

Jonathan D. Meredith Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Theresa Salazar



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: Jonathan D. Meredith Papers

Span Dates: 1795-1859

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1810-1859)

ID No.: MSS32664

Creator: Meredith, Jonathan, 1783-1872

Extent: 9,000 items ; 15 containers plus 1 oversize ; 6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Lawyer, army officer, and businessman of Baltimore, Md. Family and general correspondence, legal files, financial papers, and other material relating chiefly to Meredith's associations with the Savings Bank of Baltimore and the Bank of the United States; the War of 1812; impeachment proceedings against James Hawkins Peck; shipping and trade with Europe and South America; and settlement of the estates of Charles Carroll and Robert Oliver.

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

Aspinwall, William Henry, 1807-1875--Correspondence.
Calderón de la Barca, Ángel--Correspondence.
Carroll, Charles, 1737-1832--Estate.
Cogswell, Joseph Green, 1786-1871--Correspondence.
Duane, William J. (William John), 1780-1865--Correspondence.
Gilmor, Robert, 1748-1822--Correspondence.
Graham, John, 1774-1820--Correspondence.
Hanson, Alexander Contee, 1786-1819--Correspondence.
Harper, Robert Goodloe, 1765-1825--Correspondence.
Hone, Philip, 1780-1851--Correspondence.
Howard, Benjamin C. (Benjamin Chew), 1791-1872--Correspondence.
Howland, Gardiner Green, 1787-1851--Correspondence.
Johnson, Reverdy, 1796-1876--Correspondence.
McDonogh, John, 1779-1850--Correspondence.
Meredith family.
Meredith, Gilmor, 1824-1899--Correspondence.
Meredith, Jonathan D., 1783-1872.
Meredith, William M. (William Morris), 1799-1873--Correspondence.
Ogden, David Bayard, 1775-1849--Correspondence.
Oliver, Robert, 1757?-1834--Estate.
Pattison, Granville Sharp, 1791-1851--Correspondence.
Pattison, John, 1782-1867--Correspondence.
Peck, James Hawkins, ca. 1790-1836.
Randall, Alexander, 1803-1881--Correspondence.
Shepherd, R. D. (Rezin Davis), 1784-1865--Correspondence.
Stansbury, Arthur J. (Arthur Joseph), 1781-1865--Correspondence.
Wood, William B. (William Burke), 1779-1861--Correspondence.

Organizations

Bank of the United States (1816-1836)
Baring Brothers & Co.
Savings Bank of Baltimore.

Subjects

Banks and banking--Maryland--Baltimore.
Banks and banking--United States.
Banks and banking.
Impeachments.
International trade.
Mines and mineral resources--Maryland.
Shipping--Europe.
Shipping--South America.
Shipping--United States.
Transportation--Maryland.

Places

Baltimore (Md.)--Commerce.
Baltimore (Md.)--Social life and customs.
China--Commerce--History--19th century.
Europe--Commerce--United States.
Great Britain--Colonies--Asia.
Guangzhou (China)--Commerce.
Guangzhou (China)--Description and travel.
Guangzhou (China)--Social life and customs.
Maryland--Commerce.
Maryland--Social life and customs.
New York (State)--Social life and customs.
Saratoga Springs (N.Y.)--Social life and customs.
South America--Commerce--United States.
South America.
United States--Commerce--Europe.
United States--Commerce--History--19th century.
United States--Commerce--South America.
United States--History--War of 1812.

Occupations

Army officers.
Businessmen.
Lawyers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Jonathan D. Meredith, lawyer, army officer, and businessman of Baltimore, Md., were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1903.

Processing History

The papers of Jonathan D. Meredith were arranged and described in 1985. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the papers of William Taylor, merchant, from Baltimore, who was also engaged in foreign and domestic commerce. Containers 64-67 (1822-1858) of the Taylor Papers are especially pertinent.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Jonathan D. Meredith 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.

Preferred Citation

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

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1784, Oct. 4	Born, Philadelphia, Pa.
1805	Moved to Baltimore, Md., to practice law
1806	Married Hannah Haslitt (died 1878)
circa 1820s-1830s	Lawyer, associated with the Bank of Baltimore
1831	Assisted William Wirt as junior counsel in the impeachment trial of Judge James Hawkins Peck
circa 1840s-1850s	Lawyer associated with the Baltimore branch of the Bank of the United States
1872, Feb. 25	Died, Baltimore, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Jonathan D. Meredith (1783-1872) cover the period 1795-1859, although the material begins to bulk largest in 1810. The papers consist of correspondence, legal and financial records, and South American subject files. The collection is organized into six series: [Family Correspondence](#), [General Correspondence](#), [Legal Files](#), [Financial Files](#), [South American File](#), and [Oversize](#).

The [Family Correspondence](#) describes the domestic life of a nineteenth-century Baltimore family that spent its summers in Saratoga, New York. Of special note are the letters of Meredith's son, Gilmor, who lived in Canton (Guangzhou), China, for several years as an employee of Baring Brothers & Co. of London. Gilmor Meredith's lengthy letters provide a wealth of information about China, describing in rich detail customs, landscapes, and products, with comments about British colonialism and the tensions between the British and the Chinese.

[General Correspondence](#) between Jonathan Meredith and his business associates and friends comprises approximately one-half the collection. As a legal consultant for the Bank of Baltimore and the local branch of the Bank of the United States, Meredith dealt with the gamut of legal questions involving banking and commerce in Maryland. He was a well respected lawyer, and consequently his advice was sought by banks, insurance companies, and private individuals. The majority of this correspondence deals with local Maryland issues, but many letters are from professional associates throughout the United States as well as a few from Europe.

Among the subjects discussed in the [General Correspondence](#) are foreign and domestic trade, the development of transportation systems in Maryland, and the exploitation of mineral resources in the state. The correspondence between John Graham and Meredith provides an account of the organization of a new coal company in Cumberland as well as other related enterprises.

The [General Correspondence](#) series also records the routine activities of banking such as the collection of debts, the settlement of accounts, and the sale of property, which, in many instances, led to court cases. Because the General

Correspondence richly supplements materials in the [Legal Files](#) series, subjects within this correspondence may often be traced through consultation of the [Legal Files](#). Also in the [General Correspondence](#) are numerous letters from defendants, plaintiffs, and their lawyers.

Among the more frequent of Meredith's correspondents are such personal friends as Robert Gilmor, a Baltimore merchant; Granville Sharp Pattison, an anatomist and professor at the University of Maryland; Granville's brother, John Pattison of Glasgow, Scotland; and R. D. Shepherd, a New Orleans and Boston shipping merchant. Shepherd's letters written in 1815 give firsthand accounts of the British attack on New Orleans.

In 1831, Meredith was junior counsel to William Wirt in the defense of Judge James Hawkins Peck in impeachment proceedings before the United States House of Representatives. Although there is no correspondence dealing directly with the case, letters of Arthur J. Stansbury, publisher of the proceedings, discuss the publication of the arguments by Wirt and Meredith and mention the trial's outcome in favor of Judge Peck.

Other notable correspondents in the [General Correspondence](#) include William Henry Aspinwall, Ángel Calderón de la Barca, Joseph Green Cogswell, William J. Duane, Alexander Contee Hanson, Robert Goodloe Harper, Philip Hone, Benjamin C. Howard, Gardiner Green Howland, Reverdy Johnson, John McDonogh, William M. Meredith, David Bayard Ogden, Alexander Randall, and William B. Wood.

Although Meredith's own letters do not constitute a complete file of responses to his correspondents, they give a clear impression of the variety of activities in which he was engaged.

The [Legal Files](#) cover the sundry activities connected directly or peripherally with banking. Thus, the case of the *Union Bank of Tennessee v. Bank of Baltimore* (1833-1834) sheds light on interstate contractual agreements between banks, and the undated legal opinions of Meredith, written for the Bank of Baltimore, provide a sampling of legal principles affecting banks. Although Meredith was associated with the Bank of the United States for many years, materials documenting that institution's business are scant. However, in many of the [Legal Files](#) various banking and insurance companies are parties to suits.

A persistent theme within the [Legal Files](#) is shipping and trade with Europe and South America. A sample of the cases includes *Mactier v. Wirgman* (1811-1837), regarding access of a colonial ship to European ports; *Sheppard v. Taylor* (1830-1831), involving libel against the owners of the ship *Warren* for planning to smuggle goods out of the Spanish province of Chile; and the case of the ship *Damascus* (1853), concerning an insurance claim after the ship was discovered to be unseaworthy in Cuba.

A number of legal documents, such as wills, contracts, and suits between individuals, are also present in the [Legal files](#). There are also papers dealing with the settlement of the Charles Carroll estate (1833-1837) and the Robert Oliver estate (1835-1843), two cases in which substantial personal property was at stake. Reverdy Johnson served as a lawyer in both of these cases. Johnson was also involved in suits of the *Bank of Baltimore v. William Bosley* (1827-1829) and the Warren Factory (1829).

The [South American File](#) contains legal contracts and other documents, along with letters, that relate to the seizure of Spanish and Portuguese ships sailing in South American waters. The documents concern Venezuela, Chile, and Argentina (called Oriental Republic) soon after their revolt against the Spanish crown. There is one document relating to a proposed trading expedition to Veracruz, Mexico.

[Oversize](#) consists of shipping articles for the ship *Fame* of Baltimore, dated 1806.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Family Correspondence, 1810-1859](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1797-1859](#)
- [Legal Files, 1795-1859](#)
- [Financial Papers, 1799-1859](#)
- [South American File](#)
- [Oversize, 1806](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
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BOX 2-10	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1797-1859</u></p> <p>Personal and business letters. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and thereunder chronologically, with unidentified letters filed at the end.</p>
BOX 11-14	<p><u>Legal Files, 1795-1859</u></p> <p>Opinions, briefs, wills, indentures, memoranda, notes, and printed matter. Arranged chronologically with documents relating to the same case in the same folder, filed by the date of earliest document. Undated material is filed at the end of the series.</p>
BOX 14-15	<p><u>Financial Papers, 1799-1859</u></p> <p>Bills, receipts, and statements of accounts. Arranged according to the person or organization to which the material refers. In rough chronological order.</p>
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