



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**Rodney family papers**

1759-1823

MssCol 2602

Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2015

## Summary

**Creator:** Rodney family

**Title:** Rodney family papers

**Date:** 1759-1823

**Size:** .25 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Purchased from Stan. V. Henkels, 1919, with additional gifts and purchases.

**Abstract:** Caesar Rodney (1728-1784), his brother Thomas Rodney (1744-1811) and Thomas Rodney's son Caesar A. (Caesar Augustus) Rodney (1772-1824) were prominent American politicians and statesmen from Kent County, Delaware. The Rodney family papers, dating 1759-1823, comprise the papers of Caesar Rodney and letters received by Thomas Rodney and Caesar A. Rodney, documenting their professional and personal lives. Caesar Rodney papers, 1759-1781, consist of correspondence and other materials reflecting his militia and government responsibilities during the American Revolution, as well as personal and business matters. Letters to Thomas Rodney, 1776-1804, consist of personal letters from Caesar A. Rodney, nephew Caesar R. Wilson, and John Dickinson, and a letter regarding a legal matter from Thomas Collins. Letters to Caesar A. Rodney, 1795-1823, concern his legal, business and political affairs, and his missions to South America; there is some personal correspondence from John Dickinson, James Barron, and others.

**Preferred citation:** Rodney family papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

**Processing note:** Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2015

## Creator History

Caesar Rodney (1728-1784), his brother Thomas Rodney (1744-1811) and Thomas Rodney's son Caesar A. (Caesar Augustus) Rodney (1772-1824) were prominent American politicians and statesmen from Kent County, Delaware. Caesar Rodney (1728-1784) was a colonial legislator in Delaware and representative to the Stamp Act Congress and to the Continental Congress. He served as Brigadier General of the Delaware militia, signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and was President of Delaware from 1778 to 1781. His younger brother, lawyer Thomas Rodney (1744-1811), served in the

Continental Congress and Delaware General Assembly, and was a Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court and Chief Justice of Mississippi Territory (1803-1811). Caesar A. Rodney of Dover, and later Wilmington and New Castle, Delaware, was a lawyer and diplomat. He served in the Delaware General Assembly, was a U.S. Representative and Senator from Delaware, and U.S. Attorney General from 1807 to 1811. From 1817 to 1818 he served as a member of a special U.S. diplomatic mission to South America to report on the state of revolutionary governments in Argentina and elsewhere. In 1823 he was appointed U.S. Minister to Argentina, where he died in 1824.

## Scope and Content Note

The Rodney family papers, dating 1759 to 1823, comprise the papers of Caesar Rodney and letters received by Thomas Rodney and Caesar A. Rodney, documenting their professional and personal lives. Caesar Rodney papers, 1759-1781, consist of correspondence and other materials reflecting his militia and government responsibilities during the American Revolution, as well as personal and business matters. Letters to Thomas Rodney, 1776-1804, consist of personal letters from Caesar A. Rodney, nephew Caesar R. Wilson, and John Dickinson, and a letter regarding a legal matter from Thomas Collins. Letters to Caesar A. Rodney, 1795-1823, concern his legal, business and political affairs, and his missions to South America; there is some personal correspondence from John Dickinson, James Barron, and others.

Caesar Rodney papers, 1759-1781, largely concern military, political and personal matters during the Revolutionary War. Outgoing correspondence consists of a letter to Henry Laurens in Continental Congress advising that he will call the Delaware General Assembly, 1778, and a personal letter to an unidentified person, 1781. Letters to Rodney, 1777, from Mordecai Gist, John McKinly, and Tench Tilghman, concern the supply or disposition of militia forces; Bedford Gunning, 1779, writes on personal and business matters. Letters from Pennsylvania statesman John Dickinson, a close friend of the Rodney family, touch briefly on political and military matters. A letter from Richard Peters of the War Office to the Commissioners of Accounts relates to General Pulaski's accounts. Also present are financial drafts drawn by the Speaker of the Delaware Assembly upon the Trustee of the General Loan Office for Kent County (Rodney), 1778-1779, as well as a bond of William Addams to Rodney and a receipt signed by John Dickinson, both dated 1759. A few copies of letters and documents dating 1765-1778 concern American political, military and government affairs.

Letters to Thomas Rodney, 1776-1804, consist of personal letters from Caesar A. Rodney, nephew Caesar R. Wilson, and John Dickinson, and a letter regarding a legal matter from Thomas Collins.

Letters to Caesar Augustus Rodney, 1795-1823, concern his legal, business and political affairs; there is some personal correspondence from John Dickinson, James Barron, and others. Items pertaining to Rodney's diplomatic work in South America include Secretary of State John Quincy Adams' instructions to Caesar A. Rodney, John Graham and Theodorick Bland as members of the South American Commission, 1817. Also present are letters from U.S.S. Congress naval personnel Armstrong, Griffin and Marston at Rio de Janeiro in 1823 expressing their regard for Rodney and his family, also at Rio, and their regrets over an unstated shipboard dispute. Several letters from his friend James Barron at Norfolk describe his efforts to restore his damaged career in the U.S. Navy following an earlier court martial and suspended service. Tench Coxe writes generally of national and international affairs, and brief letters from Edward Livingston and Joseph Hopkinson concern court matters. New York publisher James Rivington, seeking payment for books, describes his poverty, and a letter from Aaron Burr, 1801, congratulates Rodney on his recent election to office.

## **Key Terms**

### **Geographic Names**

Delaware -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783

Delaware -- Politics and government -- 1775-1865

South America -- History -- Wars of Independence, -- 1806-1830

United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783

United States -- Politics and government -- 1783-1865

### **Occupations**

Diplomats

Lawyers

Legislators

Soldiers

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Drafts (negotiable instruments)

### **Names**

Adams, John Quincy, 1767-1848

Barron, James, 1769-1851

Bedford, Gunning, 1747-1812

Burr, Aaron, 1756-1836

Coxe, Tench, 1755-1824

Dickinson, John, 1732-1808

Gist, Mordecai, 1743-1792

Hopkinson, Joseph, 1770-1842

Ingersoll, Charles Jared, 1782-1862

Laurens, Henry, 1724-1792

Livingston, Edward, 1764-1836

Peters, Richard, 1743-1828

Rivington, James, 1724-1802

Rodney, C. A. (Caesar Augustus), 1772-1824

Rodney, Caesar, 1728-1784

Rodney, Thomas, 1744-1811

Tilghman, Tench, 1744-1786

Congress (Frigate : 1794-1834)

United States. Commission to Investigate the Spanish Provinces of South America.

## Container List

### Caesar Rodney papers 1759-1781

- b. 1 f. 1 Receipt for legal fee signed by John Dickinson 1759 May
- b. 1 f. 2 William Addams bond to Caesar Rodney 1759 August 15
- b. 1 f. 3 H.S. Conway to unidentified recipient 1765 October 24  
Copy of circular letter from H. S. Conway, British Secretary of State for the Northern Department, to North American colonial governors.
- b. 1 f. 4 John McKinly letter to Caesar Rodney 1777 July 28
- b. 1 f. 5 Tench Tilghman letter to Caesar Rodney 1777 August 2
- b. 1 f. 6 Mordecai Gist letter to Caesar Rodney 1777 September 2
- b. 1 f. 7 Thomas Mifflin correspondence 1777 June 14  
Copy of letters written to and by Mifflin on June 14, 1777 concerning military actions near Princeton, New Jersey.
- b. 1 f. 8 Massachusetts General Court letter to Massachusetts delegates in Continental Congress 1778 March 10  
Instructions to subscribe to the Articles of Confederation  
Attested copy.
- b. 1 f. 9 Richard Peters letter to Commissioners of Accounts 1778 November 9  
War Office letter regarding General Pulaski's accounts.
- b. 1 f. 10 Caesar Rodney letter to Henry Laurens 1778 November 13
- b. 1 f. 11 Gunning Bedford letter to Caesar Rodney 1779 March 8
- b. 1 f. 12 John Dickinson letters to Caesar Rodney 1779 September 15-October 29
- b. 1 f. 13 Drafts drawn by the Delaware Speaker of the Assembly upon the Trustee of the Continental Loan Office for the County of Kent 1778-1779
- b. 1 f. 14 Caesar Rodney letter to unidentified recipient 1781 January 21

### Letters to Thomas Rodney 1776-1804

- b. 1 f. 15 Collins, Thomas 1784 July 1
- b. 1 f. 16 Dickinson, John [1802?] January 5, 1804 [February] 11
- b. 1 f. 17 Rodney, Caesar Augustus 1795 July 14
- b. 1 f. 18 Wilson, Caesar R 1803 May 10

### Letters to Caesar A. Rodney 1795-1823

- b. 1 f. 19 Adams, John Quincy 1817 November 21  
Instructions from Adams as Secretary of State to Caesar A. Rodney, John Graham and Theodorick Bland regarding their diplomatic mission to South America.
- b. 1 f. 20 Armstrong, William A 1823 October 17-21
- b. 1 f. 21 Barron, James 1821-1823
- b. 1 f. 22 Burr, Aaron 1801 October 18
- b. 1 f. 23 Coxe, Tench 1808-1823
- b. 1 f. 24 Dickinson, John 1800-1806  
Includes two letters written 1800 July 14 by Dickinson to his friends Isaac Allen and Bishop Inglis in Nova Scotia, introducing Caesar A. Rodney, by whom they were to be delivered.
- b. 1 f. 25 Fisher, John 1795 February 23, August 12 1795
- b. 1 f. 26 Griffin, Allen 1823 October 20
- b. 1 f. 27 Hopkinson, Joseph and Charles Jared Ingersoll 1815 May 25

Letters to Caesar A. Rodney (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 28     Livingston, Edward 1802 October 22
- b. 1 f. 29     Marston, John, Jr 1823 October 20
- b. 1 f. 30     Rivington, James 1797 June 5
- b. 1 f. 31     Rodney, Thomas 1802 February 8
- b. 1 f. 32     White, Samuel 1801 August 5