



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 1636

Abraham Dubois
Papers

1792-1809, n.d.

1 box, 1 flat file, 0.2 lin. feet

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Restrictions: None.

Related Collections at Claude Unger Collection, Collection 1860A.

HSP: Dutilh and Wachsmuth Papers, Collection 184.
French West Indies collection, Collection 291.

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Abstract

Abraham Dubois was a Philadelphia merchant trading with the West Indies in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Coffee and indigo were two of the main imports that Dubois purchased from such Caribbean locales as St. Nichola, St. Eustatius, and Port-de-Paix. Dubois died in 1807.

The Abraham Dubois papers, which consist of one box, one flat file, and span from 1792 to 1809, consist of incoming letters and financial and legal documents that document his trading activities in the West Indies. Some of the papers document the experiences of merchants sailing to the West Indies from Philadelphia. The papers touch on pirate raids, weather conditions, plantations in the Caribbean, and financial transactions. Most of the correspondence was sent by his agent Charles McAllister, who accompanied Dubois's exports, and Thomas Flint, who represented Dubois land interests in Savannah, Georgia.

Background note

Abraham Dubois was most likely born around 1751 in Philadelphia. While he was considered a silver-smith by trade, Dubois also traded goods in the West Indies. Charles McAllister and Captain Samuel Davis accompanied his goods on various vessels bound for Saint Domingue, Saint Nichola, and Saint Eustatius. In the late eighteenth century, Dubois also imported coffee and indigo from these various locations. Dubois also owned lands in Savannah, Georgia, which were administered by Thomas Flint. Abraham Dubois died in 1807.

Scope & content

The Abraham Dubois papers span from 1792 to 1809 and shed light on his trading in the West Indies and land interests in Georgia. This collection is comprised of three kinds of documents: correspondence, legal papers, and financial records.

With the exception of one letter, all of the correspondence was sent to Abraham Dubois from his agents in the West Indies and his land agent in Georgia. In 1792, Charles

McAllister wrote frequently to Dubois during his voyages to Saint Vincent, Saint Domingue, and various other locations. He updated Dubois on the condition of the goods onboard the vessels, spoke of the other vessels traveling with his, sent Dubois bills of exchange, and recounted the weather conditions while sailing the Atlantic Ocean. In July 1793, McAllister reported his arrival at Saint Vincent in a letter to Dubois and discussed the sale of his goods to the people of the island. McAllister's voyages were not always uneventful, and in March 1794, he informed Dubois that the ship had been raided by pirates around Antigua and his goods stolen. He lamented the actions of the pirates "whose sole object is to annihilate virtuous people. By heavens, I never was in such a disagreeable situation as this, to see your and my own property at the mercy of a set of pirates" (Folder 2). McAllister found the voyages increasingly difficult. As he sailed from Saint Nichola in October 1794, he wrote that he could not wait to finish the wearisome trip and return to Philadelphia (Folder 3).

Another frequent correspondent involved in Dubois' mercantile endeavors was Captain Samuel B. Davis. He wrote to Dubois between 1795 and 1797, mainly from Cap Français. He was engaged in activities similar to McAllister; he shipped goods to be sold in the West Indies and purchased coffee and indigo for Dubois. Davis' letters include observations on Cap Français. He noted in January 1796, for example, that the island's "plantations are now beginning to be in a flourishing state" (Folder 4).

Thomas Flint represented Abraham Dubois's land interests in Georgia in the late 1790s, and he seems to have been in charge of the overseers of Dubois's land and the payment of taxes. Flint began reporting on land Dubois owned in Savannah in 1795. Two years later, he told Dubois that he was about to hire a trustworthy surveyor for the Georgia properties (Folder 5).

Several other letters touch on miscellaneous business involving Dubois's mercantile activities. A series of letters from October 1797 reveal that an associate of Dubois and Company decided to end his business relationship with the company. However, the company was having trouble getting in touch with him in order to settle his accounts. Also, Gerbier & Co., representing DuBois, tried to ascertain why he wanted to end the business relationship. In 1803, Joseph Delagrang, who was writing from Paris, corresponded with Dubois about compiling evidence and papers for claims most likely relating to a client's unpaid account. Of note is the one outgoing letter in this collection. Dubois sent a list of ordinances to Robert Stevenson in Cap Français outlining money that was owed for goods sold by Davis.

The financial and legal papers in this collection consist of bills, account statements, agreements, powers of attorney, and estate papers. In 1793, Dubois drew up two documents relating to his trade with the West Indies. The first declared that Samuel B. Davis represented his mercantile interests in the West Indies (Folder 9), and the second was an order for a brig to be built by William Yard. Other papers relating to trade with the West Indies were invoices for "sundry goods" that Davis shipped on the schooner *Lively* in 1796; an agreement between Davis and James Reynolds, master of the brig *Lydia*, stating that Reynolds reserved almost the entire ship for Davis' exports (1796); and lists of goods sold by Davis (n.d.).

There is a document in which James Shorter granted Joseph Grove power of attorney for the sale of land in Georgia (1795). Another power of attorney involved the estate of Robert Stevenson in Cap Français. James Williams was given the power of attorney over Stevenson's books and papers, which were transferred to the House of the Notary to be inventoried. However before they could be inventoried, the House of the Notary was pillaged and the materials destroyed, which led Williams to file a claim to recover the value of the materials (Folder 11).

Of note is a document from 1809, in which Abraham Dubois, the son of Abraham (d. 1807) and executor of his father's will, filed a claim involving goods shipped by the elder Dubois aboard the *Minerva* in 1807.

Several over-sized account statements and miscellaneous papers have been placed in a flat file. One document of note in this folder is a protest that was filed by Charles McAllister in 1794. He and several men, who sailed from Philadelphia to the West Indies, were stopped and questioned about the goods they had onboard. McAllister testified that he tried to convince the inquisitors that they were American goods. The men who seized McAllister's goods informed him that vessels were barred from sailing into the French West Indies, but he stated that he was sailing to Saint Bartholomew and was not aware of the blockade.

Related materials

At the Historical Society of Pennsylvania:
Claude Unger Collection, Collection 1860A.
Dutilh and Wachsmuth Papers, Collection 184.
French West Indies Collection, Collection 291.

Subjects

Cap-Français (Haiti) – Commerce – 18th century.
Cap-Français (Haiti) – Commerce – 19th century.
Cap-Français (Haiti) – History – 18th century.
Cap-Français (Haiti) – History – 19th century.
Haiti – Commerce – United States – 18th century.
Haiti – Commerce – United States – 19th century.
Merchants – Correspondence – 18th century.
Merchants – Correspondence – 19th century.
Merchants – Pennsylvania – 18th century.
Merchants – Pennsylvania – 19th century.
Philadelphia (Pa.) – Commerce – 18th century.
Philadelphia (Pa.) – Commerce – 19th century.
United States – Commerce – West Indies – 18th century.
United States – Commerce – West Indies – 19th century.
West Indies – Commerce – United States – 18th century.
West Indies – Commerce – United States – 19th century.

Dubois, Abraham.

Administrative Information

Restrictions

None.

Acquisition information

Provenance unknown.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Abraham Dubois Papers (Collection 1636),
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Torn documents were repaired.

Box and folder listing

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Correspondence	1792-1807, n.d.	1	1-8
Financial and legal papers	1793-1809, n.d.	1	9-13
Financial and legal papers	1794, 1795, 1797, 1804	n/a	FF 1