



Guide to the Ephraim Kirby papers, 1763-1878 and undated

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Summary

Collection Title:

Ephraim Kirby papers, 1763-1878 and undated

Creator:

Kirby, Ephraim, 1757-1804

Abstract:

Revolutionary soldier, lawyer, state legislator, and land speculator, of Litchfield, Connecticut. The papers of Ephraim Kirby consist of correspondence, broadsides, legal papers, bills and receipts pertaining to the Revolutionary War, early settlements west of the Alleghenies and Alabama, land speculation, internal improvements, and U.S. and Connecticut politics. Revolutionary War letters describe life in the Continental Army, the quartermaster disorder, military engagements, including Germantown and the surrender of Cornwallis, and the beginnings of Ephraim Kirby's legal practice. Political correspondence concerns the government of the United States under the Articles of Confederation; the ratification of the Constitution; foreign relations with Great Britain, France, Algiers, and Spain; Madison's resolutions regarding trade and navigation; Jay's Treaty; Whiskey Rebellion; taxation for revenue; the presidential campaigns of 1796 and 1800; Cherokee affairs; politics and patronage in Connecticut; and the repeal of the Judiciary Act of 1801.

Abstract:

Other correspondence relates to Kirby's legal practice; the operation of the U.S. Postal Service; land speculation and the early settlement of western lands, particularly in New York and Pennsylvania; the building of turnpikes; and a description of Washington, D.C., 1802. Of particular interest are Kirby's reports to Thomas Jefferson on the Mississippi Territory and correspondence during his journey to Natchez, Mississippi, including a description of the lands east of the Pearl River, settlers, crops, trade conditions, Spanish settlements and military posts, and Native American tribes. A diary of Reynold Marvin Kirby, son of Ephraim Kirby, describes his life in the U.S. Army during the War of 1812.

Extent:

8 Linear Feet
Approx. 2900 Items

Physical Location:

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

Language:

English

Language:

Material in English

Collection ID:

RL.00783

Permalink:

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/kirbyephraim/>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Ephraim Kirby Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

The papers of Ephraim Kirby date from 1763 to 1878, and consist of correspondence, broadsides, legal papers, bills and receipts pertaining to the Revolutionary War, early settlements west of the Alleghenies and Alabama, land speculation, internal improvements, and politics. Revolutionary War letters describe life in the Continental Army; military engagements, including the battle of Germantown and the surrender of Cornwallis; the conduct of General Oliver Wolcott; the beginnings of Ephraim Kirby's legal practice, and the purchase of law books.

Political correspondence concerns the government of the United States under the Articles of Confederation, the ratification of the Constitution, foreign relations with Great Britain, the Citizen Genet affair, James Madison's resolutions regarding trade and navigation, the proposal to arm frigates against Algiers, Jay's Treaty, Whiskey Rebellion, the need for taxation for revenue. There are also comments on the presidential campaigns of 1796 and 1800; the role of newspapers in politics (as Kirby knew many publishers and printers); relations with France; Cherokee affairs; the use of political patronage; Republican versus Federalist politics, especially in Connecticut; the repeal of the Judiciary Act of 1801; and American relations with Spain after the Louisiana Purchase.

Other correspondence relates to Kirby's legal practice, especially the collection of debts and the publication and sale of his book, Reports of Cases Adjudged in the Superior Court and Court of Errors of the State of Connecticut from the Years 1785 to May, 1788; lands claimed by both Pennsylvania and Connecticut;

land speculation by Kirby and others in lands in Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, and Georgia, and in the Western Reserve; the early settlement of western lands; the Yazoo land fraud; the building of turnpikes, especially in Connecticut and Pennsylvania; the Connecticut militia, in which Kirby was an officer; Kirby's duties as supervisor of the U.S. Revenue for Connecticut; routes and the operation of the U.S. Post Office; the collection of debts; the settlement of the estate of Reynold Marvin, with whom Kirby studied law; the Royal Arch-Masons of the United States, of which Kirby was the first general grand high priest, including some material written in code; and a description of Washington, D.C. in 1802. There are also letters referring to life at Yale University in the 18th century; a yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans, 1804; and the settlement of Ephraim Kirby's complicated estate.

Of interest are Kirby's correspondence and reports to Thomas Jefferson written following his appointment in 1803 as commissioner to receive and determine the titles of the lands east of the Pearl River. Kirby journeyed overland from Connecticut to Natchez, where he arrived December 1803. His reports to Jefferson include descriptions of the lands east of the Pearl River, settlers, crops and produce, trade conditions, Spanish settlements in West Florida and Mobile, Spanish military posts, and Native American tribes. He also receives many letters during this time from friends and business partners back home. The next year, 1804, Kirby was dead of a fever in Alabama.

The notable correspondents who have a number of letters in the collection include Elisha Babcock, Ezekial Bacon, Miles Beach, John James Beckley, John Bird, Abraham Bishop, Elijah Boardman, Putnam Catlin (father of artist George Catlin), Tench Coxe, James Easton, Pierpont Edwards, William Edwards, Daniel Everitt, Gideon Granger, Stanley Griswold, Hugh Hughes, Thomas Ives, William Samuel Johnson, William Judd, Jeremiah Mason, John Cosens Ogden, Jeremiah Olney, David Parmelee, Elijah Phelps, James Rivington, Nathaniel Smith, Jedediah Strong, Benjamin Tallmadge, Uriah Tracy, Elijah Wadsworth, John Welch, John Willard, and Alexander Wolcott, Jr. A number of commissions for Ephraim Kirby and his son Reynold Marvin Kirby are signed by Oliver Wolcott, Jonathan Trumbull, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and others.

A diary of Reynold Marvin Kirby, son of Ephraim Kirby, describes his life in the U.S. Army during the War of 1812 beginning when he entered the army in 1813 as a lieutenant in the 3rd U.S. Artillery and telling of his military engagements and duties.

For more information on the contents of the correspondence, please consult with a reference archivist to access the detailed original cardfile description.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Acquisition Information

The Ephraim Kirby papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift at an unknown date.

Processing Information

Processed by Rubenstein Library staff

Encoded by Paula Jeannet and Jennifer Snow, may 2014

Two accessions were merged to form one collection and are described in this finding aid.

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Names and Subjects

- Mississippi -- History

- Louisiana -- History -- 1803-1865
- Connecticut -- Politics and government -- 1775-1865
- Alabama -- History -- To 1819
- Presidents -- United States -- Election -- 1800
- Migration, Internal -- America -- History
- Louisiana Purchase
- Lawyers -- Connecticut -- Correspondence
- Land settlement -- United States -- History
- Land settlement -- Pennsylvania -- History
- Land settlement -- New York -- History
- Land companies -- United States
- United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783 -- Personal narratives
- United States -- Politics and government -- 1783-1809
- United States -- Politics and government -- 1775-1783
- Diaries
- United States -- Territorial expansion -- History -- 19th century
- Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826
- Granger, Gideon, 1767-1822
- Kirby, Ephraim, 1757-1804
- United States. Continental Army -- History
- United States. Continental Army -- Supplies and stores
- United States. Post Office Department

Collection Inventory

Ephraim Kirby papers, 1763-1878 and undated

Physical Description: 16 boxes

Scope and Contents note

Some materials may be fragile - please handle with care.

Correspondence, 1763-1786	Box 1
Correspondence, 1787-1789	Box 2
Correspondence, 1790-1791	Box 3
Correspondence, 1792-1793	Box 4
Correspondence, 1794-1795 June	Box 5
Correspondence, 1795 July-1796 March	Box 6
Correspondence, 1796 April-1797 March	Box 7

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Correspondence, 1797 April-1798	Box 8
Correspondence, 1799-1800 March	Box 9
Correspondence, 1800 April-1801 June	Box 10
Correspondence, 1801 July-Dec.	Box 11
Correspondence, 1802 Jan.-June	Box 12
Correspondence, 1802 July-1803 March	Box 13
Correspondence, 1803 April-December	Box 14
Correspondence, 1804-1878 and undated	Box 15
Printed materials	Box 16
Writings	Box 16
Certificates	Box 16
Diary of Reynold M. Kirby	Box 16

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