

Short-Harrison-Symmes Families Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Library of Congress

Prepared by Frederick Graboski



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2010

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

Finding aid encoded by Library of
Congress Manuscript Division, 2010

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Collection Summary

Title: Short-Harrison-Symmes Families Papers

Span Dates: 1760-1878

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1800-1860)

ID No.: MSS39883

Creator: Harrison family

Creator: Short family

Creator: Simms family

Extent: 10,000 items; 30 containers plus 1 oversize; 12.4 linear feet; 3 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Correspondence, diaries, financial records, genealogical material, and printed matter collected largely by John Cleves Short (1792-1864) and relating primarily to the financial interests of the Short, Harrison, and Symmes families, especially land and land speculation in Ohio.

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

Agassiz, Louis, 1807-1873--Correspondence.

Breathitt family.

Carpenter, Samuel H., fl. 1851-1859--Correspondence.

Clay, Henry, 1777-1852--Correspondence.

Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889--Correspondence.

Dudley family.

Field, Cyrus W. (Cyrus West), 1819-1892--Correspondence.

Giles, William Branch, 1762-1830--Correspondence.

Gray, Asa, 1810-1888--Correspondence.

Harrison family.

Harrison, John Cleves Symmes, 1798-1830. John Cleves Symmes Harrison papers.

Harrison, John Scott, 1804-1878. John Scott Harrison papers.

Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841. William Henry Harrison papers.

Harrison, William Henry, 1802-1838. William Henry Harrison papers.

Henry, Robert Pryor, 1788-1826--Correspondence.

Johnson, Cave, 1793-1866--Correspondence.

Ridgely family.

Short family.

Short, Charles Wilkins, 1794-1863. Charles Wilkins Short papers.

Short, John Cleves, 1792-1864. John Cleves Short papers.

Short, Peyton, 1761-1825. Peyton Short papers.

Short, William, 1759-1849. William Short papers.

Simms family.

Symmes, John Cleves, 1742-1814. John Cleves Symmes papers.

Taylor, Anna Harrison, 1814-1865. Anna Harrison Taylor papers.

Wilkinson, James, 1757-1825--Correspondence.

Subjects

Agriculture--Ohio.

Botany.

Land speculation--Ohio.

Land tenure--Ohio.

Landowners--Ohio.
Real estate investment--Ohio.
Speculation--Ohio.

Places

Ohio--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of the Short-Harrison-Symmes families were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1944. At the same time, the Library purchased related papers of William Short that form part of the William Short Papers in the Manuscript Division.

Processing History

The papers of Short-Harrison-Symmes families were arranged and described in 1977. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the papers of [William Short](#).

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Short-Harrison-Symmes families is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Short-Harrison-Symmes families 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 three reels. 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 or reel number, Short-Harrison-Symmes Families Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the Short-Harrison-Symmes families span the years 1760-1878, with the bulk of the material dated between 1800 and 1860. Collected chiefly by John Cleves Short (1792-1864), the papers relate primarily to the families' financial interests, especially in land and in land speculation. They consist primarily of correspondence, supplemented by bills and receipts, diaries, account books, ledgers, genealogical material, and some printed matter. The collection is organized in four series: [Short-Symmes Families](#), [Harrison Family](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Microfilm](#).

The family history begins with Judge John Cleves Symmes (1742-1814) who moved to Ohio in 1786, with the hope of amassing a fortune through land speculation, a dream that was not to materialize.

His daughter Anna married William Henry Harrison in 1795; his other daughter, Maria, had in 1789 married Peyton Short, brother of the diplomat William Short. Peyton Short worked closely with his father-in-law's land ventures but also failed to achieve the hoped for success. One of his sons, Charles Wilkins Short (1794-1863), became a noted botanist; the other, John Cleves Short, studied law but pursued the family's interest in land, acting as agent for his uncle William Short, who was to become a millionaire after leaving the diplomatic service. When William Short died in 1849, he left most of his estate to his nephews Charles Wilkins Short and John Cleves Short, thereby establishing their fortunes. The connection between the Short and Harrison families was further strengthened in 1814 by the marriage between John Cleves Short and his first cousin Betsy Harrison; and for the rest of his life, he maintained a close relationship with the Harrisons, often rescuing them from financial difficulty.

The Short-Harrison-Symmes families may be seen as a network of business associates engaged primarily in land speculation. The interconnections of their business activities are documented in their letters to one another, which were collected by John Cleves Short, the author or recipient of many of them. The correspondence of his father, Peyton Short, and of his uncle, William, came into his possession through his role as executor of their estates. Similarly, he served as executor of the estates of his grandfather Symmes and of his uncle William Henry Harrison, thereby acquiring papers relating to those men. This body of family papers he transmitted to his heirs, and they were eventually purchased by the Library of Congress. (The papers of William Short are described in a separate finding aid.)

In addition to documenting the families' financial interests, the papers of the Sort-Harrison-Symmes families are a source of information about the settlement of the Ohio Valley near Cincinnati, 19th-century business practices and agriculture, and the disruptions inflicted by the outbreak of the Civil War on the financial community. There is a significant amount of information on the Harrison family, particularly about its financial condition after the President's death. John Cleves Short maintained an extensive correspondence with his brother-in-law J. Scott Harrison and sister-in-law Anna Harrison Taylor, and there are a few letters of William Henry Harrison, Jr., and John Cleves Symmes Harrison. Other families represented in the collection are Short's relatives—members of the Ridgely, Dudley, and Breathitt families.

Among the more prominent correspondents are William Branch Giles, Henry Clay, Cave Johnson, Jefferson Davis, James Wilkinson, Robert Pryor Henry, Louis Agassiz, Asa Gray, and Cyrus W. Field. The most notable of the business correspondents is Samuel H. Carpenter of Philadelphia, one of the executors of William Short's estate and business agent in the East of the heirs.

The Microfilm series consists of selected correspondence reproduced from the collection, mainly correspondence between Charles Wilkins Short and John Cleves Short.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Short-Symmes Families, 1760-1878](#)
- [Harrison Family, 1796-1863](#)
- [Miscellany](#)
- [Microfilm, 1802-1868](#)

Description of Series

| <i>Container</i> | <i>Series</i> |
|------------------|--|
| BOX 1-26 | <u>Short-Symmes Families, 1760-1878</u> |
| BOX 1-10 | <u>Correspondence, 1780-1878</u> Family and general correspondence. Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 11-26 | <u>Business Papers, 1760-1878</u> Correspondence, letterbooks, diaries, ledgers, account books, and miscellaneous business papers. . Unbound business papers arranged chronologically (Containers 11-21), followed by bound letterbooks, account books, diaries, bankbooks, and ledgers, arranged primarily by name of family member |
| BOX 27-28 | <u>Harrison Family, 1796-1863</u> |
| BOX 27 | <u>Correspondence, 1801-1863</u> Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 28 | <u>Business Papers, 1796-1856</u> Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 29-31 | <u>Miscellany</u> Fragments, drawings, poetry, writings, newspapers and printed matter, and genealogical charts. Arranged by type of material. |
| REEL 1-3 | <u>Microfilm, 1802-1868</u> Microfilm reproducing selected correspondence from the collection, including letters of Charles Wilkins Short, John Cleves Short, William Short, and John Cleves Symmes. Microfilm shelf no. 21,369 (negative microfilm shelf no. 15,101) |

Container List

| <i>Container</i> | <i>Contents</i> |
|------------------|--|
| BOX 1-26 | Short-Symmes Families, 1760-1878 |
| BOX 1-10 | Correspondence, 1780-1878 Family and general correspondence. Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 1 | 1780-1804 (5 folders) |
| BOX 2 | 1805-1811 (5 folders) |
| BOX 3 | 1812-1816 (5 folders) |
| BOX 4 | 1817-1825 (9 folders) |
| BOX 5 | 1826-1838 (8 folders) |
| BOX 6 | 1839-1847 (6 folders) |
| BOX 7 | 1848-1850 (6 folders) |
| BOX 8 | 1851-1855 (6 folders) |
| BOX 9 | 1856-1858 (5 folders) |
| BOX 10 | 1859-1862 (4 folders) |
| BOX 11-26 | Business Papers, 1760-1878 Correspondence, letterbooks, diaries, ledgers, account books, and miscellaneous business papers. . Unbound business papers arranged chronologically (Containers 11-21), followed by bound letterbooks, account books, diaries, bankbooks, and ledgers, arranged primarily by name of family member |
| BOX 11 | 1760, 1780, 1782, 1786-1792 |
| BOX 11 | 1793-1796 (4 folders) |
| BOX 12 | 1797-1801 (4 folders) |
| BOX 13 | 1802-1805 (4 folders) |
| BOX 14 | 1806-1809 (5 folders) |

Short-Symmes Families, 1760-1878

| <i>Container</i> | <i>Contents</i> |
|------------------|--|
| BOX 15 | 1810-1813 (5 folders) |
| BOX 16 | 1814-1820 (7 folders) |
| BOX 17 | 1821-1827 (4 folders) |
| BOX 18 | 1828-1838 (5 folders) |
| BOX 19 | 1839-1852 (5 folders) |
| BOX 20 | 1853-1860 (5 folders) |
| BOX 21 | 1861-1878, undated (4 folders) |
| BOX 22 | Short, Petyon |
| BOX 22 | Letterbooks, 1791-1800 |
| BOX 22 | Accounts and letterbook, 1803-1807; surveying book; and notebook |
| BOX 22 | Account books |
| BOX 22 | 1785-1792 |
| BOX 22 | 1790-1791 |
| BOX 23 | 1790-1791 |
| BOX 23 | 1792, 1795-1796 |
| BOX 23 | 1799 |
| BOX 23 | 1802-1803, 1805-1807 |
| BOX 23 | Short, John Cleves |
| BOX 23 | Diaries |
| BOX 23 | 1840, 1845-1848 |
| BOX 24 | 1849-1853, 1861 |
| BOX 24 | Bankbooks |
| BOX 24 | Short family ledgers and account books (2 vols.) |
| BOX 25 | (3 vols.) |
| BOX 26 | Short, Peyton, distillery ledger |
| BOX 26 | Short, John Cleves, ledger |
| BOX 27-28 | Harrison Family, 1796-1863 |
| BOX 27 | Correspondence, 1801-1863 Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 27 | 1801-1863, undated; negative photocopies (duplicates) (5 folders) |
| BOX 28 | Business Papers, 1796-1856 Arranged chronologically. |

Harrison Family, 1796-1863

| <i>Container</i> | <i>Contents</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| BOX 28 | 1796-1856, undated (2 folders) |
| BOX 29-31 | Miscellany Fragments, drawings, poetry, writings, newspapers and printed matter, and genealogical charts. Arranged by type of material. |
| BOX 29 | Fragments and general miscellany, 1800-1837, undated (2 folders) |
| BOX 29 | Poetry, drawings, and notebook on Sir William Temple's <i>Of Health and Long Life</i> |
| BOX 29 | "Tour to Mobile, Pensacola, etc.," by Peyton Short, and copies of writings by others, 1810-1816, undated |
| BOX 30 | Newspapers and printed matter (3 folders) |
| BOX 31 (oversize) | Genealogical charts |
| REEL 1-3 | Microfilm, 1802-1868 Microfilm reproducing selected correspondence from the collection, including letters of Charles Wilkins Short, John Cleves Short, William Short, and John Cleves Symmes. Microfilm shelf no. 21,369 (negative microfilm shelf no. 15,101) |
| REEL 1 | Correspondence |
| REEL 1 | From Charles Wilkins Short to John Cleves Short, 1814-1848 |
| REEL 2 | To Charles Wilkins Short from John Cleves, 1849-1862 |
| REEL 2 | To Charles Wilkins Short from William Short, 1811-1847 |
| REEL 2 | To Charles Wilkins Short and John Cleves Short from John Cleves Symmes, 1802-1805, and miscellaneous letters to Charles Wilkins Short, 1815-1846 |
| REEL 3 | From Charles Wilkins Short to John Cleves Short, 1849-1862 |
| REEL 3 | To Charles Wilkins Short from John Cleves Short, 1809-1848 |