

William Vans Murray Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2008

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm82034025>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms008032>

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Collection Summary

Title: William Vans Murray Papers

Span Dates: 1778-1805

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1797-1801)

ID No.: MSS34025

Creator: Murray, William Vans, 1760-1803

Extent: 250 items

Extent: 3 containers plus 2 oversize

Extent: 1 linear foot

Extent: 2 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English, French, and Dutch

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm82034025>

Summary: Diplomat and United States representative from Maryland. Correspondence, diaries, and official documents pertaining to Murray's diplomatic activities as minister to the Netherlands (1797-1801) and as minister plenipotentiary to France (1799-1800).

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Adams, John Quincy, 1767-1848--Correspondence.

Adams, John, 1735-1826--Correspondence.

Cappelle, baron de--Correspondence.

Davie, William Richardson, 1756-1820.

Dumas, Charles Guillaume Frédéric, approximately 1725--approximately 1780--Correspondence.

Ellsworth, Oliver, 1745-1807.

Gerry, Elbridge, 1744-1814--Correspondence.

Jones, John Paul, 1747-1792--Correspondence.

Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, 1768-1844--Correspondence.

King, Rufus, 1755-1827--Correspondence.

Lafayette, Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, marquis de, 1757-1834--Correspondence.

Lee, Arthur, 1740-1792--Correspondence.

Livingston, Robert R., 1746-1813--Correspondence.

Morris, Lewis, 1726-1798--Correspondence.

Murray, William Vans, 1760-1803.

Peters, Samuel, 1735-1826--Correspondence.

Pickering, Timothy, 1745-1829--Correspondence.

Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth, 1746-1825--Correspondence.

Pitcairn, Joseph--Correspondence.

Ripley, John A.--Correspondence.

Skipwith, Fulwar, 1765-1839--Correspondence.

Taney, Francis Lewis--Correspondence.

Washington, George, 1732-1799--Correspondence.

Wolcott, Oliver, 1726-1797--Correspondence.

Subjects

Diplomatic and consular service, American--France.

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Netherlands.

XYZ Affair, 1797-1798.

Places

France--Foreign relations--United States.
France--History--Revolution, 1789-1799.
Netherlands--Foreign relations--United States.
United States--Foreign relations--France.
United States--Foreign relations--Netherlands.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.

Occupations

Diplomats.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Maryland.

Provenance

The papers of William Vans Murray, diplomat and United States representative from Maryland, were acquired by the Library of Congress through a series of gifts and purchases from 1919 to 1992. A principal deposit, donated by William Vans Murray Robertson, Jr., to the Library in 1926, was converted to a gift in 1957 by Robertson's widow, Katherine Pike Urquhart, and his daughters, Kay Pike Robertson and Nancy Robertson Rhodes. An addition to the collection was donated by Ron Fox in 1992.

Processing History

The papers of William Vans Murray were arranged and described in 1986. The collection was expanded and revised in 1994 and the finding aid revised in 2008.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of William Vans Murray is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of William Vans Murray 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 part of these papers is available on two 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 number, William Vans Murray Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1760, Feb. 9	Born, Cambridge, Md.

1784-1787	Studied law at the Middle Temple, London, England
1789	Married Charlotte Hughins
1791	Admitted to Maryland bar Member, Maryland House of Representatives
1791-1797	Member, United States House of Representatives from Maryland
1797-1801	Minister to the Netherlands
1799-1800	Appointed minister plenipotentiary (with Oliver Ellsworth and William Richardson Davie) to negotiate with France in the aftermath of the XYZ Affair, concluding in the Convention of Môtrefontaine
1801	Resigned diplomatic post and returned to Cambridge, Md.
1803, Dec. 11	Died, Cambridge, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of William Vans Murray (1760-1803) span the period from 1784 to 1805 with the majority of the materials falling between the years 1797 and 1801. Diaries, official documents, and correspondence, principally of an official nature, comprise the collection.

Murray had a short but relatively distinguished career as a diplomat. In 1797, after serving three terms representing Maryland in the United States House of Representatives, he was appointed by George Washington as minister to the new Republic of Batavia (Netherlands). In 1800, John Adams temporarily assigned him to a special diplomatic team including Oliver Ellsworth and William Richardson Davie to settle the undeclared war between the French Republic and the United States. The negotiations took place in Paris between June and September 1800 and produced a convention which was largely a result of Murray's diplomatic skills. Included in the collection are Murray's notes on the progress of these negotiations and an official copy of the convention signed on September 30, 1800.

The four volumes of Murray's diaries include his notes during the period of his diplomatic assignment from 1797 to 1801 and notations made in the latter part of 1801 after his return to the United States and throughout 1802. Besides the comments on the 1800 negotiations noted above, Murray describes a fete given by Joseph Bonaparte at his chateau, Môtrefontaine, to celebrate the successful conclusion of the talks. The majority of the notations deal with aspects of Murray's diplomatic activity at The Hague and Paris.

Correspondence also deals with matters of an official nature and includes letters with individuals such as Timothy Pickering, Oliver Ellsworth, Fulwar Shipwith, Francis Lewis Taney, Rufus King, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. For use in confidential official correspondence, Murray devised an encode sheet, a fragment of which is included in the collection. There is a sizeable number of letters using this code. Other correspondence includes letters from Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Marquis de Lafayette, and Joseph Bonaparte.

Miscellaneous items include Murray's commission to serve on the negotiating team, a letter from George Washington, a variety of *laissez passer* for Murray and others to travel to the Netherlands and France, and several letters from Americans reporting problems that they had dealing with the French. Many of the items are in French, while others are in Dutch or English.

An addition of forty-one items to the William Vans Murray Papers spans the years 1778-1801 and consists of correspondence, a portion of a treaty, and an invitation placed in a bound volume.

The correspondence consists of letters and transcripts between various parties involved in the American Revolution, the Treaty of 1787 with England, and the XYZ Affair.

Correspondents in the addition include John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Joseph Bonaparte, Charles Guillaume Frédéric Dumas, James Jay, John Paul Jones, Rufus King, Marquis de Lafayette, Arthur Lee, Robert R. Livingston, James Madison, John Marshall, James McHenry, Lewis Morris, Samuel Peters, Timothy Pickering, Joseph Pitcairn, John P. Ripley, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Francis Lewis Taney, George Washington, and Oliver Wolcott.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Diaries, 1797-1802](#)
- [Correspondence, 1784-1801](#)
- [Miscellany, 1790-1805](#)
- [Addition, 1778-1801](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-2 REEL 1	<p><u>Diaries, 1797-1802</u></p> <p>Four diaries dealing primarily with Murray's diplomatic service in the Netherlands and as special envoy to France in 1800. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 2-3 REEL 2	<p><u>Correspondence, 1784-1801</u></p> <p>Letters received and copies of letters sent, mostly while in diplomatic service in the Netherlands and France. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 4 REEL 2	<p><u>Miscellany, 1790-1805</u></p> <p>Commissions, laissez passer for Murray and other Americans, official complaints, a copy of the convention signed on 30 Sept. 1800, between the United States and France, and a letter from Murray to his wife, Charlotte. Arranged chronologically</p>
BOX 5 not filmed	<p><u>Addition, 1778-1801</u></p> <p>Correspondence, a portion of a treaty, and an invitation placed in a bound volume. Arranged chronologically.</p>

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 19,634

Container	Contents
BOX 1-2 REEL 1	Diaries, 1797-1802 Four diaries dealing primarily with Murray's diplomatic service in the Netherlands and as special envoy to France in 1800. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1 REEL 1	June 1797-Apr. 1799 (commonplace book)
BOX 1 REEL 1	Apr.-Oct. 1800
BOX 2 REEL 1	July 1800-Aug. 1802 (includes recipes and newspaper clippings)
BOX 2-3 REEL 1	Oct. 1800-Aug. 1801
BOX 2-3 REEL 2	Correspondence, 1784-1801 Letters received and copies of letters sent, mostly while in diplomatic service in the Netherlands and France. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 2 REEL 1	1784-1798 (3 folders)
BOX 3 REEL 1-2	1799-1801, undated (4 folders)
BOX 4 REEL 2	Miscellany, 1790-1805 Commissions, laissez passer for Murray and other Americans, official complaints, a copy of the convention signed on 30 Sept. 1800, between the United States and France, and a letter from Murray to his wife, Charlotte. Arranged chronologically
BOX 4 REEL 2	1790-1805
BOX 5 not filmed	Addition, 1778-1801 Correspondence, a portion of a treaty, and an invitation placed in a bound volume. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 5 not filmed	1778-1801, undated (1 vol..)