



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Morris & Ludlum letter and order book

1797-1825

MssCol 24326

Summary

Cre: Morris & Ludlum

Title: Morris & Ludlum letter and order book

Date: 1797-1825

Size: .20 linear feet (1 volume)

Source: Purchased from Mrs. Hugh Taylor (Susan M.) Lawrence, 2017

Abstract: The mercantile firm of Morris & Ludlum (active 1790s) operated a hardware store on Water Street in New York City, and also engaged in potash production in Sussex County, New Jersey. The Morris & Ludlum letter and order book, 1797-1825, contains copied letters and orders written by the hardware business at New York, 1797-1799, to merchants in Great Britain and the southern United States. These include Perry & Hayes, suppliers of a large variety of hardware, and the pewterware firm of Robert Bush & Co., both located in Bristol, England. Other commodities mentioned include iron bars, potash, flaxseed, cotton, and otter skins. The volume was later used as a ledger by James Ludlum for his farming and milling activities at Sparta, New Jersey, including transactions in his role as an administrator of his brother Gabriel Ludlum's estate.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Morris & Ludlum letter and order book, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Susan P. Waide.

Creator History

The mercantile firm of Morris & Ludlum (active 1790s) operated a hardware store on Water Street in New York City, and also engaged in potash production in Sussex County, New Jersey.

The partners of the potash venture and presumably the hardware store were Robert Morris (1762-

1851), a New York City merchant with property in Sussex County, and merchant Gabriel Ludlum (1765?-1801) of Wantage Township. The potash works were in the area of Deckertown, now Sussex, New Jersey. James Ludlum (1770-1834), a member of the hardware firm ("our James Ludlum," letter of 1797 November 11), was Gabriel Ludlum's younger brother. They were the sons of Isaac Ludlum of Goshen, New York, and the brothers-in-law of Robert Morris who married their sister Frances (died 1852) at Goshen in 1786.

Robert Morris (1762-1851), of Mount Fordham in what is now Bronx County, was the son of Richard Morris (1730-1810) of Morrisania, New York, a judge of the royal Court of Vice-Admiralty and Chief Justice of the State of New York; the grandson of Lewis Morris (1698-1762), also a Vice-Admiralty judge; and the great-grandson of Lewis Morris (1671-1746), chief justice of New York and governor of New Jersey. He was the nephew of Lewis Morris (1726-1798), signer of the Declaration of Independence.

The Ludlum family was additionally related to the Morris family by Gabriel's marriage to Mary Lawrence, the daughter of Thomas Lawrence (died 1823) and his first wife Rebecca Bond (died 1771). Thomas Lawrence was the son of Thomas Lawrence (1720-1775) of Philadelphia and his wife Mary Morris, sister of Richard and Lewis Morris. He married, second, his first cousin Mary Morris (daughter of Lewis Morris, 1726-1798), and third, her sister Catherine Morris. Thomas Lawrence acquired Lewis Morris's farm Morrisvale in Sussex County, becoming a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He entered into a brief mercantile partnership with Robert Morris in New York City in the mid-1780s.

The hardware business of Morris & Ludlum appears to have ended in 1799, with James Ludlum forming his own partnerships in the City's wholesale grocery trade with H.W. Phillips (Phillips & Ludlum; 1799-1803) and Jeromus Johnson (Ludlum & Johnson, later Ludlum, Johnson & Co., founded 1803).

After his brother Gabriel died intestate in 1801, James and his sister-in-law Mary were empowered to dispose of Gabriel's real estate by an act of the New Jersey Legislature in November 1802, as petitioned by James, his father Isaac Ludlum, Gabriel's widow Mary, and her father Thomas Lawrence. James Ludlum and Thomas Lawrence were appointed guardians of Gabriel's children, James, Julia, Thomas and Gabriel, in early 1803. (Gabriel's son James was referred to as "James Jr." in James Ludlum's lifetime.) James Ludlum bought land in Sparta, engaging in farming and milling operations. He married Catherine Miller (d. 1831), the widow of V. E. Beekman, also associated with the hardware store of Morris & Ludlum. In the 1820s Ludlum moved to nearby Lafayette. James's nephew Richard R. Morris, the son of Robert and Frances Morris, was the executor of his will.

Scope and Content Note

The Morris & Ludlum letter and order book, 1797-1825, contains copied letters and orders written by the hardware business at New York City, 1797-1799, to merchants in Great Britain and the southern United States. These include Perry & Hayes, suppliers of a large variety of hardware, and the pewterware firm of Robert Bush & Co., both located in Bristol, England. The volume was later used as a ledger by James Ludlum for his farming and milling business at Sparta, New Jersey, including transactions in his role as administrator of his brother Gabriel Ludlum's estate.

Large orders for the commencement of business list a variety of hardware, including items used in trades such as carpentry, shoemaking and furniture making; fastenings for clothing; tableware and decorative boxes; fish hooks; gun locks; and gun flints. Other commodities mentioned include iron bars, potash, flaxseed, cotton, and otter skins. Shipments of flaxseed were sent to Newry, Ireland in 1799, partly in payment for British accounts. Transactions with southern merchants mention items such as

fowling pieces, sheet iron, window glass, and pewterware. Shipments of butter to the island of St. Thomas in 1799 were a joint venture of James Ludlum and H. W. Phillips.

James Ludlum used the remainder of the volume, beginning at the reversed end, as his own ledger for farming and milling activities at Sparta, New Jersey, 1812-1825. The ledger includes transactions with Robert Morris, members of the Decker family, Ludlum & Johnson, and Gabriel Ludlum's family. There is a separate ledger within, dated 1802-1820 (pages 60-89), for members of Gabriel Ludlum's family, reflecting James's role as administrator of the estate. Some entries are copied from his entries in the main ledger. A few loose accounting items are inserted in the volume; some pages are lacking.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Account books
Letter books

Subjects

Agriculture -- New Jersey -- Sussex County -- 19th century
Hardware stores -- New York (State) -- New York -- 18th century
Merchants -- New York (State) -- New York -- 18th century

Occupations

Farmers.
Merchants.
Millers

Geographic Names

Great Britain -- Commerce -- United States
New York (N.Y.) -- Commerce -- 18th century
Sussex County (N.J.) -- History
United States -- Commerce -- Great Britain

Names

Ludlum, James, 1770-1834
Ludlam family
Morris & Ludlum