



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Robert Morris papers

1759-1802

MssCol 2066

Digitization was made possible by a lead gift from The Polonsky Foundation.

Compiled by Casey Babcock, 2015

Summary

Creator: Morris, Robert, 1734-1806

Title: Robert Morris papers

Date: 1759-1802

Size: 1.1 linear feet (4 boxes, 1 oversized folder)

Source: Purchased from Stan Henckels, 1917-1919 and various other purchases, gifts, and donations from multiple sources.

Abstract: Robert Morris (1734-1806) was a Founding Father of the United States, a businessman, and statesman. As a Philadelphia merchant, Morris helped to finance the American Revolution with the wealth he acquired through his real estate and shipping business. He was one of the rare Founding Fathers to have signed all three of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the United States Constitution. The Robert Morris papers, dated 1751-1802, consist of correspondence, financial and legal papers. The correspondence pertains mostly to Morris's business affairs. Other letters concern his Revolutionary War activities, his service as Superintendent of Finance of the United States and as Chairman of the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, and some personal matters. The financial and legal papers include receipts, accounts, stock certificates, and land records.

Access: Advance notice required.

Alternative Form Available: Available on microfilm.

Preferred citation: Robert Morris papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Casey Babcock, 2015

Creator History

Robert Morris (1734-1806) was a Founding Father of the United States, a businessman, and statesman. As a Philadelphia merchant, Morris helped to finance the American Revolution with the wealth he acquired through his real estate and shipping business. He was one of the rare Founding

Fathers to have signed all three of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the United States Constitution. He went on to represent Pennsylvania in the United States Senate from 1779 through 1785. In 1781, Congress appointed him the first Superintendent of Finance of the United States. He later invested much of his fortune in land speculation in western New York but went bankrupt after the Panic of 1796-1797. He was imprisoned for debt in Philadelphia from February, 1789 to August, 1801. His release was a result of Congress passing the Bankruptcy Act of 1800. Upon his release, Morris spent a quiet life of retirement until his death in 1806.

Custodial History

Portions of this collection were purchased from Stan Henkels on January 16, 1917. These papers were inherited by Morris's granddaughter, Mrs. Edward Waln, and later sold by her family through Henckels. Additional pieces were purchased from Henkels on June 13, 1919. Much of the material pertaining to Morris's activities in Genesee County, NY was purchased from Walter R. Benjamin on July 23, 1963. Also included are Robert Morris letters that were transferred from both the Ford and Emmet Collections.

Scope and Content Note

The Robert Morris papers, dated 1751-1802, consist of correspondence, financial and legal papers. The bulk of the correspondence pertains to Morris's business affairs. Other correspondence within the collection concerns his Revolutionary War activities, his service as Superintendent of Finance of the United States and as Chairman of the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, and some personal matters. Financial and legal papers include receipts, accounts, land records, and a stock certificate for the Delaware and Schuylkill Navigation Company. Significant records of Morris's land ventures in Genesee County, NY are also included. Other items of note included papers pertaining to the Asylum Company, a company started by Robert Morris and John Nicholson that attempted to purchase and resell tracts of land in western Pennsylvania.

Key Terms

Subjects

Business enterprises -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia
Finance -- United States
Land speculation -- United States
Shipping -- United States

Occupations

Merchants

Geographic Names

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

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Stock certificates

Names

Bondfield, John

Brown, John

Cranch, William, 1769-1855

Deane, Silas, 1737-1789

Harrison, Benjamin, approximately 1726-1791

Hoops, Adam

Hopkinson, Francis, 1737-1791

Jay, John, 1745-1829

Lee, Charles, 1731-1782

Livingston, Muscoe

Morris, Robert, 1734-1806

Nicholson, John, 1757-1800

Parr, William

Peters, Richard, 1743-1828

Ridley, Matthew, 1749-1789

Sage, Alexander

Tilghman, Tench, 1744-1786

Willing, Morris & Company

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 r. 1 1759
- b. 1 f. 2 r. 1 1774
- b. 1 f. 3 r. 1 1775
- b. 1 f. 4 r. 1 1776
- b. 1 f. 5 r. 1 1777
- b. 1 f. 6 r. 1 1778
- b. 1 f. 7 r. 1 1779
- b. 1 f. 8 r. 1 1780
- b. 1 f. 9 r. 1 1781
- b. 1 f. 10 r. 1 1782 January-June
- b. 1 f. 11 r. 1 1782 July-December
- b. 1 f. 12 r. 1 1783
- b. 1 f. 13 r. 1 1784 February-June
- b. 1 f. 14 r. 1 1784 July-December
- b. 2 f. 1 r. 1 1785 January-April
- b. 2 f. 2 r. 1 1785 May-August
- b. 2 f. 3 r. 1 1785 September-December
- b. 2 f. 4 r. 1 1786 January-April
- b. 2 f. 5 r. 1 1786 May-November
- b. 2 f. 6 r. 1 1787
- b. 2 f. 7 r. 1 1788
- b. 2 f. 8 r. 1 1790
- b. 2 f. 9 r. 1 1792
- b. 2 f. 10 r. 1 1793
- b. 2 f. 11 r. 1 1794
- b. 2 f. 12 r. 1 1795 January-June
- b. 2 f. 13 r. 1 1795 July-November
 - o. 1 Accounts of land purchases 1795 August 1
- b. 2 f. 14 r. 1 1795-1796
- b. 3 f. 1 r. 1 1796 January-May
- b. 3 f. 2 r. 1 1796 June
- b. 3 f. 3 r. 1 1796 July-November
- b. 3 f. 4 r. 1 1797 January-May
- b. 3 f. 5 r. 1 1797 June
- b. 3 f. 6 r. 1 1797 July
- b. 3 f. 7 r. 1 1797 August-September
- b. 3 f. 8 r. 1 1797 October
- b. 3 f. 9 r. 1 1797 November
- b. 3 f. 10 r. 1 1797 December

- b. 3 f. 11 r. 1 1797-1798
- b. 3 f. 12 r. 1 1798 January-February
- b. 3 f. 13 r. 1 1798 March-May
- b. 3 f. 14 r. 1 1798 June
- b. 4 f. 1 r. 1 1798 July
- b. 4 f. 2 r. 1 1798 August-September
- b. 4 f. 3 r. 1 1798 November-December
- b. 4 f. 4 r. 1 1799
- b. 4 f. 5 r. 1 1800
- b. 4 f. 6 r. 1 1801-1802
- b. 4 f. 7 r. 1 Undated