John Holker Papers
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Washington, D.C.
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LC Online Catalog record:
http://lccn.loc.gov/mm78026260

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff
Collection Summary

Title: John Holker Papers
Span Dates: 1777-1822
ID No.: MSS26260
Creator: Holker, John, 1745-1822
Extent: 4,500 items; 41 containers; 9.4 linear feet; 20 microfilm reels
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Merchant and French consul general in the United States. Correspondence, invoice book of Jacques-Donatien Leray de Chaumont, depositions taken before Benjamin Franklin, and navigational exercise booklets of George W. Stillman, relating to French military and economic assistance to the United States and American commerce during and after the Revolutionary War.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Bancroft, Edward, 1744-1821--Correspondence.
Bell, Daniel, merchant, of Boston, Mass.--Correspondence.
Chastellux, François Jean, marquis de, 1734-1788--Correspondence.
Chaumont, Jacques-Donatien Leray de, 1725-1803--Correspondence.
Clonard, Lieutenant de--Correspondence.
Deane, Simeon--Correspondence.
Duer, William, 1747-1799--Correspondence.
FitzSimons, Thomas, 1741-1811--Correspondence.
Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790.
Grand, Henry--Correspondence.
Gérard, Conrad Alexandre, 1729-1790--Correspondence.
Harrison, Benjamin, approximately 1726-1791--Correspondence.
Holker, John, 1745-1822.
Huntington, Samuel, 1731-1796--Correspondence.
La Luzerne, Anne-César, chevalier de, 1741-1791--Correspondence.
La Rouérie, Charles Armand Tuffin, marquis de, 1751-1793--Correspondence.
LeGriffon, A. D., merchant--Correspondence.
Mease, James, 1771-1846--Correspondence.
Morris, Gouverneur, 1752-1816--Correspondence.
Morris, Robert, 1734-1806--Correspondence.
Parker, Daniel, merchant--Correspondence.
Peters, Richard, 1744-1828--Correspondence.
Reed, Joseph, 1741-1785--Correspondence.
Ridley, Matthew, 1749-1789--Correspondence.
Ross, John, merchant--Correspondence.
Rutledge, John, 1739-1800--Correspondence.
Sartine, Antoine de, comte d'Alby, 1729-1801--Correspondence.
Smith, William, merchant--Correspondence.
Stillman, George W.
Turnbull, William--Correspondence.

Organizations
Roulhac & Company (Edenton, N.C.)--Correspondence.
Turnbull, Marmie & Company (Philadelphia, Pa.)--Correspondence.
United States. Continental Congress. Committee of Commerce--Correspondence.

**Subjects**
Merchants--France.
Merchants--Maryland--Baltimore.
Merchants--Massachusetts--Boston.
Merchants--New York (State)--New York.
Merchants--North Carolina--Edenton.
Merchants--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

**Places**
France--Commerce--United States.
United States--Commerce--France.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Participation, French.

**Occupations**
Diplomats.
Merchants.

**Administrative Information**

**Provenance**
The papers of John Holker, merchant and French consul general in the United States, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1919.

**Processing History**
The papers of John Holker were arranged and described for microfilming in 1969. The finding aid was revised in 2009.

**Copyright Status**
The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Holker is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

**Access and Restrictions**
The papers of John Holker are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

**Microfilm**
A microfilm edition of these papers is available on twenty reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

**Preferred Citation**
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, John Holker Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Biographical Note**

**Date** | **Event**
---|---
1745 | Born near Manchester, England
1767-1768 | Married Julia Quessnel in France
1770  Partner with father in a textile mill in Rouen, France
1778  Sailed from France to America
1781  Entered into business partnership with Robert Morris
1783  Dismissed, by Dormesson, comptroller-general of French Finances, as consul general of France in America and as agent for the French Royal Marine  Set up peacetime business partnerships with Turnbull, Marmie & Co., Philadelphia, Pa., and with Parker, Duer & Co., New York, N.Y.
1784  Terminated partnership with Robert Morris over settlement of their accounts
1806  Married Hannah Hay Cooper
1815  Married Ann Davis Stillman
1822  Died

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Holker (1745-1822) date from 1777 to 1822. Holker was agent of marine for the French fleet in America as well as consul general and was closely associated with the business of supplying the French Army. He was the partner of Robert Morris, William Turnbull, and William Duer; and his private ventures in trade, coupled with his official activities, present a picture of the commerce of the United States during the Revolutionary War and provide source materials for the history of a considerable portion of the French assistance, military and economic, to the struggling colonies. The papers also contain material relating to the commerce of the United States from the close of the Revolution to the adoption of the Constitution.

Holker was a silent partner in the firm of Parker, Duer & Company, contractors for supplying provisions to the Continental Army. Parker was one of the commissioners for superintending the embarkation of the British at the evacuation of New York City in 1783. Parker afterwards fled to Paris, and many of the later papers in this collection relate to Duer’s and Holker’s efforts to obtain redress from him through the courts. Also in the papers are accounts and correspondence relating to the purchase of horses for the French cavalry in 1780, in which the names of the owners and the price and description of each animal is given; the expenditures for the French fleet at Boston, 1778-1780; the report, attested by Tarle, of the expense of the French expeditionary force at Newport, Rhode Island, dated 28 October 1780; accounts of the proceeds of the sale of prizes taken by D’Estaing’s fleet, 1778-1781; returns of clothing issued to the light infantry under Lafayette, 26 September 1780; sundry returns of French prisoners on board the ill-famed British prison ships Jersey, Scorpion, and others, August and September 1780; an account of the loss of the ship Soucy, which contains Simeon Deane’s description of the capture and burning of Portsmouth, Virginia, by the British in May 1779; John Mitchell’s account of expenditures for the French fleet, 1780-1781; and bills of exchange negotiated by Holker, 1780-1781, for the expenses of the French Navy in America.

The papers also contain material relating to the affairs of the Continental Navy Board and to Robert Morris’s management of army subsistence affairs, as developed in the suit instituted by Holker against Morris for alleged mishandling of contracts. There is also a small but interesting correspondence between Holker, John Edgar, and Louis Tournier at Kaskaskia and New Orleans, 1785-1787, relating to the fur and ginseng trades.

Letters of more than ordinary interest among the Holker Papers include correspondence from the Commercial Committee of the Continental Congress; from Benjamin Harrison, Robert Morris, William Duer, Richard Peters, Henry Grand, James
Wilson, Joseph Reed, John Rutledge, Thomas FitzSimons, James Mease, Matthew Ridley, Benjamin Franklin (various depositions taken before him), Edward Bancroft, Simeon Deane, William Turnbull, Gouverneur Morris, and Samuel Huntington; from the Frenchmen Jacques-Donatien Leray de Chaumont, Marquis de François Jean Chastellux, Conrad Alexandre Gérard, Chevalier de Anne-César La Luzerne, Lieutenant de Clonard, Marquis de Charles Armand Tuffin La Rouérie, Jean-Marie-André de Capriol de Saint Hilaire, and Comte d'Alby Antoine de Sartine; drafts of Holker’s letters to La Luzerne, 1780; and his letterbook of Robert Morris’s letters, 1778-1779.

Business letters include correspondence with A. D. Le Griffon of Baltimore; Roulhaç & Company, Edenton, North Carolina; Daniel Bell, Boston; Daniel Parker, New York; William Smith, Baltimore; and John Ross and Turnbull, Marmie & Company, Philadelphia.

The last items in the collection are two navigational exercise booklets kept by George W. Stillman. Included with the exercises is a journal of a voyage from Boston to Madeira, March 25 to April 11, 1805.

**Arrangement of the Papers**

This collection is arranged in two series:

- [General Correspondence, 1777-1822](#)
- [Miscellany, 1777-1805](#)
## Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOXX 1-38</td>
<td>General Correspondence, 1777-1822</td>
<td>Letters received, copies of letters sent, memoranda, and tabulations. Arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 14,488

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-38</td>
<td>General Correspondence, 1777-1822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REEL 1-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>25 June 1777-10 Dec. 1778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REEL 1</td>
<td>12 Dec. 1778-26 Feb. 1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>27 Feb.-26 May 1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REEL 2</td>
<td>27 May-26 July 1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>27 July-18 Sept. 1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REEL 3</td>
<td>20 Sept.-25 Nov. 1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 4</td>
<td>26 Nov. 1779-3 Jan. 1780</td>
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<tr>
<td>REEL 4</td>
<td>4 Jan.-29 Feb. 1780</td>
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<td>29 Sept.-31 Dec. 1780</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3 Jan.-30 Apr. 1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1 May-29 Oct. 1781</td>
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<td>21 Dec. 1782-28 Feb. 1783</td>
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<tr>
<td>REEL 9</td>
<td>1 Mar.-20 May 1783</td>
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REEL 10
BOX 21 22 May-31 Aug. 1783
REEL 10
BOX 22 1 Sept.-21 Nov. 1783
REEL 11
BOX 23 21 Nov.-31 Dec. 1783
REEL 11
BOX 24 1 Jan.-14 Mar. 1784
REEL 12
BOX 25> 15 Mar.-14 May 1784
REEL 12
BOX 26 15 May-10 July 1784
REEL 13
BOX 27 12 July-30 Nov. 1784
REEL 13
BOX 28 1 Dec. 1784-28 Feb. 1785
REEL 14
BOX 29 1 Mar.-12 Oct. 1785
REEL 14
BOX 30 13 Oct. 1785-28 June 1786
REEL 15
BOX 31 3 July 1786-28 Dec. 1787
REEL 15
BOX 32 1 Jan. 1788-31 Aug. 1789
REEL 16
BOX 33 10 Sept. 1789-28 Sept. 1790
REEL 16
BOX 34 29 Sept. 1790-21 Apr. 1798
REEL 17
BOX 35 23 Apr. 1798-13 Oct. 1802
REEL 17
BOX 36 28 Oct. 1802-10 Apr. 1810
REEL 18
BOX 37 12 Apr. 1810-31 May 1817
REEL 18
BOX 38 1 June 1817-4 Mar. 1822
REEL 19

BOX 39-41
REEL 19-20
Miscellany, 1777-1805

An invoice book of Jacques-Donatien Leray de Chaumont, correspondence between Holker and Robert Morris, and navigational exercise booklets and a journal of a voyage of George W. Stillman

Arranged by type of material.

BOX 39
REEL 19
Chaumont, Jacques-Donatien Leray de, invoice book, 1777-1779

BOX 40
REEL 20
Morris, Robert, correspondence with Holker, 1778-1779
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 41</td>
<td>Stillman, George W., navigational exercise booklets and journal of a voyage from Boston, Mass., to Madeira, Spain, 25 Mar.-11 Apr. 1805 (2 vols.)</td>
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