Jonathan Rhea Papers, 1773-1892: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C0521
Repository: Princeton University. Library. Dept. of Rare Books and Special Collections
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 0.8 linear ft.
2 archival boxes
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: This collection consists of correspondence and legal documents of eighteenth-century lawyer and legal clerk Jonathan Rhea (1758-1815), of Trenton, New Jersey, as well as legal records created by others following his death. The materials mainly reference land transactions, lawsuits, and the collecting of debts in the Trenton area, but also extending to New Brunswick, Burlington, Monmouth County, and other localities.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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Jonathan Rhea (1758-1815), a Trenton attorney, was born April 9, 1758, to Robert and Mary Forman Rhea. He served in the army during the American Revolution, attaining the rank of captain, and later served as a colonel during the Pennsylvania Insurrection (Whiskey Rebellion) of 1794. Rhea was admitted to the New Jersey bar in 1784 and served two terms as clerk of the New Jersey Supreme Court from 1793 to 1807 and as clerk of Monmouth County Court of Common Pleas. In 1789, Rhea served as a presidential elector. Rhea subsequently served as Quartermaster-General of New Jersey from 1812 to 1813 and was president of the Trenton Banking Company from 1807 until his death on February 3, 1815.

Jonathan Rhea married Mary Matilda Rutgers (1763-1800) and they were the parents of four children, Richard (1788-1816), Anthony (1791-1793), Nicholas (1792-1817), and Mary (1792-1817) who married Garret Dorset Wall (1783-1850). Garret Dorset Wall worked with Jonathan Rhea in his legal practice, and also served as clerk of the New Jersey Supreme Court, as a member of the New Jersey General Assembly, as United States District Attorney for New Jersey, and as a United States Senator.

Rhea worked closely with several other prominent New Jersey politicians and attorneys including Charles Ewing (1780-1832) and James H. Imlay (1764-1823).

This collection consists of the papers of Jonathan Rhea, and papers of others, most likely related to his legal office. More than half of the collection is not directly associated with Rhea, and much of this material was created after Rhea's death in 1815.

Series 1, "Papers of Jonathan Rhea," dates from 1786 to 1814 and is almost entirely legal in nature. Researchers will find accounts, bills, promissory notes, receipts, land transactions, court records, and correspondence, which makes up the bulk of this series. The correspondence is arranged alphabetically by author, and all but five letters are addressed to Rhea. The five letters not addressed to Rhea were written by Rhea to Robert Montgomery and Colonel Joshua Howell. The two letters written to Colonel Joshua Howell describe the "Insurrection at Princeton," also known as the "Great Rebellion" at Princeton in 1807, when several College of New Jersey students resisted the authority of the College and, in particular, President Samuel Stanhope Smith. Of interest, and of a more personal nature, are the bills from Pearsons for the building of Rhea's home in 1810.

Series 2, "Papers of Others," dates from 1774 to 1892, and like the first series, is almost entirely legal in nature. The bulk of this series is correspondence, which is arranged alphabetically by author. Some of the recipients include John Baggs, Rachel (or Rachael) Borden, Jesse Bowen, James Imlay, John Johnston, Benjamin F. Lee, William B. Manning, Samuel Reid, Nathaniel Smith, and John Wachsmith. The correspondence mainly refers to legal matters, and may relate to the court records, which are arranged by court. Researchers will also find financial records, land records, military records, and wills.

It is unclear how all the authors, recipients, and papers are related to Jonathan Rhea. Some materials were created by, received by, or reference Rhea's relatives, including his uncle and
Sheriff of Monmouth County, Colonel David Rhea (1740-1821); his wife's uncle and Sheriff of Monmouth County, David Forman (1733-1812); his son, Nicholas Rhea (1792-1817), a graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University); his son-in-law and colleague, Garret Dorset Wall (1783-1850); and his nephew, William W. Montgomery (1778-1864). Others, including Charles Ewing and James H. Imlay, were colleagues.

Access and Use

Access
The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the Associate University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Custodial History
The collection was formed as a result of a departmental practice of combining into one collection manuscript material of various accessions relating to a particular author or historical figure.

Processing and Other Information

Preferred Citation
Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Jonathan Rhea Papers, Box and Folder Number; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Processing Information
This collection was processed by Holly Mengel in 2012. Finding aid written by Holly Mengel in 2012.

Encoding
This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2012-10-23T10:45-0400

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

· Collecting of accounts -- New Jersey -- 18th century.
· Debtor and creditor -- New Jersey -- 18th century.
· Lawyers -- New Jersey -- 18th century.
· Real property -- New Jersey -- 18th century.
· New Jersey -- History -- 1775-1865 -- Sources.
· Trenton (N.J.) -- History -- 1775-1865 -- Sources.
· Accounts.
· Legal correspondence -- New Jersey.
· Legal documents -- New Jersey.
· Wills -- New Jersey.
· New Jerseyana
### Contents List

**Papers of Jonathan Rhea, 1786-1814**

**Description:** Consists of accounts, correspondence, bills, receipts, and mortgage information of Jonathan Rhea.

**Arrangement:** Arranged alphabetically by genre of material.

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Papers of Others, 1774-1892

Description: Consists of papers of others, including accounts, bills, receipts, bonds, correspondence, court records, land records, military records, and promissory notes.

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by genre of material.

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Correspondence, B (Letters from J. Blackwell, Thomas Bullman, and illegible), 1812, 1817, undated  Box: 1 Folder: 28

Correspondence, C (Letters from Jonathan Casler, George Chichester, J.M. Clarke, David Craig, Caleb Crane, Thomas Cummings, James Cuyes, and illegible), 1814-1828  Box: 1 Folder: 29

Correspondence, D (Letters from William Davidson, William Davis, John D. Delacy, Fr. DeMasson, W. DeWald, and John Durey), 1811-1840  Box: 1 Folder: 30

Correspondence, F (Letter from David Forman to John Young Noel regarding Former Sheriff David Rhea), 1793  Box: 1 Folder: 31

Correspondence, G (Letters from S. Gould, William Griffiths, and Joseph Griggs), 1799, 1819-1822  Box: 1 Folder: 32

Correspondence, H (Letters from D. Hadden, C. Haight, J. Halstead, W. Halstead, [Head], B.B. Howell, Henry J. Hoyt, and William Hyer), 1814, 1821-1838  Box: 1 Folder: 33

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Correspondence, S (Letters from G. Schmitz, Richard [Smethurt], Nathaniel Smith, Richard Stockton, Thomas Stryker, and John Sylvester), 1830-1861
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Correspondence, T (Letters from T. Talmage, Jacob Tice, and G. Tomlinson), 1795, 1820, 1892
Box: 2 Folder: 7

Correspondence, V (Letters from George Vanpelt, John Van Pelz, David Vickings, and P.J. Voorhees), 1812-1836
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Correspondence, W (Letters from Garret D. Wall, Wharton, R. Wells, Moses Willets, Reuben Willets, Matthias Williamson, and G. Wood), 1806-1830, undated
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Correspondence, Y (Letter from Abel Yerrill to William B. Manning), 1818
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Wills of Walter Bartley, James Casada, Samuel Dickinson, William Fox, and John Van Dyke, 1785-1835

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