



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 361

Sir George Lee (1700-1758)
Papers

1689-1753 (bulk 1742-1750)
4 boxes, 1.25 lin. feet

Contact: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: (215) 732-6200 FAX: (215) 732-2680
<http://www.hsp.org>

Processed by: Meghan Vacca

Processing Completed: July 2005

Sponsor: Processing made possible by a grant from the
National Endowment for the Humanities.

Restrictions: None.

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Abstract

Sir George Lee became Lord of Admiralty within in the British government in 1742. While in this position he compiled a collection of reports he and others created regarding naval situations dealing with the British Empire. Many of these items lend incite into eighteenth and seventeenth century trade, maritime law and international relations with richly detailed descriptions.

Background note

Sir George Lee (1700-1758) is known for being a lawyer and politician. He entered Christ Church at Oxford in 1720. By 1742 he was a Lord of Admiralty. Admiralty, a department within the British government, oversaw naval matters. In 1751 Sir Lee became dean of arches and a judge of the prerogative court of Canterbury. These appointments lasted until his death in 1758. Under King George II (1727-1760) Sir Lee became a privy councilor and was knighted in 1752.

Scope & content

The collection contains papers of British naval cases from 1689-1753. The bulk of the material, however, is from 1742-1750 coinciding with Sir Lee's position as Lord of Admiralty. The papers comprise a collection of opinions and interpretations of maritime laws regarding the commercial rights of neutrals, seizure of vessels, confiscation of merchandise and prizes captured by privateers. The documents most frequently deal with search and seizure of British vessels. International events involving France, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands are also documented. Of possible interest to researchers are frequent references to international trade.

The strength of this collection lies with the details provided in the reports. Sir Lee documents specific naval cases listing the ship name and master and commander of each vessel in these reports. In addition these papers also yield information regarding the geographic location of the ship, cargo lost and ship and cargo owners. The collection maintains a weak assortment of reports, however, from before 1742 and after 1750. While some documents dated before Sir Lee's birth in 1700 are included one can only surmise Sir Lee himself collected these or previous owners of the collection, of which there is no record, gathered the material.

Sir Lee, a previous owner of the collection or a combination of both arranged the documents in two volumes; Admiralty opinions and Admiralty cases. These volumes were not bound, rather grouped together in a series of folders. The documents were arranged alphabetically by ship or subject name and given a page number in the upper right corner of the document in pencil. In some instances multiple documents share the same page number. An index of each volume was then comprised. The indexes consist of two parts. One organized by date of the document and the other by ship name/subject matter. Both parts and both indexes refer the researcher to page numbers where the document can be found. Please note that these indexes have been housed together in Box 4.

Overview of arrangement

Series I	Admiralty opinions, 1689-1751	48 folders
Series II	Admiralty cases, 1692-1753	40 folders

Series description

Series 1. Admiralty opinions, 1689-1751 (Boxes 1-2, 4)

Series 1 maintains the original order of the documents. The majority of documents are signed and dated from 1745-1749 by Sir Lee and relate to specific naval cases. These reports follow a clear form used by Sir Lee. First he outlines the case, next the query and finally Sir Lee renders his opinion or answer to the situation in question. Items discussed include the East India Company, international trading, Men of War ships, items laden on ships, attacks on vessels including British ships taken by the Spanish during wartimes and Maritime law. Documents from 1746 also discuss issues surrounding a declaration of war between France and Spain.

Particular items of interest can be found on pages 136, 296 and 322. James Bogden, a Philadelphia ship builder, was commissioned by London merchants in 1742 to build the *Dockoeg* as related on page 136. As told on page 296 *Race Horse John* was home to murder and robbery in 1747. A copy of the Treaty between King William 3rd and the States General 22nd October 1689 is found on page 322. This treaty, however, is in French.

Series 2. Admiralty cases, 1692-1753 (Boxes 2-4)

It is difficult to discern a clear difference between the Admiralty opinions and cases series other than this distinction was presented by the collection's creator. However, absent from the reports found in Admiralty cases are Sir Lee's opinions on each case. The documents in this series almost exclusively report on instances when ships have been "taken." These reports describe the ship in question, its location and cargo as well as crew members. Some documents present extensive inventories of papers on board a particular vessel when it was seized. This series too maintains its original order.

Separation report

None

Related materials

Faber, John Jr. *Sir George Lee*. National Portrait Gallery.
<http://www.npg.org.uk/live/search/person.asp?LinkID=mp56466>.

Papers of Sir George Lee (1700-1758.) Parliamentary Archives, House of Lords Records Office. <http://www.portcullis.parliament.uk/DServeA/refnos.htm>.

Bibliography

Dictionary of National Biography: The Concise Dictionary Part 1 from the beginnings to 1900. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Subjects

Admiralty
Capture at sea
Embargo
Foreign trade and employment – 17th century
Foreign trade and employment – 18th century
Maritime law
Privateering
Seizure of vessels and cargoes
Ship captains
Ship's papers
Ships cargo

Administrative Information

Restrictions

None

Acquisition information

Provenance unknown.

Alternative format

None

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Sir George Lee Papers (Collection 361), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Processing made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this finding aid do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

At some point in the collection's history items were grouped together in artificial bulk sections with an item level inventory appearing on the front of each section folder. The inventories have been photocopied and placed inside the current folders at the beginning of each former section.

Box and folder listing

Series 1. Admiralty opinions.

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Volume 1, pages 1-6	1747-1749	11 items	1	1
Volume 1, pages 8-14	1738-1750	12 items	1	2
Volume 1, pages 14-22	1740-1744	10 items	1	3
Volume 1, pages 22-29	1744-1745	10 items	1	4
Volume 1, pages 31-35	1745	8 items	1	5
Volume 1, pages 37-44	1745-1746	10 items	1	6
Volume 1, pages 46-52	1746	11 items	1	7
Volume 1, pages 54-60	1746-1747	10 items	1	8
Volume 1, pages 60-66	1747	10 items	1	9
Volume 1, pages 68-74	1747-1748	11 items	1	10
Volume 1, pages 76-82	1748-1749	10 items	1	11
Volume 1, pages 82-90	1749-1750	12 items	1	12
Volume 1, pages 90-98	1745-1750	10 items	1	13
Volume 1, pages 98-106	1745-1748	10 items	1	14
Volume 1, pages 106-110	1741-1747	9 items	1	15
Volume 1, pages 112-118	1745-1751	10 items	1	16
Volume 1, pages 120-126	1746-1748	10 items	1	17
Volume 1, pages 128-134	1744-1750	12 items	1	18
Volume 1, pages 134-140	1744-1750	10 items	1	19
Volume 1, pages 142	1746-1750	3 items	1	20
Volume 1, pages 144-148	1742-1751	10 items	1	21
Volume 1, pages 150-156	1745-1748	11 items	1	22
Volume 1, pages 156-166	1691-1744	10 items	1	23
Volume 1, pages 168-186	1745-1751	10 items	1	24
Volume 1, pages 188-204	1693-1750	12 items	1	25
Volume 1, Miscellaneous	1747-1754	7 items	1	26
Volume 2, pages 206-212	1745-1750	9 items	1	27
Volume 2, pages 214-222	1745-1749	10 items	1	28
Volume 2, pages 222-228	1745-1749	11 items	1	29
Volume 2, pages 230-236	1744-1748	9 items	1	30
Volume 2, pages 238-244	1741-1748	10 items	1	31
Volume 2, pages 246-252	1741-1749	10 items	1	32
Volume 2, pages 252-258	1745-1749	10 items	1	33
Volume 2, pages 260-268	1741-1750	10 items	1	34
Volume 2, pages 270-274	1744-1748	6 items	1	35
Volume 2, pages 276-280	1743-1745	10 items	2	1
Volume 2, pages 282-294	1745-1750	10 items	2	2

Volume 2, pages 296-304	1745-1747	10 items	2	3
Volume 2, pages 304-310	1746-1749	10 items	2	4
Volume 2, pages 312	1745-1749	4 items	2	5
Volume 2, pages 314-320	1741-1749	10 items	2	6
Volume 2, pages 320-328	1689-1751	10 items	2	7
Volume 2, pages 328-336	1741-1747	10 items	2	8
Volume 2, pages 336-344	1744-1479	10 items	2	9
Volume 2, pages 344-350	1741-1746	8 items	2	10
Volume 2, pages 352-364	1745-1749	11 items	2	11
Volume 2, pages 365-374	1745-1750	5 items	2	12

Series 2. Admiralty cases.

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Volume 1, pages 1-7	1694-1748	13 items	2	13
Volume 1, pages 9-23	1692-1752	12 items	2	14
Volume 1, pages 25-33	1745-1748	18 items	2	15
Volume 1, pages 33-45	1745-1748	16 items	2	16
Volume 1, pages 47-59	1747-1749	10 items	2	17
Volume 1, pages 61-67	1749-1748	9 items	2	18
Volume 1, pages 69-75	1747-1748	10 items	2	19
Volume 1, pages 77-87	1745-1748	10 items	2	20
Volume 1, pages 87-91	1747-1748	6 items	2	21
Volume 1, pages 93-99	1746-1748	9 items	2	22
Volume 1, pages 101-111	1746-1748	9 items	2	23
Volume 1, pages 113-119	1745-1752	11 items	2	24
Volume 1, pages 121-133	1745-1749	10 items	2	25
Volume 1, pages 135-151	1711-1748	11 items	2	26
Volume 1, pages 153-169	1744-1750	11 items	3	1
Volume 1, pages 171-181	1745-1748	11 items	3	2
Volume 1, pages 183-199	1740-1748	11 items	3	3
Volume 1, pages 201-205	1741-1746	15 items	3	4
Volume 1, pages 207	1740	13 items	3	5
Volume 1, pages 209-217	1743-1751	14 items	3	6
Volume 1, pages 219-227	1745-1748	10 items	3	7
Volume 1, pages 229-237	1745-1749	10 items	3	8
Volume 1, pages 239-253	1744-1748	10 items	3	9
Volume 1, pages 255-259	1750	7 items	3	10
Volume 2, pages 257-273	1745-1749	9 items	3	11
Volume 2, pages 277-293	1741-1748	12 items	3	12
Volume 2, pages 295-305	1712-1748	16 items	3	13
Volume 2, pages 307-309	1737	9 items	3	14
Volume 2, pages 311-313	1743-1750	18 items	3	15

Volume 2, pages 313-319	1743-1749	11 items	3	16
Volume 2, pages 321-331	1748-1751	16 items	3	17
Volume 2, pages 333-347	1741-1753	13 items	3	18
Volume 2, pages 349-361	1745-1748	13 items	3	19
Volume 2, pages 365-377	1742-1747	11 items	3	20
Volume 2, pages 379-387	1746-1752	11 items	3	21
Volume 2, pages 389-403	1744-1753	11 items	3	22
Volume 2, pages 405-413	1742-1752	10 items	3	23
Volume 2, pages 415-431	1711-1750	10 items	3	24
Volume 2, pages 435-451	1696-1747	10 items	3	25
Index		22 items	4	n/a