



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 1874

Willings and Francis
Records

1698-1855

1 box, 0.33 linear ft.

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: October 2005

Restrictions: None.

Related Collections at Willing Family Papers, Collection 1531

HSP: Wharton-Willing Papers, Collection 2014
Powel Family Papers, Collection 1582

Willings and Francis

Papers, 1698-1855

1 box, .33 lin. feet

Collection 1874

Abstract

These are records of the merchant firm of Thomas Willing, Thomas Mayne Willing, and Thomas Willing Francis of Philadelphia. A majority of the papers pertain to the China trade, 1805-1822, and to William Read, a merchant of Philadelphia, who represented the firms of Willing and Francis and Willing and Cuwen, some outgoing correspondence of Willings and Francis, invoices of goods shipped, and other financial records, documenting trade in opium and tea, including probably the first recorded arrival of an American opium ship in China in 1805, the Bingham, owned by Willing and Francis, and a dispute involving the efforts of the Chinese merchant, Consequa, to recover a debt owed by Willing and Francis. There are also a few letters and other records regarding the ship Mount Vernon and a claim against Willing and Francis by William Mayne Ducanson, 1796-1800, a few land papers of Thomas Willing, 1794-1811, and Willing family land deeds.

Background note

Willings and Francis was a Philadelphia merchant firm established in the eighteenth century by two prominent Philadelphia families. Although correspondence from the firm is often signed with the company name, a document from 1810 bears the signatures of Thomas Willing (1731-1821), Thomas Mayne Willing (1767-1822) and Thomas Willing Francis as proprietors of the firm. This same document bears the signatures of William Willing and Joseph Curwen of the Willing and Curwen firm. Willings and Francis conducted joint business ventures with Willing and Curwen.

Thomas Willing, father of Thomas Mayne Willing and uncle of Thomas Willing Francis, was known for being a successful merchant as well as public servant. At the age of twenty-three Thomas Willing assumed responsibility of his father's, Charles Willing (1710-1754), counting house. He was elected to the Common Council of Philadelphia in 1755 and as city alderman in 1759. In 1759 he also became Judge of the City Court and Common Pleas justice in 1761. Thomas became Mayor of Philadelphia in 1763 and served as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in 1767-1774. Influential in establishing a national banking system, Thomas became President of the Bank of North America in 1781 and President of the Bank of the United States in 1791.

Thomas Willing also helped to establish the London Coffee House in 1754 located in Philadelphia. He and approximately 200 other merchants contributed 348 Pounds to the establishment run by William Bradford. The Coffee House soon became the center of business and politics in Philadelphia laying the foundation for the Philadelphia Stock Exchange.

While pursuing public service, Thomas Willing and his sons Charles (1806-1887), Richard and Thomas Mayne Willing oversaw the family business. Little is written regarding the mercantile firm of Willing and Francis. Thomas Willing's father began the firm of Charles Willing & Sons which Thomas later took over. Thomas was also a partner with Robert Morris in the firm of Willing and Morris. What is known about Willing and Francis comes from correspondence and legal documents in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

As related in Powell Family Papers (Collection 1582), John Hare Powel worked for the firm in the early 1800's first in the counting house and latter as supercargo on the ship *Anthony Mangin* bound for Calcutta in 1806 to transport sugar and brandy. Willing and Francis are also known to have commissioned voyages to Batavia and Canton facilitating the trade of seal skin, opium, sandalwood, cotton, tea and other spices.

Scope & content

The Willings and Francis Papers span 1792-1822 in the form of correspondence, deeds and legal documents. Disputes involving the merchant firm and its associates comprise approximately sixty percent of the collection. Deeds and land documents indicating ownership of various properties by members of the Willing family occupy the remaining forty percent.

Correspondence between Willings and Francis and supercargo William Read illustrate the nature of international trade in early America. Costs and products are documented along with the various ships transporting the cargo and ships' captains. Researchers will find the detail in the correspondence intriguing. Also of possible interest to researchers are the two disputes involving Willings and Francis that are documented in the collection.

In 1805 William Read was employed as supercargo by Willings and Francis and Willings and Curwen on a joint venture to procure tea in Canton. The *Bingham* sailed from Philadelphia in the spring carrying \$90,000 worth of spices owned by the two firms. When the ship reached Batavia some spices were invested in cotton, blackwood and rattans. The vessel then proceeded to Canton where Chinese merchant, Conseequa, was charged with purchasing high quality tea to be shipped back on the *Bingham* to various destinations. Conseequa was not paid in full as promissory notes were issued by Read on behalf of the two firms. In addition to a deposition take from Read in 1811 correspondence between Read and the firms suggest Conseequa never received full payment as the quality of the tea was inferior to what was promised.

An earlier dispute involving Willings and Francis and the vessel *Mount Vernon* is also documented in the collection. The papers representing the case are not as detailed as the Conseequa papers but they do illustrate the vessels' cargo. Issues surrounding the cargo and vessel resulted in a heated argument between William Mayne Duncanson and Willings and Francis over unpaid accounts to which Duncanson felt wronged by Willings and Francis. Duncanson's Maryland naturalization papers are included in the collection.

The remainder of the Willing and Francis papers are land documents and deeds for various family members and associates. Papers regarding the estate of Major William Jackson, secretary of President George Washington, can be found in the collection as Thomas Willing's daughter, Elizabeth, married Major Jackson. Some correspondence from Thomas Willings sister and brother-in-law, Mary and Henry Clymer, show monetary transactions between the families.

Due to its size the collection is not divided into series but remains as one unit echoing its original order. In this order documents were grouped according to subject matter and, for the most part, documents were in chronological order. This arrangement has been maintained as folders are filed alphabetically by title. Items have been arranged chronologically within the folders.

Separation report

None.

Related materials

Balch, Thomas Willing. *Willing Letters and Papers*. Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and Scott, 1922.

Konkle, Burton Alva. *Thomas Willing and the First American Financial System*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937.

Powel Family Papers, Collection 1582, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Willing Family Papers, Collection 1531, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Wharton-Willing Papers, Collection 2014, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Bibliography

Konkle, Burton Alva. *Thomas Willing and the First American Financial System*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937.

Philadelphia Stock Exchange. *A Blueprint for America's Free Markets: The History of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange*. <http://www.phlx.com/exchange/history.html>.

Wharton-Willing Papers (Collection 2014), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Subjects

Bengal (Ship)
Bingham (Ship)
Camilla (Ship)
China – Commerce
Cotton trade
Financial statements
Fur trade
Legal documents -- Eighteenth century
Legal documents -- Nineteenth century
Mount Vernon (Ship)
Netherlands – Commerce
New Jersey (Ship)
Opium trade
Spice trade
Tea trade
Willing family

Adlum, John, 1759-1836.
Biddle, George
Bingham, William
Binney, Horace, 1780-1875.
Clymer, Henry
Clymer, Mary
Curwen, Joseph
Conseequa
Duncanson, William M.
Fisher, Samuel W.
Francis, Thomas Willing, 1767-1815.
Ingersoll, Charles Jared, 1782-1862.
Jenkins, Joshua C.
Kensey, John
Lewis, Hannah
Lewis, John T.
Lewis, Samuel N., d. 1841
Moore, Mary L.
Moore, Samuel
Nicholson, Morris
Owen, John
Ray, James
Read, William
Sterling, Walter
West, William
Willing, Ann
Willing, Charles
Willing, Elizabeth
Willing, Thomas, 1731-1821.
Willing, Thomas Mayne, 1767-1822.
Willing, William S., b. 1779.

Willings and Francis
Willing and Curwen

Administrative Information

Restrictions

None.

Acquisition information

Gift of Leonard T. Beale, 1963.

Alternative format

None

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Willings and Francis Records (Collection 1874), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Processed by Meghan Vacca, October 2005.

Box and folder listing

Series 1. Papers.

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1800-1805	11 items	1	1
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1805	12 items	1	2
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1805	11 items	1	3
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1805	12 items	1	4
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1805-1806	9 items	1	5
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1806	11 items	1	6
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1806-1811	12 items	1	7
Conseequa vs. Willings and Francis	1815-1822	11 items	1	8
William Mayne Duncanson and <i>Mount Vernon</i> (ship) case	1796-1797	10 items	1	9
William Mayne Duncanson and <i>Mount Vernon</i> (ship) case	1799-1800	10 items	1	10
Major William Jackson's debt	1822	1 item	1	11
Land papers of Thomas Willing	1792-1795	12 items	1	12
Land papers of Thomas Willing	1795-1811	8 items	1	13
Land papers of Thomas Willing	n.d.	10 items	1	14
Thomas M Willing and Henry & Mary Clymer correspondence	1819-1822	3 items	1	15
Property deeds	1698-1855	12 items	FF 1	