



# Guide to the Savannah Port Papers, 1754-1920

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## Table of Contents

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<a href="#">Summary</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Background</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Administrative Information</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Names and Subjects</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Collection Inventory</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Savannah Port Papers</a> .....	5
<a href="#">General Port Papers</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Legal Documents</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Volumes</a> .....	16
<a href="#">Miscellaneous Documents</a> .....	17

## Summary

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**Collection Title:**

Savannah Port papers, 1754-1920

**Creator:**

Port of Savannah (Ga.)

**Abstract:**

This collection contains the official papers of the Port of Savannah, Georgia, in the Governmental Coastal District of Savannah. They are papers of ship clearance, cargo lists, Treasury Department letters and similar papers which deal with the customs operations at the port from 1820 to 1920. Although the papers mainly consist of cargo manifests, there are also letters, legal documents, literary pieces, and other miscellaneous items. Several of the items deal with slavery in Savannah and there are occasional mentions of piracy, smuggling, and general misdeeds among the seamen.

**Extent:**

20 Linear Feet (5,594 items)

**Language:**

Materials in English

**Collection ID:**

RL.10081

**Permalink:**

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1vq08>

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Savannah Port papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Background

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**Scope and Content**

The official papers of the port of Savannah cover a myriad of topics, but are primarily comprised of documents pertaining to customs, import and export trade, and shipping. The general papers include ship clearance papers, cargo

lists, crew lists, crew bonds, customs papers, salary receipts for port officials, and warehouse papers. The general correspondence includes letters from everyday port transactions and affairs, United States Treasury Department letters, and letters from the British consulate. There are papers concerning construction and maintenance of lighthouses, particularly the Tybee Island Lighthouse. These papers also include a number of legal documents, mostly bills of sale and deeds for land, livestock, sea vessels, and slaves. Other items include lists of seamen admitted to the Savannah poor house and hospital in the 1820s and 1830s, miscellaneous literary documents, and papers of the Savannah Port Society, a charitable organization to aid indigent seamen. Included also is a letter book, 1817-1826, of A. S. Bullock, collector of the port of Savannah, giving many references to economic conditions; a volume listing the persons who entered the port of Savannah, 1817-1818; and volumes containing lists of returns of goods on a number of ships, and inspectors' returns, 1830-1840. Items are arranged chronologically whenever possible.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Statement**

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### **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.

### **Alternative Form Available**

Microfilm available.

## Acquisition Information

The Savannah Port Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library between 1939 and 1956.

## Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

## Processing Information

Processed by: Janice Hansen, February 2015.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Names and Subjects

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- Lighthouses -- Georgia -- Savannah.
- Savannah (Ga.) -- Commerce
- Merchant mariners -- Missions and charities -- Georgia.
- Customs administration -- Georgia -- Savannah.
- Georgia -- Commerce.
- Savannah (Ga.) -- Economic conditions.
- Shipping -- Georgia -- Savannah.

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## Collection Inventory

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### Savannah Port Papers

#### General Port Papers, 1754-1918

##### Scope and Contents

This series consists of the official papers of the Port of Savannah, Georgia. It mainly contains ship clearance papers, cargo lists, and other documents that were a part of customs operations at the time. The documents date from 1754 to 1918, but the bulk of the items are from the early to mid-1800s. The manifests detail cargo entering and leaving the port. The Returns of Seamen papers list the crews shipping on the vessels. There are also import customs papers, which detail the customs due on each item. The Warehouse Withdrawal papers are permits to withdraw stored items from warehouses. Importers were allowed to place liquors and other articles in bonded

warehouses until sold and then pay the duty as they withdrew them from the houses. Also included are lists of ship stores. The crew bonds are bonds binding vessel masters to return to port with the same crews with which they ship out, unless some be discharged in foreign ports with permission of the U.S. Consul in that port. There are also salary receipts of the various United States officials necessary to administer the work of the District of Savannah, and receipts and disbursement accounts of various sorts for the Port of Savannah, District of Savannah.

Of these papers, by far the largest part are manifests, either of a part of the cargo or of the whole cargo. The next largest groups include Returns of Seamen and Import Custom papers, and the other items are in much smaller proportions.

Several interesting observations arise from a study of this collection. One of these concerns the chief items of export from Savannah during the years of this set. The one item which composed the largest part of the export trade was up-land, or short-staple cotton. Most of this went to Liverpool, and the return cargoes consisted largely of iron, steel, and manufactured goods. There was some Sea Island Cotton to export, but not nearly so much of it as of the upland. Two or three manifests, one in 1851, show that often ships came down from Boston and New England with cargoes of ice. The 1851 manifest shows a cargo of 124 tons of ice from Boston to Savannah. Most of the other cargoes from New England consisted mainly of food. Two other items occur often in the export manifests from Savannah. One is rice. This commodity formed a part of many cargoes, and quite a few times was the whole cargo. The other item was lumber, notably pine, in the form of boards and shingles. Much of this went to Liverpool, and much of it to Barbados, Havana, and other island ports, but, interestingly enough, a considerable quantity was sent North to New England ports. Much wine was imported from Madeira and then exported again to European ports, notably Liverpool. The main European ports receiving Savannah exports were Liverpool and Havre.

Items are arranged chronologically. There are several boxes of oversized documents also arranged chronologically.

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General Papers, 1754-1809	Box 1
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General Papers, 1800-1822	Box 26
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**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1810-1811	Box 1
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**Physical Description:** 3 folders

General Papers, 1812-1815	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 3 folders	
General Papers, 1816-1819	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 3 folders	
General Papers, 1820 Jan-June	Box 2
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
General Papers, 1820 July-1822	Box 2
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
General Papers, 1823-1827	Box 26
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1823-1826	Box 2
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
General Papers, 1827	Box 2
General Papers, 1828	Box 26
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1828	Box 2
General Papers, 1829 Jan-Mar	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1829 Apr-May	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1829 June-Aug	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	

General Papers, 1829 Sept-Oct	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1829 Jan-Mar	Box 2
General Papers, 1829 Apr-May	Box 3
General Papers, 1829 June-Aug	Box 3
General Papers, 1829 Sept-Oct	Box 3
General Papers, 1829 Nov-Dec	Box 3
General Papers, 1830 Jan-Mar	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1830 Apr-July	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1830 Aug-Nov	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1830 Dec-Mar	Box 25
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1830 Jan-Mar	Box 3
General Papers, 1830 Apr-July	Box 3
General Papers, 1830 Aug-Nov	Box 3
General Papers, 1830 Dec-1831 Mar	Box 4
General Papers, 1831 Apr-Dec	Box 24

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**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1831 Apr-Dec	Box 4
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General Papers, 1832	Box 24
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**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1832 Jan-May	Box 4
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General Papers, 1832 June-Nov.	Box 4
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General Papers, 1832 Dec	Box 4
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General Papers, 1833	Box 24
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**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1833 Jan-June	Box 5
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**Physical Description:** 2 folders

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General Papers, 1833 July-Dec	Box 5
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General Papers, 1834	Box 24
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**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1834 Jan	Box 5
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General Papers, 1834 Feb-Mar	Box 5
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**Physical Description:** 2 folders

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General Papers, 1834 Apr 1-15	Box 6
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General Papers, 1834 Apr 16-22	Box 6
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General Papers, 1834 Apr 23-30	Box 6
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General Papers, 1834 May	Box 6
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**Physical Description:** 2 folders

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General Papers, 1834 June	Box 6
General Papers, 1834 July	Box 7
General Papers, 1834 Aug-Dec <b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	Box 7
General Papers, 1835 <b>Scope and Contents</b> Oversize.	Box 24
General Papers, 1835 Jan-May	Box 7
General Papers, 1835 June-Nov <b>Scope and Contents</b> Includes three documents from November and December of 1835 pertaining to the brig Ann Maria and its cargo. Thirty-three slaves are listed alongside sea stores and cargo. The documents are from the Port of Alexandria and the Port of Savannah.	Box 7
General Papers, 1835 Dec <b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	Box 8
General Papers, 1836-1837 <b>Scope and Contents</b> Oversize.	Box 24
General Papers, 1836 Jan-Feb	Box 8
General Papers, 1836 Mar-Nov <b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	Box 8
General Papers, 1836 Dec	Box 8
General Papers, 1837 <b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	Box 9
General Papers, 1838-1842 <b>Scope and Contents</b> Oversize.	Box 24

General Papers, 1838 Jan-Feb	Box 9
General Papers, 1838 Mar	Box 9
General Papers, 1838 Apr	Box 9
General Papers, 1838 May-June	Box 10
General Papers, 1838 Oct-Dec	Box 10
General Papers, 1839 Jan-July	Box 10
General Papers, 1839 Aug-Dec	Box 10
General Papers, 1840 Jan-Mar	Box 11
General Papers, 1840 April	Box 11
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
General Papers, 1840 May-Nov	Box 11
General Papers, 1841	Box 11
General Papers, 1842	Box 12
General Papers, 1843	Box 12
General Papers, 1843-1846	Box 24
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1844 Jan-June	Box 12
General Papers, 1844 July-Dec	Box 12
General Papers, 1845-1846	Box 13
General Papers, 1847 Jan	Box 13
General Papers, 1847 Feb-Dec	Box 13
General Papers, 1847-1849	Box 23
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	

General Papers, 1848-1849	Box 13
General Papers, 1850	Box 23
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1850 Jan-July	Box 13
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
General Papers, 1850 Aug-Dec	Box 13
General Papers, 1851	Box 23
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1851 Jan-Apr	Box 14
General Papers, 1851 May-Dec	Box 14
General Papers, 1852-1853	Box 23
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1852-1853 Mar	Box 14
General Papers, 1853 Apr-June	Box 14
General Papers, 1853 July-Dec	Box 14
General Papers, 1854	Box 23
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1854 Jan	Box 14
General Papers, 1854 Feb-Dec	Box 15
General Papers, 1855	Box 23
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	

General Papers, 1855 Jan-Mar	Box 15
General Papers, 1855 Apr	Box 15
General Papers, 1855 May	Box 15
General Papers, 1855 June-Sept	Box 15
General Papers, 1855 Oct-Dec	Box 15
General Papers, 1856	Box 22
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1856 Jan-Feb	Box 15
General Papers, 1856 Feb-Mar	Box 16
General Papers, 1856 Apr-June	Box 16
General Papers, 1856 July-Sept	Box 16
General Papers, 1856 Oct-Dec	Box 16
General Papers, 1857	Box 22
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1857	Box 16
General Papers, 1858	Box 22
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Oversize.	
General Papers, 1858 Jan	Box 16
General Papers, 1858 Feb-May	Box 16
General Papers, 1858 July-Dec	Box 17
General Papers, 1859	Box 22
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	

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**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1859 Jan-June	Box 17
General Papers, 1859 July-Sept	Box 17
General Papers, 1859 Oct	Box 17
General Papers, 1859 Nov	Box 17
General Papers, 1859 Dec	Box 17
<del>General Papers, 1859</del> General Papers, 1860	Box 21

**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1860 Jan	Box 18
General Papers, 1860 Feb	Box 18
General Papers, 1860 Mar-Aug	Box 18
General Papers, 1860 Sept-Oct	Box 18
General Papers, 1860 Nov-Dec	Box 18
General Papers, 1861	Box 21

**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1861 Jan-Feb	Box 18
General Papers, 1861 Mar 5-15	Box 18
General Papers, 1861 Mar. 16 - 1861 Dec.	Box 19
General Papers, 1863-1865	Box 19
General Papers, 1866	Box 21

**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1866 Jan-Sept	Box 19
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General Papers, 1866 Oct-Dec	Box 19
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General Papers, 1867-1918	Box 21
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**Scope and Contents**

Oversize.

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General Papers, 1867	Box 19
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General Papers, 1868	Box 19
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General Papers, 1869 Jan-Mar	Box 19
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General Papers, 1869 Apr-Dec (online item available)	Box 19
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**Digital Object:** [General Papers, 1869 Apr-Dec](#)

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General Papers, 1870-1900	Box 20
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General Papers, 1901-1918	Box 20
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General Papers, undated	Box 20
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**Physical Description:** 2 folders

## Legal Documents

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Bills of Sale - Livestock, 1837-1842	Box 27
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Bills of Sale - Slaves, 1822-1831	Box 27 Box 26
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**Physical Description:** 2 folders

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Bills of Sale - Land, 1814-1859	Box 27 Box 26
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**Physical Description:** 2 folders

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Bills of Sale - Sea Vessels, 1829-1858	Box 27
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Miscellaneous Legal Documents, 1824-1865	Box 27
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**Scope and Contents**

Various fragments, copies of ordinances and other items that are legal in nature.

## **General Correspondence, 1820-1883, undated**

**Physical Description:** 3 folders

### **Scope and Contents**

The correspondence contains various letters to and from the British Consulate in the Port of Savannah, as well as correspondence regarding the day-to-day operations of the port. Also among the letters are many requests for information on British citizens presumed dead and thought to have settled in Savannah. These letters are generally seeking for portions of inheritances. The letters to the British consulate often request financial aid or travel back to Britain. Among these letters of the British consulate is a note from Jefferson Davis, allowing a British subject to travel freely without threat of conscription (January 2, 1865).

Particular letters of interest include the following:

- 1) A letter dated December 12, 1819 that includes details on the prosecution of certain prisoners who were part of the crew of the piratical ship Louisa and were charged with piracy and murder.
- 2) A letter dated March 10, 1820 with a complaint about port fees.
- 3) A letter dated October 27, 1843 detailing a complaint against the master of a particular ship and his theft of broadcloths and linens. This was not his first act of impropriety and the author of the letter urges the port to recognize him as a "shameless smuggler."
- 4) A letter dated February 2, 1853 urging its recipient that "by sending the negroes to Charleston they would bring a higher price."

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## **Savannah Port Society Papers, 1901-1920, undated**

**Physical Description:** 2 folders

### **Scope and Contents**

The papers of the Savannah Port Society, a charitable organization to aid indigent seamen.

Box 20

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## **Volumes**

A.S. Bullock Letterbook, 1817-1826 Box 28

**Scope and Contents**

Letterbook of A. S. Bullock, collector of the port of Savannah at least from 1817 to 1822, containing copies of routine letters relative to the port of Savannah. The routine letters, however, contain considerable information. Among them are accounts of pirate ships, smuggling of slaves, escape of slaves in ships, burning of the customs house at Savannah, Tybee Light House and its equipment, and other related matters. Frequently Bullock's letters request information on legal matters from the district attorney. A few letters at the end of the volume were written by N.A. Olmstead, Deputy collector.

Inspectors Returns, 1830-1840 Box 29

Cargo Returns Ledger, 1817-1824 Box 29

Protection, 1817-1818 Box 29

**Miscellaneous Documents**

Literary Documents, 1828-1859, undated Box 27

**Scope and Contents**

Contains handwritten poetry, the Song of the Charleston Light Dragoons at their 24th Anniversary Supper, and other miscellaneous literary items.

Account of Certificates Issued for Distilled Spirits, Wines, and Teas, 1827 Box 27

**Scope and Contents**

Unbound.

Poor House Hospital Documents Box 27

**Scope and Contents**

Documents pertaining to the medical care of seamen.

Tybee Lighthouse Papers Box 27  
Oversize-folder 1

**Scope and Contents**

Contracts, letters, bills, receipts, proposals, etc., that deal with the upkeep of the Tybee Lighthouse.

Miscellaneous

Box 27

**Scope and Contents**

Fragments and unidentified items.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)