Overview of the Collection

Title: Caleb Leach Papers

Dates (inclusive): 1787-1940

Bulk dates: 1787-1889

Collection Number: mssLeach papers

Creator: Leach, Caleb, 1755-1837.

Extent: 225 items. 1 box.

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

1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
Email: reference@huntington.org
URL: http://www.huntington.org

Abstract: This collection contains the papers of American watchmaker and water-works builder Caleb Leach (1755-1837). The majority of the collection deals with Leach’s invention, the screw auger, and his various business ventures. There is also some material related to Leach’s family into the beginning of the 20th century. This small collection includes business records, correspondence, and other miscellaneous material.

Language: English.

Access

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

Publication Rights

The Huntington Library does not require that researchers request permission to quote from or publish images of this material, nor does it charge fees for such activities. The responsibility for identifying the copyright holder, if there is one, and obtaining necessary permissions rests with the researcher.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. Caleb Leach Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Burndy Library Collection, Gift of Dibner Family, November 2006. Previously MSS Collection 18.

Biographical Note

Watchmaker, water-works builder, and businessman Caleb Leach (1755-1837) was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1755. As a young man, Leach was apprenticed to a watch maker. In July 1775, Caleb served for eight months in Captain James Keith’s company in the 28th regiment, commanded by Colonel Paul D. Sargent. He was discharged from the Army in 1780 having served in various different regiments during the Revolutionary War. Leach returned to Halifax, Massachusetts, as a clock/watch maker. In 1782, Caleb married Abigail Tinkham (died 1818); they had eight children: Ebenezer (1782-1796), Abigail (1785-1795), Caleb, Jr. (1786-), Ephraim (1788-1855), Samuel (1792-1838), Ebenezer (1797-1861), and Abigail (1802-1803).

In 1796, Leach, with Joshua Thomas and others, formed the Plymouth Aqueduct Company and constructed the Plymouth water works, said to have been the first water-works constructed in America. Leach was contracted to build the works, and he invented a screw auger and machine to bore out logs for its conduits. He patented his invention on April 13, 1799. In 1799, at the invitation of Aaron Burr, DeWitt Clinton and others, Leach built the Manhattan water works and later the first water works in Philadelphia and then Boston.

Around 1804, Leach, his youngest son Dr. Ebenezer Leach, and his brother Ephraim Leach, purchased a large tract of land in Owego, New York, where the family established Leach’s Mills, a grist and saw mill complex.

Following the death of his wife, Leach went to live with his son Ebenezer in Utica, New York, where he died in 1837 at the age of 82.

Scope and Content

This collection contains the papers of American watchmaker and water-works builder Caleb Leach (1755-1837). The majority of the collection deals with Leach’s invention, the screw auger, and his various business ventures. There is also some material related to Leach’s family into the beginning of the 20th century. The collection includes business records, correspondence and other miscellaneous material.
The Business records include two account books, correspondence, receipts, bills, business contracts, documents dealing with several of Leach’s projects including the Manhattan Company, and the water-works in Plymouth, Boston and Philadelphia, indentures, and contracts with manufacturers granting them exclusive rights to produce the augers. Several of these documents contain details about the screw auger and how it works, types of lumber used for the various projects, and the price of materials.

The Correspondence includes personal letters by various Leach, Tinkham, and Gale family members. There are also several postcards, miscellaneous items, newspapers and clippings and empty envelopes.

**Arrangement**

Arranged in 3 series:

1. Business records
2. Correspondence
3. Miscellaneous materials

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library’s Online Catalog.

**Subjects**
Leach, Caleb, 1755-1837 -- Archives.
Leach family.
Businessmen -- United States -- Archives.
Drilling and boring machinery.
Inventors -- United States -- Archives.
Lumber. Mills and mill-works -- History -- Sources.
Screw-cutting machines.
Waterworks -- Massachusetts.
Waterworks -- New York.
Waterworks -- Pennsylvania.
Boston (Mass.)
New York (N.Y.)
Owego (N.Y.)
Philadelphia (Pa.)
Plymouth (Mass.)

**Forms/Genres**

Business records -- United States -- 18th century.
Business records -- United States -- 19th century.
Contracts -- United States -- 18th century.
Contracts -- United States -- 19th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 18th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 19th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 20th century.

**Additional Contributors**
Burndy Library, former owner.

---

Box 1  
Caleb Leach papers

---

Business records

Folder 1  
Account Book (1799-1816). 1 item. The majority of the notebook is made up of blank pages.
### Folder 2
**Account Book (1801-1805).** 1 item. The majority of the notebook is made up of blank pages.

### Folder 3
**Business Records (1787-1797).** 6 items.

### Folder 4
**Business Records (1799).** 31 items.

### Folder 5
**Business Records (1800-1802).** 13 items.

### Folder 6
**Business Records (1803-1805).** 11 items.

### Folder 7
**Business Records (1806-1809).** 14 items.

### Folder 8
**Business Records (1811-1908).** 15 items.

### Correspondence

### Folder 9
**Correspondence, Family (1873-1929).** 19 items.

### Folder 10
**Correspondence, Personal (1817-1825).** 20 items.

### Folder 11
**Gale Family Correspondence and Documents (1889-1910).** 17 items.

### Miscellaneous Items

### Folder 12
**Miscellaneous Items (1826-1927).** 24 items.

### Folder 13
**Newspapers and Clippings (1842-1874).** 8 items.

### Folder 14
**Postcards (1912-1930).** 9 items.

### Folder 15
**Empty Envelopes (1883-1940).** 36 items.