

Robert Carter Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2003

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm76015297>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009044>

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Revised by Patrick Kerwin

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Collection Summary

Title: Robert Carter Papers

Span Dates: 1685-1828

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1774-1804)

ID No.: MSS15279

Creator: Carter, Robert, 1728-1804

Extent: 70 items

Extent: 3 containers

Extent: 1.2 linear feet

Extent: 2 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm76015297>

Summary: Tobacco planter and iron manufacturer. Correspondence, memorandum books, account books, and religious writings relating primarily to the operation of Nomini Hall in Westmoreland County, Va., other Virginia estates, shipment of tobacco, the Baltimore Iron Works, and his affiliation with the Baptists and the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem.

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

Ball, Spencer, 1762-1832--Correspondence.

Carroll, Daniel, 1764-1849--Correspondence.

Carter, George, 1777- --Correspondence.

Carter, Robert, 1728-1804.

Dawson, Benjamin--Correspondence.

Dulany, Daniel, 1685-1753--Correspondence.

Fairfax, Bryan Fairfax, Baron, 1736-1802--Correspondence.

Jones, Joseph, 1727-1805--Correspondence.

Lee, Thomas Ludwell, 1730-1778--Correspondence.

Martin, Luther, 1748-1826--Correspondence.

Maund, John James--Correspondence.

Tazewell, Henry, 1753-1799--Correspondence.

Organizations

Baltimore Iron Works (Baltimore, Md.)

Subjects

Agriculture--Virginia.

Baptists.

Farm tenancy--Virginia.

Iron industry and trade--Maryland--Baltimore.

New Jerusalem Church.

Plantations--Virginia.

Slavery--United States.

Tobacco industry--Virginia.

Places

Nomini Hall (Westmoreland County, Va. : Estate)

Occupations

Iron manufacturers.

Plantation owners.

Provenance

The papers of Robert Carter, tobacco planter and iron manufacturer, were acquired by the Library of Congress by gift and purchase from George Cuthbert Carter in 1916.

Processing History

The papers of Robert Carter were processed in 1976. The finding aid was revised in 2003.

Other Repositories

Other Carter papers can be found in the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library of Duke University which houses an extensive Carter collection, and in the libraries of the Maryland Historical Society, the Virginia Historical Society, and the Virginia Baptist Historical Society at the University of Richmond.

Related Material

The Library of Congress also holds Carter manuscripts in the Benjamin Stoddert and Rebecca Lowndes Stoddert Papers.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Robert Carter 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 two reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Robert Carter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1728, Feb.	Born at Corotoman, the Virginia estate of Robert "King" Carter
1749-1751	Lived in England
1751	Returned to Virginia to manage Nomini Hall and other holdings

1754	Married Frances Tasker
1758-1771 (?)	Member, Governor's Council of Virginia
1761-1772	Lived in Williamsburg, Md.
1769	Obtained part interest in the Baltimore Iron Works
1777	Established textile operations on his Virginia estates
1778	Left the Episcopal Church to become a Baptist
1790	Became a convert to the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian)
1793-1804	Lived in Baltimore, Md.
1804, Mar. 10	Died, Baltimore, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Robert Carter (1728-1804) of Nomini Hall in Westmoreland County, Virginia, contain correspondence, daybooks, account books, and religious writings. Except for two items dated 1685 and 1828, the collection spans the years 1759 to 1805, with the bulk of the material dating from 1774 to 1804. After Carter's death in March 1804, his son George continued the letterbook to February of the next year.

Carter was one of Virginia's landed elite, a great-grandson of Robert "Emigrant" Carter and grandson of Robert "King" Carter. Although known as "Councilor" Carter because of more than a decade's tenure on the colonial Governor's Council, Carter was principally engaged in managing his land holdings, running his estate, Nomini Hall, and directing his interests in the Baltimore Iron Works. His activities as adviser to the governor are not reflected in these papers. Rather, the collection documents his business and financial affairs relating to Carter's numerous commercial and manufacturing interests. Much of the collection is devoted to Carter's extensive use of the tenancy system on farmlands outside Nomini Hall. Included in the papers are copies of rental agreements, communications to and from Carter's land agents, crop and livestock valuations, production records, market listings, complaints by tenants, and daybook entries relating to supervising diverse enterprises. There is also an annual rent roll of tracts in Westmoreland, Richmond, and Northumberland counties, 1791-1793, and an itemized listing of the names, ages, value, and rentable worth of Carter's slaves. Carter's correspondence, which is also heavily business oriented, emphasizes property management and security and interest arrangements with planters who received private loans.

In addition to Carter's business practices, the papers also reflect his other interests. Carter rejected the established church and in 1778 became a convert to the Baptist church. Both the correspondence and a folder on religious writings document Carter's affiliation with the Baptists and ultimately with the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem. These connections brought Carter in contact with religious leaders outside the South and resulted in correspondence which shows the political and social views of some of his dissenting contemporaries. Carter's interest in the abolition of slavery, for instance, is revealed by incoming letters which solicit his aid and opinions on the formation of organizations to end the practice. He devised a program for the manumission of his slaves beginning in 1791, a program which is schematized in these papers. Similarly, his theological beliefs appear indirectly in the critiques of his views sent him by correspondents and in sporadic daybook notations on such subjects as the French Revolution.

Among the correspondents in the papers are Spencer Ball, Daniel Carroll, George Carter (son), Benjamin Dawson, Daniel Dulany, Baron Bryan Fairfax Fairfax, Joseph Jones, Thomas Ludwell Lee, Luther Martin, John James Maund, and Henry Tazewell. With some exceptions, Carter indexed his letterbooks, daybooks, and rent rolls. Three letters, written by Carter in 1793 and referred to as the "Toner Transcript" are copies made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged by type of material or topic.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 16,856

Container	Contents
BOX 1 REEL 1	Letter regarding ownership of Metcalfe tract, 1685
BOX 1 REEL 1	Letters received, 1786-1798 (2 folders)
BOX 1 REEL 1	Letterbooks, 1794, Apr.-1805, Feb. (3 folders)
BOX 1 REEL 1	Letters sent and miscellany, 1767-1795
BOX 2 REEL 1	Ledger, 1759-1799
BOX 2 REEL 1	Daybooks
BOX 2 REEL 1	1774-1775 (2 folders)
BOX 2 REEL 2	1789-1792 (2 folders)
BOX 2 REEL 2	Journal, 1784-1789
BOX 3 REEL 2	Date book, 1781-1782
BOX 3 REEL 2	Rent roll, 1791-1793
BOX 3 REEL 2	Rent book, bonds, and miscellany, 1793-1797
BOX 3 REEL 2	Waste book, 1794-1795
BOX 3 REEL 2	"Book of miscellanies," 1787-1790
BOX 3 REEL 2	Religious writings, undated
BOX 3 REEL 2	Directions for making Connecticut cement, 1828