



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 1508

Henry Pleasants, Jr. (1884-1963)
Collection

1693-1825

1 box, 3 vols., 0.8 lin. feet

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Related Collections at Clement Biddle letterbooks, Collection 48

HSP: Clement Biddle papers, Collection 49

Henry Pleasants, b. 1884

Collection, 1693-1825

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Abstract

In 1762 Samuel Pleasants relocated from Henrico County, Virginia, to Pennsylvania. He became established in the mercantile industry giving the Pleasants family a prominent position in society. Dr. Henry Pleasants, Jr. (1884-1963), a descendant of Samuel, pursued a medical degree and was an officer in the United States military while maintaining an interest in writing. Authoring several history books relating to Pennsylvania and the American Revolution, Dr. Pleasants collected letters, receipts and other business documents over the years presumably to aid in his research.

The items in this collection document 1693-1825 Pennsylvania business relationships and persons as well as the American Revolution. Business documents, shipping documents, letters, journal entries and indenture certificates make up a majority of the collection. A significant portion of the collection concerns the Mason family's shipping interests. While not a strong aspect of the collection, Pleasants did compile some genealogical information on the Sisom and Mason families.

Background note

The Pleasants family's roots in America date back to 1665 when John Pleasants left Norwich, England to settle in Henrico County, Virginia. Strong in their Quaker faith, the Pleasants family thrived in Virginia. In 1762 Samuel Pleasants, a descendent of John, moved north to Pennsylvania. Here he gave up the family's long tradition of agricultural pursuits and became a merchant, securing the Pleasants family a prominent place in Pennsylvania society for years to come.

On December 12, 1882, Samuel's descendant, Henry Pleasants, married Agnes Spencer. Henry Pleasants was a lawyer and first cousin of American artist John Singer Sargent. Henry Pleasants, Jr. was born of this union in Radnor, Pennsylvania, in 1884. Henry Jr. attended Haverford School and Haverford College, receiving an A.B. in 1906. He received his M.D. in 1910 after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania. The year before Dr. Pleasants married Elizabeth W. Smith. The couple had five children (Henry III, William Wilkins, Richard Rundle, Howard Spencer and Constantia Elizabeth) before divorcing. Dr. Pleasants had another child, Ann Franklin, with his second wife Vera M. Kilhefner, whom he married in 1928.

From 1911 to 1949 Dr. Pleasants practiced general medicine in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He was an emeritus staff physician at the Chester County Hospital, chief of the Clinic for Diabetes, and a consulting physician for the Pennsylvania Colony Farm. From 1940 to 1943 Dr. Pleasants was the medical director at the State Teachers College in West Chester. He also worked with the Chester County Council Defense. In 1949 Dr. Pleasants retired from general medicine and became the district medical director for the Department of Health of Pennsylvania until 1957.

In 1919 Dr. Pleasants received an honorable discharged from the Medical Corps, U.S.A. Army after serving three years. In 1919 he received the rank of Lt. Col. Meritorious Service Citation A.E.F. He served as Major in the Medical Corps U.S.A Reserve from 1922 to 1936. Dr. Pleasants was also Chairman of the Medical Aid Com. Department of Pennsylvania American Legion in 1925-1929 and vice commander of Military Order Foreign Wars. Dr. Pleasants was awarded two stars, a Victory Medal and Order of Purple Heart.

Throughout his career Dr. Pleasants maintained several memberships and associations, including the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, the American College of Physicians, and the American Medical Association. He was involved with the Franklin Inn, St. Elmo, the Society of Colonial Wars and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In addition to these, Dr. Pleasants was associated with the American Society of Sanitary Engineers, National Genealogical Society, St. Andrews Society and was the vice president of Chester County Historical Society.

In 1919 Dr. Pleasants began writing resulting in several historical works and articles in magazines and was the associate editor for "Medical World" 1934-1936. He wrote *Thomas Mason, Adventurer*, 1934; *Anthony Wayne*, 1936; *Four Great Artists*, 1936; *Three Scientists of Chester County*, 1936; *The Tragedy of the Crater*, 1937; *Mars Butterfly: a tale of the career of Major John Andre, spy-extraordinary of the British Army in the American Revolution*, 1941; *Wintthrop Sargent: from patriot to pioneer*, 1944; *From Kilts to Pantaloons*, 1945; *A Doctor in the House*, 1947; *Inferno at Petersburg*, 1961. *From Kilts to Pantaloons* is an autobiography of his young adulthood in the American Victorian Era.

Scope & content

The items in this collection document 1693-1825 Pennsylvania business relationships and persons as well as the American Revolution. The items were assembled by Henry Pleasants Jr. presumably as research to his written works as items in the collection relate to books and papers authored by Pleasants. Business documents, shipping documents, letters, journal entries and indenture certificates make up a majority of the collection.

The collection includes an abundance of receipts, deeds, land papers and surveys. Of particular interest are items relating to arms smuggling during the Revolution. These documents and letters implicate prominent Philadelphians including Clement Biddle and Robert Mason. Portions of Mason's journal included in the collection provide justification for his involvement. These documents were used in a paper by Pleasants on the arms smuggling operations, presented to the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society in

1945, which includes typescript extracts of documents and a narrative analysis of the events.

Also of interest are three of Israel Pleasants' commonplace books noting insurance and other mercantile enterprises and miscellaneous manuscripts of Captain Thomas and John Mason. In addition to these manuscripts is Captain Thomas Mason's account of a voyage to Europe to secure arms for the colonies in 1775-1776. Papers on 1776-1784 disputes with his partners Robert Morris and Jacob Winey over voyage proceeds have been compiled as well. Several personal letters are found in the collection including 1775-1783 letters by Thomas Shirley of London who gives the viewpoint of a moderate Englishman on the American Revolution.

While not a strong aspect of the collection, Pleasants did compile some genealogical information on the Sisom and Mason families. These records include the marriage certificate of Thomas Sisom to Priscilla Smith in 1693. A genealogical chart beginning in 1504 and culminating in 1850 of the Mason family is also contained.

Items have been left in the alphabetical order and groupings presumably created by Henry Pleasants Jr. Folders are alphabetized according to either form of the documents, subject of the documents or person(s) associated with the documents enclosed.

Related materials

Clement Biddle letterbooks, Collection 48.

Clement Biddle papers, Collection 49.

Bibliography

Leach, F. L. *Pleasants Family*. Philadelphia: The Historical Publication Society, 1939.

Pleasants, H. Jr. *From Kilts to Pantaloons*. West Chester, Pa: Horace F. Temple, 1945.

Who's Who in America: A biographical dictionary of notable living men and women. Vol. 32, (1962-1963). Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company.

Subjects

Business -- Insurance

Contracts, Marine

Insurance, Marine

Land use surveys -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia

Merchant ships

Ship's papers

Ship captains

United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783 -- Foreign public opinion

United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783 -- Equipment and supplies

Appleman, Mathias

Barry, James

Biddle, Clement, 1740-1814

Chardon, Anthony

Coates, Samuel, 1748-1830

Craig, John

Cufford, John

Dildine, Andrew

Dowell, C.A.

Drinker, Henry, 1734-1809

Fausey, David

Foster, George

Gaskill, Jasiah

Grace, Jacob

Hoopper, Abraham

Keely, Mathias

Mason, John

Mason, Priscilla

Mason, Thomas, 1736-1796

Mason, Robert

Montgomery, William
Morris, Robert, 1734-1806
Pleasants, Henry, b. 1884
Pleasants, Israel, 1764-1843
Say, Benjamin, 1755-1813
Sergeant, Jonathan D.
Shiner, Andrew
Shiner, Peter
Shirely, Thomas
Sisom, Elizabeth
Sisom, John
Sisom, Priscilla Smith, fl. 1693
Sisom, Thomas
Smith, Samuel
Spencer, James S.
Stillwell, Savage
Way, Andrew
Winey, Jacob
Wood, Jacob
Woodruff, Isabella
Yost, Samuel

Episcopal Academy (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Mason & Co. (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Philadelphia Dispensary

Administrative Information

Acquisition information

1948 gift of Dr. and Mrs. Henry Pleasants, Jr., Henry Pleasants, III, William Wilkins Pleasants, Howard Spencer Pleasants, Richard Rundle Pleasants, Mrs. Nathaniel Bowditch, Dallas Franklin Pleasants, and Ann Franklin Pleasants.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Henry Pleasants Collection, (Collection 1508), 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.

Items have been repaired with rice paper mends and treated for mold. Larger items have been removed from their original placement and unfolded.

Box and folder listing

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Accounts	1807	1 item	FF	1
Accounts	1807-1837	1 item	1	1
Articles of agreement between John Mason & William Montgomery	1816	1 item	1	2
James Barry to John Mason	1801	1 item	1	3
Berard brothers receipt and invoice to Thomas Mason	1775	2 items	1	4
Bills and receipts Thomas, John and Priscilla Mason	1784-1824	31 items	1	5
C. Biddle to Thomas Mason	1775	1 item	1	6
Brig "Diana"- sales on account of the owners of the ship	1793, 1795	2 items	1	7
Anthony Chardon bill to Thomas Mason	1796	1 item	1	8
W. Collins two bills of exchange	1775	2 items	1	9
Confederate states loan 1862 Bond payable 1881	1862-1881	1 item	1	10
Correspondence	1820-1839	21 items	1	11
John Craig receipt to Thomas Mason	1775	1 item	1	12
Stephen Decatur, undated fragment with signature; part of letter	1803	2 items	1	13
Documents	1689-1784	3 items	1	14
Documents	1689-1784	5 items	FF	2
Documents	1785-1790	13 items	1	15
Documents	1785-1790	9 items	FF	3
Documents	1798-1819	6 items	FF	4
Documents	1798-1819	4 items	FF	5
Documents	1807	1 item	FF	6
Documents	1811-1820	5 items	FF	7
Documents	1811-1820	4 items	FF	8
Documents	1819	1 item	1	16
Documents	1822-1836	3 items	FF	9
Documents	1822-1836	4 items	FF	10
Documents	1839-1843	5 items	1	17
Documents	1839, 1843	2 items	FF	11

C.A. Dowell to Isabella Woodruff	1862	1 item	1	18
Henry Drinker, treasurer, certificate issued to Thomas Mason for contributions to the poor of Philadelphia	1768	1 item	1	19
Extracts from patents	1811	1 item	1	20
David Fausey & Mathias Appleman, Agreement	1820	1 item	1	21
Jasiah Gaskill bill to Thomas Mason	1796	1 item	1	22
Genealogical record of the Mason family	1504-1850	1 item	1	23
Jacob Grace bill to Thomas Mason	1796	1 item	1	24
Inventory of Thomas Mason's silver	n.d.	1 item	1	25
Inventory of Thomas Mason's personal property	1796	1 item	1	26
Invoice 109 casks cannon powder acct. Thomas Mason & Co. in brig "Chance"	n.d.	1 item	1	27
Mathias Keely in account with James Barry	1794, 1792-1799	2 items	1	28
Land surveys	1786-1835	6 items	1	29
Land survey	n.d.	1 item	FF	12
Library Company receipts to Thomas Mason signed by Samuel Coates	1790	2 items	1	30
John Mason copies of letters	1792-1800	2 items	1	31
John Mason voyage dispute	n.d.	1 item	1	32
John Mason & Samuel Smith agreement	1823	1 item	1	33
John Mason letter from MH	1826	1 item	1	34
John Mason dispute with Jacob Winey	n.d.	20 items	1	35
John Mason & Andrew Dildine agreement	1830	1 item	1	36
John Mason & Samuel Yost 2 nd articles of agreement	1831	1 item	1	37
Mathias Keely vs. Thos & John Mason	1800, 1803	2 items	1	38
Iron Monger's bill F&A Engle to Thomas Mason	1796	1 item	1	39

Thomas Mason certificate from United Company of Philadelphia	1776	1 item	1	40
Thomas Mason Journal	1775	10 items	1	41
Thomas Mason to Robert Morris	1776, 1783	2 items	1	42
Thomas Mason to Jacob Winey	1783	1 item	1	43
Thomas Mason to George Foster, lease	1784	1 item	1	44
Thomas Mason certificate from Philadelphia dispensary, signed John Cufford	1786	1 item	1	45
Thomas Mason certificate from Episcopal Academy for donation of 25 pounds	1787	1 item	1	46
Thomas Mason to his son	1791	1 item	1	47
Thomas Mason & Mathias Keeley to James Barry	1792	1 item	1	48
Will of Thomas Mason	1796	1 item	1	49
Estate of Thomas Mason 3 bills	1796	3 items	1	50
Thomas Mason to his wife	n.d.	1 item	1	51
Thomas Mason Jr. to his brother	1793	1 item	1	52
Mason & Co. in account with Thomas Mason	1775	2 items	1	53
Miscellaneous items	1815	4 items	1	54
Robert Morris to Thomas Mason	1776-1784	5 items	1	55
Note to owners of Schuylkill Point Meadows of an election signed, Thomas Mason	1786	1 item	1	56
Sales of Merchandise by Brig "Polly" on account of Thomas Mason and others	1796	1 item	1	57
Benjamin Say bill for medical service to Thomas Mason	1794	1 item	1	58
Jonathan D. Sergeant bill to Thomas Mason	1788	1 item	1	59
Andrew Shiner to John Mason, agreement	1818, 1825	2 items	1	60
Peter Shiner to John Mason	1825	1 item	1	61
Ships' papers	1792-1797	3 items	1	62
Thomas Shirley letters to Thomas Mason	1775	7 items	FF	13
Thomas Shirley letter to Thomas Mason	1775, 1783	1 item	1	63
Elizabeth Sisom	1785	1 item	1	64
John Sisom note to Messrs White & Taylor	Prior to 1741	1 item	1	65

Thomas Sisom & Priscilla Smith marriage certificate copy	1693	1 item	1	66
Receipt to Thomas Sisom, signed Abraham Hoopper	1698	1 item	1	67
Sisom genealogical notes	1846	1 item	1	68
Statement filed by James S. Spencer regarding Thomas Mason's Estate	1825	1 item	1	69
Savage Stillwell	1803	1 item	1	70
Surveys for land in Luzerne Co., PA	1784	1 item	1	71
Two land surveys	n.d.	2 items	1	72
Tax papers Thomas & John Mason	1796-1828	3 items	1	73
Andrew Way, two bills to Thomas Mason	1785	2 items	1	74
Jacob Winey's account with Thomas Mason	1776	2 items	1	75
Jacob Winey to Thomas Mason	1783	1 item	1	76
Jacob Wood receipt to Thomas Mason	1794	1 item	1	77
Israel Pleasants commonplace book	ca. 1789	Vol. 1		
Israel Pleasants commonplace book	ca. 1815	Vol. 2		
Israel Pleasants commonplace book	n.d.	Vol. 3		