



Guide to the Enos Reeves Papers, 1780-1782

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Summary

Collection Title:

Enos Reeves papers, 1780-1782

Creator:

Reeves, Enos, 1753-1807

Abstract:

Lieutenant Enos Reeves served in the Pennsylvania Line during the Revolutionary War, and later worked as a silversmith in South Carolina. This collection consists of three volumes from an original set of journals he kept as letterbooks documenting his activities during his Continental Army service, between 1780 and 1782. Topics include troop reviews by George Washington, the treason of Benedict Arnold, the execution of Major John Andre, the Battle of King's Mountain, the seige of Yorktown, and troop movements, discipline, and encampments. Reeves describes a visit to the army camp by the Oneida and other Indigenous nations, including their leader Akiatonharónkwen (John Louis Cook, who Reeves describes as "Colonel Lewis"). Reeves' letterbooks also discuss his encounters with enslaved people and his opinion that slavery was "a great sin" but that "it would be some what difficult to alter it at the present." Also present in the journals are his accounts of his entertainments, flirtations with various women, dinners with officers, and social engagements, including a "genteel country dance" where the men dressed and danced in women's clothes.

Extent:

0.5 Linear Feet (3 volumes in 1 box)

Language:

Materials in English.

Collection ID:

RL.11900

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1px5p>

Preferred Citation

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

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Background

Scope and Content

This collection consists of three volumes, which represent a portion of Reeves' original journals written in letterbook form. The volumes at Rubenstein Library are number 5, number 8, and loose pages (from either volume 6 or 7); the materials date from 1780 September through 1782 April 20. The other volumes were destroyed in the 1886 Charleston, S.C. earthquake.

Reeves writes to a fellow officer and several ladies, but the letters are not addressed to specific individuals. He describes: George Washington reviewing the troops; entertaining Oneida chiefs, including "Colonel Lewis" (Joseph Louis Cook, or Akiatonharónkwen); the French army stationed at Newport, Rhode Island; Benedict Arnold's treason, including his escape and British spy Major John Andre's capture; Philadelphia press coverage of Arnold being burned in effigy; British General Henry Clinton's attempted negotiations for Andre's release; Andre's execution by hanging - Reeves reported he behaved honorably throughout his execution; battles of King's Mountain, N.C., and Yorktown, Va.; troop movements, desertions, encampments; and descriptions of locations like Hillsborough, N.C., Williamsburg, Petersburg, Baltimore, and New Jersey.

Reeves mentions slavery and enslaved people several times. One encounter is detailed in the March 21 1782 letter, from Williamsburgh, N.C.: "I drew near to the circle where stood a mulatto slave for sale - He was about 40 years of age, of a good presence but his countenance fallen. One hundred and five pounds. God help thee thought I. Are you strong (says me) - he look'd down at his legs and thighs. He seem'd to have been half starved. His lip quiver'd. My heart sympathized with him." Reeves later writes, "Heavens! is this liberty? is this the Land of Liberty I've been fighting for these six years? Tis but the Name. Where for many thousands are held in perpetual slavery - and what is worse, no measures taken to alter it. The slaves are kept in total ignorance, they hardly know there is a God. A great Sin in a country as Enlighten'd as ours. But I am of the opinion that it would be some what difficult to alter it at present."

Reeves' journals also note some of his activities and entertainment with his fellow officers. A letter from 1780 October 4 includes the following: "We make ourselves very Merry at this place and as there is but few of the inhabitants worthy our notice we enjoy ourselves without them. The evening of the 29 ultimo several of us dress'd in women's clothes and had a genteel Country Dance - spent the evening in great glee." Other dinners, dances, and evenings with "agreeable" people are also scattered throughout the volumes.

Biographical/Historical

Enos Reeves was born February 4, 1753, in Virginia. He served with various Pennsylvania regiments during the Revolutionary War, entering as a private in 1777, and mustering out as brevet captain in 1783. After the war, he married Amy Legare of Charleston, South Carolina, and settled in that city as a silversmith and firemaster. The couple had seven children. He died on June 23, 1807.

Some of this information has been cited from The Reeves Project, a community genealogical website maintained by Reeves family descendants.

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Arrangement

Volumes are foldered and the collection includes an information folder with transcripts and card files.

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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 Rubenstein Library's Citations, Permissions, and Copyright guide.

Acquisition Information

The Enos Reeves Papers were purchased by the Duke University Library Manuscript Department (now David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library) from Arthur Pfromzheimer (New York) in October 1947, with funding from the Flowers Endowment.

Processing Information

Processed by RL Staff, March 1950. Rehoused with description updated by Meghan Lyon, 2021.

Accessions described in this collection guide: 1948-0154.

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Names and Subjects

- United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783 -- Personal narratives
- United States. Army -- Officers -- Correspondence
- Oneida Indian Nation
- King's Mountain, Battle of, S.C., 1780
- Yorktown (Va.) -- History -- Siege, 1781
- United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783 -- Participation, Indian
- United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783 -- Participation, French
- Slavery -- North Carolina -- History -- 18th century
- Cross-dressing
- Washington, George, 1732-1799
- Arnold, Benedict, 1741-1801
- André, John, 1751-1780
- Akiatonharónkwen (Joseph Louis Cook), d. 1814

Collection Inventory

Journal (Volume 5), 1780 September 13-1781 February 18	Box 1
Journal (loose pages), 1781 September-1781 November	Box 1
Journal (Volume 8), 1781 December 23-1782 April 20	Box 1