Simeon Johnson Papers, 1805-1807: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C1589
Repository: Princeton University Library. Special Collections.
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 0.2 linear feet
1 box
Language(s) of Material: French
English
Abstract: Consists of papers of Simeon Johnson (1770-1807), an American merchant residing in Gonaïves, Haiti, following the Haitian Revolution, including a journal about the conflicts between rival Haitian leaders Henri Christophe (1767-1820) and Alexandre Pétion (1770-1818), as well as legal documents signed by Henri Christophe and Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758-1806) and financial documents and correspondence pertaining to Johnson's business and social affairs.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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Biography/History

Simeon Johnson was an American merchant who resided in Gonaïves, Haiti, following the Haitian Revolution. Johnson was born in Berlin, Connecticut, in 1770 to Samuel Johnson (1740-1798) and Ann Hopkins (1742-1816), descendents of English settlers who arrived in the Americas in the mid-17th century. Simeon Johnson married Lucretia Ranney (1769-1820), with whom he had four children. He died in Haiti on November 5, 1807.

Description

Consists of legal and financial documents, correspondence, and a journal belonging to Simeon Johnson (1770-1807), an American merchant residing in Gonaïves, Haiti, following the Haitian Revolution. Johnson’s thirteen-page journal, which he labeled "Journal and notes written during the disturbances at Haiti," spans the period from January 10 to February 3, 1807, and details the conflicts between rival political leaders Henri Christophe (1767-1820), who became President of the State of Haiti in 1807, and Alexandre Pétion (1770-1818), who was then President of the Republic of Haiti.

Additional materials relate to Johnson’s business affairs in Haiti. The earliest document is a license to do business issued to Powell, Kane & Co. in 1805, signed by Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758-1806), who was then the Emperor of Haiti. The license was endorsed in 1806 to indicate its transfer to Simeon Johnson. There is also a detailed list of debts owed by Simeon Johnson to various people totaling $2697.72 (April 7, 1807); a receipt for the purchase of provisions from Charles McNeill "payable in good coffee" (March 14, 1807); an envelope addressed to Johnson at New York Coffee House, Royal Exchange; and a passport, signed by Henry Christophe (1767-1820), allowing Simeon Johnson to travel to London in April 1807.

A few items related to Johnson’s social life are also present, including two invitations to events in 1806, a birthday feast for Empress Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur and a wedding. Both invitations are annotated with Johnson’s translations into English and labeled as "specimens" of the "manners" and "politings" of Haiti. Johnson had sent this collection of papers, including the journal, to his wife, and many items are annotated with his English translations.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Access and Use

Access

Open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition
Gift of Frederic Leake, Princeton Class of 1908, in 1954 (AM 16859).
This accession was separated from the Princeton University Library Collection on Slavery in the Americas (C1210), formerly known as the Miscellaneous Slavery Collection, during 2017 reprocessing.

Appraisal
No materials were separated during 2017 processing.

Related Materials

Location of Copies or Alternate Formats

Processing and Other Information

Encoding
This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2017-12-26T12:13:0500

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

Subject Headings

- Dessalines, Jean-Jacques, 1758-1806
- Henri Christophe, King of Haiti, 1767-1820
- Johnson, Simeon, 1770-1807
- Pétion, Alexandre, 1770-1818
• Powell, Kane & Company
• Merchants -- Haiti -- 19th century -- Diaries.
• Gonaïves (Haiti) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
• Haiti -- Commerce -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
• Haiti -- Politics and government -- 1804-1844 -- Sources.
• Haiti -- Social life and customs -- 19th century -- Sources.
• Correspondence -- 19th century.
• Diaries -- 19th century.
• Financial records -- 19th century.
• Legal documents -- 19th century.
• American history/Early national
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<td><strong>Patent No. 2 for Powell, Kane &amp; Co. Granted by James I of Hayti (Jean-Jacques Dessalines, 1758-1806), 1805-1806 July 5</strong></td>
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<td>Passport for Simeon Johnson, Signed by Henry Christophe, President of the State of Haiti, 1807 April 1</td>
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