Charles Thomson Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2009

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

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm73042861

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms008139

Prepared by Karen Linn Femia

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2009
Collection Summary
Title: Charles Thomson Papers
Span Dates: 1765-1888
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1765-1818)
ID No.: MSS42861
Creator: Thomson, Charles, 1729-1824
Extent: 360 items
Extent: 4 containers
Extent: 1.0 linear feet
Extent: 1 microfilm reel
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm73042861
Summary: Secretary of Continental Congress, biblical translator, and merchant. Correspondence relating to the official business of the Continental Congress and the American Revolution, scientific and scholarly matters, personal affairs, and including petitions, notes on debates, and translations of portions of the New Testament from Greek to English.

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, 1735-1826--Correspondence.
Coxe, Tench, 1755-1824--Correspondence.
Debrett, John, -1822--Correspondence.
Dickinson, John, 1732-1808--Correspondence.
Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790--Correspondence.
Jay, John, 1745-1829--Correspondence.
Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826--Correspondence.
Laurens, Henry, 1724-1792--Correspondence.
Madison, James, 1751-1836--Correspondence.
Monroe, James, 1758-1831--Correspondence.
Morris, Gouverneur, 1752-1816--Correspondence.
Thomson, Charles, 1729-1824.
Washington, George, 1732-1799--Correspondence.
Winthrop, James, 1752-1821.

Organizations
United States. Continental Congress.

Places
Northwest, Old.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.

Titles
Bible. Revelation.

Occupations
Merchants.
Public officials.
Translators.
Provenance

The papers of Charles Thomson, secretary of the Continental Congress, biblical translator, and merchant, were given to the Library of Congress by Thomas Ewing in 1930 and acquired by purchase, 1899-1985, and by transfer, 1955.

Processing History

The papers of Charles Thomson were arranged and described in 1999. The finding aid was revised in 2009.

Additional Guides

The papers have been described in *Manuscript Sources in the Library of Congress for Research on the American Revolution* published by the Library of Congress in 1975.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Charles Thomson 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 one reel. 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, Charles Thomson, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1729, Nov. 29</td>
<td>Born, Maghera, County Londonderry, Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1739</td>
<td>Immigrated to America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774-1789</td>
<td>Secretary, Continental Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824, Aug. 16</td>
<td>Died, Lower Merion Township, Pa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Charles Thomson (1729-1824) span the years 1765-1888, with the bulk of the material dating from 1765 to 1818. A majority of the papers consists of correspondence during Thomson's tenure as secretary to the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1789. Thomson corresponded frequently over the years with both Benjamin Franklin and Thomas
Jefferson. Many of these letters pertain to foreign affairs or reflect Thomson's scientific and scholarly interests. His letters from John Jay reveal Thomson's role as the key recipient of information on the events of the Revolutionary era. The papers also include Henry Laurens's charges against Thomson made before Congress in September 1779 ranging from incompetence to haughtiness, and Thomson's ten-page defense. There are notes on Charles Pinckney's speech of 10 August 1786, notes on debates in Congress in July 1777, a copy of a published 1787 ordinance concerning territory northwest of the Ohio River, and financial material. Correspondents include John Adams, Tench Coxe, John Debrett, John Dickinson, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Laurens, James Madison, James Monroe, Gouverneur Morris, and George Washington.

The papers also include two volumes concerning Thomson's interest in biblical translations, one a translation and one a critique of a translation. Although the biblical translation was previously identified as Thomson's translation of the Septuagint, and remains so identified on the microfilm copy, it is actually from the New Testament, Romans (beginning with chapter 2), 1 Peter, and the first two chapters of 2 Peter.

**Arrangement of the Papers**

This collection is arranged by type of material.
## Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 15,821

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1 REEL 1</td>
<td>Chronological file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1 REEL 1</td>
<td>1769, Jan. 21-1784, Jan. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 2 REEL 1</td>
<td>1784, Jan. 23-1787, Sept. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 3 REEL 1</td>
<td>1788, Mar. 26-1845, July 16, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 4 REEL 1</td>
<td>Notes on debates in Congress, 1777, July 24-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 4 REEL 1</td>
<td>&quot;Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States, North West of the River Ohio,&quot; 1787, July 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 4 not filmed</td>
<td>Translation of New Testament books of Romans, 1 Peter and 2 Peter, incomplete, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 4 not filmed</td>
<td>&quot;Criticism by Charles Thomson on James Winthrop's Attempt to Translate the Apocalypse,&quot; undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>