
Nathanael Greene Collection of Correspondence: Finding Aid

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Overview of the Collection

Title: Nathanael Greene Collection of Correspondence

Dates (inclusive): 1775-1786

Collection Number: mssGR, etc.

Creator: Greene, Nathanael, 1742-1786.

Extent: 2 boxes and 15 volumes

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department

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Abstract: This collection contains original letters of American Revolutionary War general Nathanael Greene (1742-1786), largely with Robert Morris and Henry Lee, and approximately 2700 transcriptions of Greene's military correspondence gathered by his grandson George Washington Greene (1811-1883).

Language: English.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Nathanael Greene Collection of Correspondence, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Acquisition Information

Purchased from various sources.

Greene's correspondence with Robert Morris was purchased from the Anderson Gallery George P. Marsh sale, March 19-20, 1919.

The correspondence with Henry Lee was purchased from George D. Smith, 1919.

Miscellaneous items came from the American Art Association, the Anderson Galleries, Maggs Brothers, and others.

Biographical Note

Nathanael Greene (1742-1786) was an American Revolutionary general. He commanded the Southern Department of the Continental Army from December 1780 to December 1781.

Scope and Content

This collection of Nathanael Greene's correspondence was assembled at the Huntington Library from pieces acquired from various sources prior to 1927. The collection consists of 107 pieces of original correspondence of Greene, largely with Robert Morris and Henry Lee, and more than 2600 transcriptions of Greene's military correspondence gathered by his grandson historian George Washington Greene. These were gathered from many sources, public and private, by George Washington Greene for publication purposes, but were never used.

Subject matter of the correspondence includes: the American Revolution and military events; activities of Congress; the Southern campaign (1781-1784), with letters related to operations of General Greene's army and subsistence and pay of the army; and Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee's resignation from the Continental Army.

Persons represented by three or more pieces: Nathanael Green (47 pieces); Thaddeus Kosciuszko (3 pieces); Henry Lee (12 pieces); and Francis Marion (3 pieces).

Some notable items:

- Greene, Nathanael. Letter to Silas Deane. New Windsor, 1779 July 4. "... You did me the honor to write me by General Arnold upon the subject of his tryal.... I agree with you in sentiment that it is a very discouraging circumstance to officers in public Service to see that years of hard duty, constant fatigue, and perpetual danger, can be so soon forgotten... and that a little error either real or imaginary is sufficient to erase the very

remembrance of the most important service."

- Pettit, Charles. Letter to General Greene. 1781 February 18. "... Capt. Paul Jones is at length arrived in 8 Weeks from France.... He has probably brought a supply of Arms, but I believe no Cloathing. He had a mutinous crew of British Seamen many of whom he has brought in hopped, & I am told it required great vigilance & care to bring the ship to this port instead of New York...." [Philadelphia],
- Greene, Nathanael. Letter to Horatio Gates. 1781 October 5. "... Since we parted this country has undergone a variety of changes. We have fought frequently, and bled freely. Fortune has not been our friend. At Camden not far from the ground where you fought Lord Cornwallis we met with a repulse by Lord Rawdon.... How cruel fortune, how uncertain Military fame. The repulse mingled our misfortunes together and as ours was last it drew a veil over yours...."
- Greene, Nathanael. Letter to Henry Lee. [1782 January 28]. "... I have beheld with extreme anxiety for sometime a growing discontent in your mind.... Whatever may be the source of your wounds I wish it was in my power to heal them.... I am far from agreeing with you in opinion that the public will not do you justice.... I believe few officers either in America or Europe are held in higher estimation...."
- Lee, Henry. Letter to General Greene. 1782 February 13. "... The ceremony of parting from you & my friends in the army is so affecting that I wish to decline it personally & I hope you will consider me as you always have experienced me your devoted friend. Whenever you think me necessary to you, I will come at the risk of everything in this world.... I pray most fervently for your glory & happiness...."
- Greene, Nathanael. Letter in reply to Robert Morris's of Mar. 14, 1783 ([supra](#)). 1783 April 20. "... You and everybody else must and will suffer obloquy who serve the public. It is a tax which every one must pay for eminence in public life. Bear it with dignity and despise what is neither just or true."
- Kosciuszko, Thaddeus. Letter to General Greene. Warsaw, 1786 January 20. "... Do write me my dear General of the Situation of your Country because I heard many bad things; however when our King have asked me I gave him the best description I could.... As to myself am in good health, something rich, and well as I am, so much am attached to your Country, that I would fly this very moment even in the Balloon to embrace you could I obtain honorable rank in your Country's Army...."

The papers are published or referenced in: The papers of General Nathanael Greene / Richard K. Showman, editor, Margaret Cobb and Robert E. McCarthy, assistant editors, assisted by Joyce Boulind, Noel P. Conlon, and Nathaniel N. Shipton (Chapel Hill : Published for the Rhode Island Historical Society [by] the University of North Carolina Press, [c1976-c2005].

Removed or Separated Material

- The letters from Robert Morris to Nathanael Greene have been filed in [Robert Morris Collection of Papers](#). (Call number: mssMorris papers)
- United States. Continental Army. [Continental Army in the American Revolution, 1780-1782](#). (Call number: mssHM 1649)
- [Orderly book of Nathanael Greene, 1781, Apr. 1 - July 25](#). (Call number: mssHM 683)

Arrangement

Organized in the following manner:

1. Original letters (107 pieces, 2 boxes)
2. Copies of military correspondence collected by George Washington Greene + chronological index (incomplete) (15 volumes)

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

Subjects

Greene, Nathanael, 1742-1786 -- Archives.
Lee, Henry, 1756-1818 -- Correspondence.
Morris, Robert, 1734-1806 -- Correspondence.
United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783 -- Sources.

Forms/Genres

Letters (correspondence) -- United States Revolution, 1775-1783.
Military records -- United States Revolution, 1775-1783.

Additional Contributors

Greene, George Washington, 1811-1883, collector.
Lee, Henry, 1756-1818.
Marsh, George P. (George Perkins), 1801-1882, former owner.
Morris, Robert, 1734-1806, correspondent.

Original letters

Box 1

Letters, 1775-1786

This box contains the following items: HM 1762, HM 5510, HM 5548, HM 8054, HM 8055, HM 8056, HM 8058, HM 8071, HM 8072, HM 8078, HM 8079, HM 8089, HM 8090, HM 8100, HM 8102, HM 8104, HM 8109, HM 8110, HM 8114, HM 8125, HM 8126, HM 8145, HM 8146, HM 8152, HM 8166, HM 8170, HM 8189, HM 22378, HM 22380, HM 22383, HM 22391, HM 22398, HM 22406, HM 22415, HM 22483, HM 22518, HM 22545, HM 22649, HM 22655, HM 22677, HM 22686, HM 22690, HM 22691, HM 22694, HM 22697, HM 22698, HM 22699, HM 22700, HM 22701, HM 22704, HM 22706, HM 22707, HM 22708, HM 22709, HM 22710, HM 22712, HM 22715, HM 22716, HM 22718, HM 22719, HM 22721, HM 22722, HM 22723, HM 22725, HM 22731, HM 22734, HM 22735, HM 22736, HM 22737, HM 22738, HM 22739, HM 22740, HM 22741, HM 22742, HM 22743, HM 22746, HM 22747, HM 22749, HM 22773, HM 23424, HM 23425, HM 23426.

Box 2

Oversize letters

This box contains the following items: HM 5512, HM 5524, HM 8101, HM 8185, HM 8237, HM 20995, HM 22034, HM 22377, HM 22381, HM 22384, HM 22446, HM 22449, HM 22620, HM 22702, HM 22717, HM 22730, HM 22762, HM 22763, HM 22764, HM 22765, HM 22766, HM 22768, HM 22785, HM 23433.

Copies of Military Correspondence

These volumes contain handwritten transcriptions in multiple hands and on various types of paper that have been tipped into the volumes, with an index.

Volume 1	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1775-1776 GR 1-96
Volume 2	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1777 GR 97-147
Volume 3	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1778 GR 148-223
Volume 4	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1779 GR 224-498
Volume 5	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1780 January -October GR 499-700
Volume 6	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1780 October-December GR 701-846
Volume 7	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1781 January-March GR 847-1144
Volume 8	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1781 April-June GR 1145-1405
Volume 9	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1781 July-September GR 1406-1587
Volume 10	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1781 October-December GR 1588-1733
Volume 11	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1782 January-March GR 1734-2003
Volume 12	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1782 June-December GR 2004-2311
Volume 13	Letters from Nathanael Greene. 1783-1786 GR 2312-2530
Volume 14	Letters to Nathanael Greene from the SK Collection [Skipworth Collection?]. 1775-1782 GR 2531
Volume Index	Chronological index of letters June 4, 1775-March 31, 1782