

**Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum  
Record Unit 270  
Marchant Family Collection  
By Michael Coulter**

**Descriptive Summary**

**Repository:** Martha's Vineyard Museum

**Call No.**

**Title:** Marchant Family Collection

**Creator:** Michael Coulter

**Quantity:** .5 Cubic Feet

**Abstract:** This collection of legal and business documents involving the Marchant family span the years of 1782-1838. Many of the documents involve one member of the family, Cornelius Marchant, the majority of which are legal notices to early members of the island community. Also included are lists of goods for personal and business needs, a diary of Mary Marchant's, and a biography written by Dr. Charles E. Banks for Henry Marchant in 1916.

**Acquisition Information:** The ..... were acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum in \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

**Processing Information:** Michael Coulter

**Access Restrictions:** none

**Use Restrictions:** none

**Preferred Citation for Publication:** Marchant Family Collection, Martha's Vineyard Museum, Record Unit 270

**Index Terms**

Cornelius Marchant, 1795-1832

Justice of the Peace, Edgartown, Massachusetts, 1808-1832

Henry Marchant, 1741-1796

**Series and Subseries Arrangement**

Series I. Family Papers

Subseries A. Mary Marchant

Subseries B. Other family members

Series II. Cornelius Marchant, 1791-1832

Subseries A. Correspondence, 1795-1832

Subseries B. Business Papers

Series III. Court Papers of Cornelius Marchant

## **Biography/Historical Note:**

John Marchant came to America in 1638, moving frequently before his death sometime before 1670. His son, also John Marchant, acquired land on the island and is assumed to have moved here in 1682. There have been several prominent Marchants since that time. Edgar Marchant, for example, founded the Vineyard Gazette in 1847.

“The Vineyard’s most distinguished son”, Henry Marchant (1741-1796), whose mother and father died in 1745 and 1747 respectively was raised by the family of Isabel Ward, daughter of the Governor of Rhode Island, and second wife of his father, Huxford Marchant. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1762, and became a lawyer. He was the Attorney General of Rhode Island 1770-1777, and was chosen to be a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1777. After the American Revolution President Washington appointed Henry as a Judge of the United States Court in Rhode Island.

The most prominent figure in this collection is Cornelius Marchant. Cornelius served as Justice of the Peace in Edgartown for the years 1806-1831. Justices of the Peace are charged with the task of settling misdemeanor cases, as well as debt disputes. Many of Cornelius’s legal documents deal with the demands of his court to have someone pay someone else an amount of money.

## **Scope and Content Note:**

The Marchant Family Collection consists of a variety of original documents which are organized chronologically by family member . There is a year-long diary that belonged to Mary Marchant during the year 1862. Many of the documents in this collection are from Cornelius Marchant’s time serving as Justice of the Peace (1806-1831) and many island names such as Pease, Norton, Daggett, and Coffin are mentioned. There are additional references to Cornelius Marchant in other archival finding aids relating to his time serving as a clerk under George Athearn, Judge of Probate and Wills.

## **Series Descriptions**

### **Series I. Family Papers**

#### **Subseries A. Mary Marchant**

Folder 1. Diary, 1862

Folder 2. Correspondence, 1839-1843

#### **Subseries B. Other family members**

Folder 3. Gamaliel Marchant, 1782

Folder 4. George Marchant, 1788-1825

Folder 5. John Marchant, 1790

Folder 6. Henry H. Marchant, 1833-1874  
Folder 7. Hubbard Marchant, 1846  
Folder 8. Edward D. Marchant, 1847-1928  
Folder 9. Allen Marchant, 1865  
Folder 10. C. B. Marchant, 1900-1904  
Folder 11. George L. Marchant, 1902-1903

**Series II. Cornelius Marchant, 1791-1832**

**Subseries A. Correspondence, 1795-1832**

Folder 12. Incoming Correspondence, 1805-1832  
Folder 13. Outgoing Correspondence, 1795-1825

**Subseries B. Business Papers**

Folder 14. 1791-1831

**Series III. Court Papers of Cornelius Marchant**

Folder 15: Court Papers, 1808-1832