

Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de
Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau,
Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Library of Congress

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, Papers

Span Dates: 1777-1794

ID No.: MSS38067

Creator: Rochambeau, Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de, 1725-1807

Extent: 1,800 items; 16 containers; 2.5 linear feet; 4 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in French

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

Abstract: Commander-in-chief of the French army in America. Correspondence, histories, and other papers chiefly concerning French participation in the American Revolution and the establishment of the French branch of the Society of the Cincinnati. Includes material on the siege of Yorktown, Virginia.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Clinton, Henry, Sir, 1738?-1795.

Digby, Robert, 1732-1815.

Estaing, Charles Henri, comte d', 1729-1794.

Greene, Nathanael, 1742-1786.

La Luzerne, Anne César, chevalier de, 1741-1791.

La Pérouse, Jean-François de Galaup, comte de, 1741-1788.

Langeron, Charles Destouches Andrault, comte et marquis de, 1763-1831.

Louis XVI, King of France, 1754-1793.

Montbary, Alexandre Marie Lenor de Saint Mauris, prince de, 1732-1796

Rochambeau, Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de, 1725-1807.

Ségur, Philippe Henri, marquis de, 1724-1801.

Tallmadge, Benjamin, 1754-1835.

Vergennes, Charles Gravier, comte de, 1719-1787.

Washington, George, 1732-1799.

Organizations

Society of the Cincinnati. Branche française.

Places

United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Participation, French.

Virginia--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.

Yorktown (Va.)--History.

Occupations

Army officers, French.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, commander-in-chief of the French army in America, were acquired by the Library of Congress in 1883 following an act of Congress authorizing the purchase from Eugène Achille Lacroix de Vimeur, marquis de Rochambeau.

Processing History

The papers of Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, were reported to the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* in 1959. The collection was prepared for microfilming in 1975, and the finding aid was revised in 2009.

Transfers

Maps have been transferred to the Library's Geography and Map Division where they are identified as part of these papers..

Related Material

There is additional Rochambeau material in the papers of his contemporaries. Relevant collections in the Library include the papers of [George Washington](#) and [Nathanael Greene](#); French reproductions including records from the French Foreign Ministry (La Luzerne, Marbois, Bellecombe), the Archives Nationales (Montbarey, Sugar, Necker), and the Archives de la Marine (Destouches, Sartine, Castries); and the pertinent reproductions from the United Kingdom, including the microfilmed papers of Lord Cornwallis.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau 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 four reels. Consult a reference librarian 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 or reel number, Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1725, July 1	Born in Vendôme, France
1730-1740	Attended Collège de Vendôme, the Jesuit school at Blois, and the military academy in Paris, France (later called the Ecole St.-Cyr)
1740-1748	Served in the war of the Austrian Succession
1743	Promoted to captain
1747	Appointed colonel of the Régiment de la Marche Wounded at the battle of Laufeld

- 1748 Fought in the battle of Maastricht
- 1749 Married Jeanne Thérèse Tellez d'Acosta
- 1749-1755 Lived chiefly in retirement at Vendômois
- 1756 Led his regiment in the Minorcan campaign
Appointed brigadier general and a Chevalier of St. Louis
- 1756-1763 Served in the Seven Years' War
- 1757 Appointed major general on the duc de Richelieu's staff
- 1759 Appointed to command the Régiment d'Auvergne
- 1760 Wounded at the battle of Clostercamp
Promoted to maréchal de camp
Appointed inspector general of infantry
- 1771 Awarded the Grand Croix of the Order of St. Louis
- 1776 Appointed governor of Villefranche-en-Roussillon
- 1780 Ordered by the King to head an expeditionary force to aid the American colonists
Sailed for America with four regiments; arrived in Rhode Island and placed his army at the disposal of General George Washington
- 1781 Joined his army with the Continental Army under General George Washington
Besieged Cornwallis at Yorktown, Va., aiding in gaining his surrender
- 1783 Returned to France
- 1784 Became commander of the military district at Calais France
Founded the French chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati (disbanded in 1792)
- 1789 Participated in the Second Assembly of Notables
Appointed commander of the district of Alsace
- 1791 Created marshal of France
- 1792-1794 Imprisoned during the Reign of Terror
- 1804 Awarded Legion of Honor by Napoleon
- 1807 Died, chateau de Rochambeau, Thoré-la-Rochette, near Vendôme, France

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau (1725-1807) are bound in fifteen volumes dated 1777-1794. There is one volume of manuscript histories covering some of the Revolutionary War years; five volumes of correspondence and other papers concentrated in the 1780s; and nine letterbook volumes, 1780-1784, containing copies of letters to and from the comte de Rochambeau and relating chiefly to the Revolutionary War. There is also a sixteenth-century volume that consists of a partial inventory ¹ of the papers and correspondence with the Library of Congress about their sale.

The manuscript histories in Volume 1 consist of a 212 page memoir entitled "Histoire de l'Origine, & des Progrès de la Guerre . . . 1763 . . . 1780" (an incomplete manuscript which covers only the period up to 1778) and a 49-page manuscript entitled "Mémoire de la guerre en Amérique en 1780" (which covers the period July 1780 to October 1781).

Among the other notable items in the papers are the extant records of the French branch of the Society of the Cincinnati in the eighteenth century and Rochambeau's correspondence with George Washington. ² Rochambeau's letters to Washington are written chiefly after his return to France and discuss the French Society of the Cincinnati and contemporary affairs, particularly the financial and other problems of the French government. Washington's letters to Rochambeau (17 of the 36 are holographs) are dated 1782-1790 and discuss primarily social and friendly matters.

Other prominent correspondents in the Rochambeau papers include King Louis XVI of France; the French minister of war, Alexandre Marie Léonor de Saint Mauris, Prince de Montbarey; Philippe Henri, marquis de Ségur; Nathanael Greene; Benjamin Tallmadge; Charles Gravier, marquis de Vergennes; Anne-César, chevalier de La Luzerne; Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse; Charles Hector, comte d'Estaing; Chevalier Charles Destouches Andrault, comte et marquis de Langeron; Sir Henry Clinton; and Robert Digby.

A letter of La Pérouse to Rochambeau recounting his interview with George Washington is in volume 3, microfilm reel 1, following the printed page papers of Rochambeau, 1763-1794.

¹The Inventory was prepared in the 1870s prior to the Library's acquisition of the papers; it is incomplete.

²According to Arnold Whitridge in his book *Rochambeau* (New York, Macmillan, 1965), the Rochambeau-Washington correspondence has never been published.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged by type of material, and therein chronological.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 16,297

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1 REEL 1	Manuscript histories
BOX 2 REEL 1	Correspondence and other papers
BOX 2 REEL 1	Mar. 6-Nov. 19, 1780 (with a few items dated 1777-1779)
BOX 3 REEL 2	Jan. 6, 1781-Mar. 24, 1782
BOX 4 REEL 2	Mar. 24-Aug. 26, 1782
BOX 5 REEL 2	Sept. 6-Dec. 1782
BOX 6 REEL 2	Jan. 1, 1783-May 17, 1794 (includes material on the Society of the Cincinnati and George Washington letters)
BOX 7 REEL 3	Letterbooks
BOX 7 REEL 3	Mar. 1, 1780-Apr. 30, 1781
BOX 8 REEL 3	Mar. 1, 1780-Mar. 21, 1781
BOX 9 REEL 3	Mar. 10, 1780-Dec. 5, 1781
BOX 10 REEL 3	Dec. 5, 1781-Oct. 9, 1872
BOX 11 REEL 3	Dec. 9, 1781-June 25, 1783
BOX 12 REEL 3	Apr. 26, 1781-July 7, 1782
BOX 13 REEL 4	July 19, 1782-Feb. 1, 1784
BOX 14 REEL 4	1780-1783 (correspondence with chevalier de La Luzerne)
BOX 15 REEL 4	July 12, 1780-Mar. 9, 1782 (conferences on provisioning)
BOX 16 REEL 4	Inventory