Guide to the
Henry Laurens letters and documents
1769-1792
MssCol 4494

Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2016

Summary

Creator: Laurens, Henry, 1724-1792

Title: Henry Laurens letters and documents

Date: 1769-1792

Size: .2 linear feet (1 oversized folder, 1 folder)

Source: Donated by John S. Kennedy, 1896 as part of the Emmet Collection and J. Pierpont Morgan, 1899 as part of the Ford Collection

Abstract: Henry Laurens (1724-1792) was a South Carolina merchant, plantation owner, and Revolutionary-era statesman. The collection of Henry Laurens letters and documents, 1769-1792, includes letters written by him to Lachlan McIntosh, 1769; to his son John Laurens, 1775; to Thomas Wharton, Caesar Rodney and William Alexander while President of the Continental Congress, 1777-1778; and to Benjamin Vaughan, dated 1782 April 2 at Exeter, England, regarding a meeting with Lord Shelburne. An oversize letter to William Carmichael, 1778 February 24, asks for payment of his account with Matthew Lock, written on verso, for sums paid on behalf of the Marquis de Lafayette. Letters to Henry Laurens are chiefly from his former secretary Moses Young, captured with Laurens on their voyage to Holland in 1780, regarding Young's attempts to obtain payment from Congress for his services. Laurens's brief notes on his conversation with John Adams at Haarlem on April 15, 1782 (1 page), and two clipped signatures are also present. Items are in chronological order.

Preferred citation: Henry Laurens letters and documents, 1769-1792, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2016

Creator History

Henry Laurens (1724-1792) was a South Carolina merchant, plantation owner, and Revolutionary-era statesman. Laurens was president of the Continental Congress from November 1, 1777 to December 9, 1778. On November 1, 1779 Congress elected him a commissioner to negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce with Holland. Laurens sailed for Europe on August 13, 1780, only to be captured at sea by the British on September 3, 1780. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London under the charge of

treason from October 6, 1780 until his release on bail December 31, 1781. Laurens briefly joined the American peace commission, signing the preliminary Treaty of Paris on November 30, 1782. He returned to the United States in 1784, and was a member of the South Carolina convention to ratify the U.S. Constitution in 1788.

Key Terms

Geographic Names
Great Britain -- Politics and government -- 1760-1789
United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783

Occupations
Merchants
Plantation owners
Politicians
Statesmen

Subjects
Merchants -- South Carolina

Names
Alexander, William, 1726-1783
Laurens, Henry, 1724-1792
Laurens, John, 1754-1782
McIntosh, Lachlan, 1725-1806
Rodney, Caesar, 1728-1784
Vaughan, Benjamin, 1751-1835
Wharton, Thomas, 1735-1778
Young, Moses
United States. Continental Congress