London, 1762 September 9 to James Christie "a mercht of London but now in Glasgow" regarding terms for vessels now that the war was close to ending, and the availability of any ship going to Charlestown [Charleston], South Carolina; and 1775 Sept 30 to Mrs. Fenwicke at Charlestown, South Carolina, regarding a payment owed by Mr. Fenwicke.
- b. 2 f. 15 **Stern Bros. Employees Mutual Aid Society letter sent 1884 February 27**
Letter by president I. Noble regarding distributions; also, clipped advertisement for H.C.F. Koch & Co., New York City department store.
- b. 2 f. 16 **Storke & Gainsborough letters received 1735-1736**
London merchants; letter from George Feilding at New York, 1735 June 2, and from Henry Cuyler at New York, 1736 November 23.
- b. 2 f. 17 **Titford, Isaac, letters and documents 1796-1799**
Three letters from British merchants to Isaac Titford, New York City merchant; bills of lading, certificate of delivery signed by William Titford at London, and invoices to Isaac Titford and Mrs. Titford.
- b. 2 f. 18 **Willard Brothers correspondence 1913-1914**
Chiefly letters received by the New York City firm of Willard Brothers, coal contractors, regarding coal supply and storage plans at the Panama Canal.
- b. 2 f. 19 **William & James Douglas documents 1774-1786**
William and James Douglas were Scottish merchants with business enterprises in Great Britain and New York. Documents comprise a protest on a bill of exchange, shipping invoices, and two maritime insurance policies by George and Samuel Douglas, who would take over the New York firm.
- b. 2 f. 20 **Williams, G., letters to Baynton & Wharton 1760 March 6, April 9 1760**
G. Williams letters at the island of New Providence (Bahamas) to Messrs. Baynton & Wharton, Philadelphia merchants, concerning privateering and prize ships. Williams had just been appointed Judge to the Court of Vice-Admiralty at New Providence by Governor William Shirley.

Subjects, titles and formats

Account books

Subjects, titles and formats (cont.)

Account books (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 1 **Griswold, S.L., Accounts 1875-1876** (Disbound sheets.)
- b. 3 f. 2 **Heirs of A. G. [Alexander G.] Fraser in account with Anson G. Phelps 1828-1832** (Disbound sheets.)
- b. 3 f. 3 **James Lloyd (Ship) account book 1811-1833**
Disbound volume with loose pages and cuttings for the ship James Lloyd in account with James Walker, Benjamin Walker, Gamamiel Church and others [of Taunton, Mass.]; also, account for the meeting house.
- b. 3 f. 4 **Searing, Alfred, ship accounts 1899**
Disbound letterpress statements and invoices identified by vessel, including Schooner Hannah F. Carleton, Brig Henry B. Cleaves, and others; with index.
- b. 7 **Pharmacy ledger 1771-1775** (Disbound sheets.)
Incomplete ledger of an unidentified druggist in New York City, as identified from customer and place names: Isaac Brashier, Peter Riker on Cowfoot Hill, Thomas Lynch merchant, "Judge Livingston," "Mr. Colden from The Highlands," and Stone Street. Entries under account names provide date; medicines dispensed, sometimes to other individuals under the account name; and amount charged. African-Americans mentioned include an account for Caesar Freeman, a former slave.
- b. 3 f. 5 **Unidentified account book 1835-1836** (Disbound sheets.)
- b. 3 f. 6 **Unidentified account book 1855**
Loose sheets pertaining to E.O. Perrin and John Bull.
- b. 3 f. 7 **Unidentified day book 1820-1822**
Day book, 1820 November 16-1822 June 14, of unidentified Massachusetts merchant. Names such as Paddock Dean, Cyrus Caswell, and Dighton Manufactory place the accounts in the Taunton area.
- b. 3 f. 8 **Unidentified memorandum and account book 1768-1772**
Memorandum book of an unidentified merchant or clerk in New York, recording accounts for lumber, surveying activities, and tasks performed, some on behalf of "Coll. Reid" (Colonel John Reid), including reference to the estate of Mr. Alexander.

Accounts

Included are loose accounts, invoices, receipts, and promissory notes.

- b. 3 f. 9 **1726-1794**
- b. 3 f. 10 **1801-1896**
- b. 3 f. 11 **Advertisements 1856-1937**
- b. 3 f. 12 **Agreement of New York City employers to close early on Saturdays 1864**
October 1
Signed by dealers in "paints, drugs, chemicals, etc." with street addresses, agreeing to close at 3 p.m. on Saturdays during the winter months.
- b. 3 f. 13 **Article concerning dispute between commander of H.M.S. Brazen and the government of Buenos Aires circa 1823**
Analysis of actions [in 1823] of Captain J.W. Willis [G.W. Willes] by "A Cosmopolitan," citing maritime law in support of the Buenos Aires government. Manuscript text in English.

Banks and banking

- b. 3 f. 14 **1796-1883**
Miscellaneous letters and documents; checks and drafts.
- b. 3 f. 15 **Bank of the United States 1816-1840**
Miscellaneous letters, checks and stock certificates pertaining to the Bank of the United States.
- b. 3 f. 16 **Bills of exchange 1748-1780, 1813-1832**
- b. 3 f. 17 **Bonds 1770-1845**

Insurance

- b. 3 f. 18 **1800-1912**
Miscellaneous letters, documents and policies relating to non-maritime insurance

Subjects, titles and formats (cont.)

Insurance (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 19 **Maritime 1770-1882**
Miscellaneous letters, documents and policies relating to maritime insurance.

- b. 3 f. 20 **Manufacturing 1938, 1950**

- b. 3 f. 21 **Prices Current 1801-1871**

Railroads

- b. 4 f. 1 **Alabama and Tennessee River Rail Road programme for construction and lease 1866**

- b. 4 f. 2 **Attica and Buffalo Rail Road Company contract and plan for station 1843**

- b. 4 f. 3 **Auburn & Rochester Rail Road Company contracts 1840**

- b. 4 f. 4 **Central Transportation Company (Philadelphia, Pa.) 1927-1928**
Letter from City Hall Recorder of Deeds, 1927 December 30 to Charles W. Dahlinger, enclosing certified copies, 1928, of charter (1862) and certificate (1863).

- b. 4 f. 5 **Cleveland and Pittsburgh Rail Road letter received and documents 1860, 1866**

- b. 4 f. 6 **Dauphin & Susquehanna Rail Road. Weekly reports of Pinegrove coal transport 1856 (Bound in one volume.)**

- b. 4 f. 7 **Hudson River Rail Road contracts 1847, 1849**

- b. 4 f. 8 **Lake Ontario and Hudson River Rail Road Co. first mortgage bond and coupons 1857 April 6**

- b. 4 f. 9 **Mohawk and Hudson Rail-Road passenger and freight reports 1936**

- b. 4 f. 10 **New York and Erie Rail Road Company. Report to Executive Committee 1837 April 28**

New York Central Rail Road

- b. 4 f. 11 **Bay of Havana and Matanzas Rail Road, Cuba 1860-1861**
Specifications and other documents, some signed by Howard Carroll, civil engineer with the New York Central Railroad, and letter to him, in English; plan of bridge over Rio Mayabuna in Spanish signed Alej[andr]o Helvecio Lanier.

- b. 4 f. 12 **Sidney T. Fairchild letter received and document 1856, 1860**
Concerning wood proposal.

- b. 4 f. 13 **W.S. Kittle letter and document 1856 December**
Concerning injury of Mr. Goodman, a jewelry peddler.

- b. 4 f. 14 **Pennsylvania Coal Company coal transport report 1865 January 20**

- b. 4 f. 15 **Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Rail Road Company correspondence 1848-1863**
Chiefly letters to George A. Dadmun, General Ticket Agent.

- b. 4 f. 16 **Schenectady and Troy Railroad Company contracts 1842**

- b. 4 f. 17 **Syracuse & Utica Rail Road Company letters and documents 1849-1855**
Correspondence, reports, circulars, stock certificates and other documents; some are addressed to Sidney T. Fairchild.

- b. 4 f. 18 **List of distances by rail from New York and other points to midwestern cities undated**

- b. 4 f. 19 **Report to the Legislature of New-York 1843**
Printed circular reporting on meetings held by delegates from railroad companies operating between Buffalo and the Hudson River.

- b. 4 f. 20 **Canada. Great Western Railway letter (copy) undated**
Copy of letter from Locomotive Superintendent Richard Eaton to Managing Director C. J. Brydges, 1859 August 27, comparing English and American locomotives.

- b. 4 f. 21 **Miscellaneous letters and documents relating to railroads 1838-1928**

Subjects, titles and formats (cont.)

Shipping

Cargo and customs documents

- b. 5 f. 1 1725-1790
- b. 5 f. 2 1791-1794
- b. 5 f. 3 1796-1799
- b. 5 f. 4 1800-1804
- b. 5 f. 5 1805-1810
- b. 5 f. 6 1815-1819
- b. 5 f. 7 1821-1875

Includes customs clearance document for the American ship Canton, 1822 (5 p.) signed by officials of the Republic of Chile at Valparaiso and Santiago, among them [Bernardo] O'Higgins.

Vice-Admiralty courts

- b. 5 f. 8 **Hannah (Brig), of Philadelphia, Nathaniel Donnell, master 1758**
Pemberton & Reeve, owners; the Hannah was captured by the French privateer Le Fier (brig) of New Orleans, commanded by Jean Hinard.
- b. 5 f. 9 **Herman (Ship), of New York, Alexander Horn, master 1813**
Papers relating to case before the Court of Vice-Admiralty in Nova Scotia.
- b. 5 f. 10 **Sandwich (Ship), of London, Thomas Hazlewood, commander 1750s-1760s**
Customs case before the Court of Vice-Admiralty in Philadelphia, concerning the baggage of Palatine immigrants on a voyage from Rotterdam to Philadelphia via Cowes, 1750. James Pemberton acted as security for Hazlewood.
- b. 5 f. 11 **Tryall (Brig), of Philadelphia, John Evans, master 1745**
Papers relating to case before Court of Vice-Admiralty at Frederica, Georgia. The Tryall was owned by James and Israel Pemberton and William Logan.
- b. 5 f. 12 **Opinion of Dr. Bettesworth on a case stated by Mr. Charles on flags of truce 1760 June 17**
With reference to the case of the ship Ospray, Court of Vice-Admiralty at Philadelphia.
- b. 5 f. 13 **Miscellaneous letters relating to shipping 1758-1905**
- b. 5 f. 14 **Miscellaneous documents relating to shipping 1775-1940**
- b. 5 f. 15 **Miscellaneous invoices and receipts relating to shipping 1768-1854**
Charges or receipts for wharfage, wages, goods and services; receipts for payment.

Stock and bond certificates

- b. 6 f. 1 **Stock and bond certificates 1829-1929**
- b. 6 f. 2 **Mining stock certificates 1852-1892**
- b. 6 f. 3 **Railroad stock certificates 1850s-1900s**
- o. 1 o. 1 **"Table showing additional duties imposed on basis of Internal Revenue Acts and Not Repealed when the Internal Revenue taxes were repealed" circa 1868 (Manuscript; 6 oversize sheets attached at top.)**

Textiles

- b. 6 f. 4 **Antique lace designs 1899**
- b. 6 f. 5 **Tests with knit goods circa 1906**
Tables and notes regarding knitting machinery patent case of Charles Cooper v. Otis Co., decided 1906 in the U.S. District Court, Boston.
- b. 6 f. 6 **Unidentified notes on the Mills tariff bill 1888**
Notes and pasted clippings on disbound notebook sheets relating to free trade and the Mills tariff bill, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives in 1888, but not the Senate.

Whaling

Subjects, titles and formats (cont.)

Whaling (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 7 **Directions for boats in using signals when whales are sighted** undated (1 page.)
- b. 6 f. 8 **List of whaling vessels at Tumbez, Peru from 1858 to 1862** undated
Extracted from logbook of U.S. Consulate at Tumbes, Peru, Leonard G. Sanford, Consul, listing vessel, tonnage, date of launching, where built and port, with additional research notes, perhaps by donor H. Percy Ashley (1938), 6 pages.
- b. 6 f. 9 **Miscellaneous letters and documents** 1771-1935