

Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum Record Unit 370

Colonial Documents Collection

By Julia Novakovic

Descriptive Summary

Repository: Martha's Vineyard Museum

Call No.

Title: Colonial Documents Collection

Creator: various

Quantity: 1.5 cubic feet

Abstract: The Colonial Document Collection is a result of various donors throughout the 20th century. Ranging from 1652 to 1776, this compilation contains important records such as legal documents, court testimonies, wills, details on land transactions, religious sermons, marriage intentions, promissory notes, and bills and receipts.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information: The Colonial Document Collection was acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum throughout the 20th century by various donors.

Processing Information: Julia Novakovic

Access Restrictions: none

Use Restrictions: none

Preferred citation for publication: Martha's Vineyard Museum, Colonial Documents Collection, Record Unit 370.

Index Terms

-Martha's Vineyard	-Butler, Thomas
-Colonial Period	-Dudley, Joseph
-Mayhew, Governor Thomas	-Coffin, Enoch
-Mayhew, Matthew	-Norton, Peter
-Daggett, Hannah	-Smith, Benjamin
-Daggett, John	-Wollon, Elisha

Series and Subseries Arrangement

Series I: Pre-1700

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Land Transactions
- Subseries C: Wills
- Subseries D: Order Letters and Receipts

Series II: 1700-1709

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Court Documents
- Subseries C: Land Transactions
- Subseries D: Bills and Receipts

Series III: 1710-1719

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Land Transactions
- Subseries C: Letters
- Subseries D: Bills and Receipts

Series IV: 1720-1729

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Wills and Estate Inventories
- Subseries C: Religious Documents
- Subseries D: Bills and Receipts

Series V: 1730-1739

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Court Documents
- Subseries C: Land Transactions
- Subseries D: Religious Documents
- Subseries E: Letters
- Subseries F: Bills and Receipts

Series VI: 1740-1749

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Court Documents
- Subseries C: Wills
- Subseries D: Religious Documents
- Subseries E: Letters
- Subseries F: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts

Series VII: 1750-1759

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Court Documents
- Subseries C: Land Transactions
- Subseries D: Indentured Servant Contracts
- Subseries E: Religious Documents
- Subseries F: Letters
- Subseries G: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts

Series VIII: 1760-1769

- Subseries A: Legal Documents
- Subseries B: Court Documents
- Subseries C: Land Transactions
- Subseries D: Wills and Estate Inventories
- Subseries E: Religious Documents
- Subseries F: Letters
- Subseries G: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts
- Series IX: 1770-1776
 - Subseries A: Legal Documents
 - Subseries B: Court Documents
 - Subseries C: Land Transactions
 - Subseries D: Indentured Servant Contracts
 - Subseries E: Wills and Estate Inventories
 - Subseries F: Religious Documents
 - Subseries G: Letters
 - Subseries H: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts
 - Subseries I: Miscellaneous
- Series X: Undated
 - Subseries A: Court Documents
 - Subseries B: Land Transactions and Estate Inventories
 - Subseries C: Letters
 - Subseries D: Bills and Receipts
 - Subseries E: Miscellaneous
- Series XI: Document Fragments
 - Subseries A: Dated
 - Subseries B: Undated

Historical Note:

This collection of Colonial Documents ranges from legal and court documents to wills and financial papers. The time span is from 1662 until 1776, when Martha's Vineyard was still considered a colony of England. The materials were obtained by the Dukes County Historical Society [later the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society] throughout the 20th century.

Scope and Content Note:

The Colonial Document Collection is a result of various donors throughout the

20th century. Encompassing 1662 to 1776, this artificial compilation contains important records such as legal documents, court testimonies, wills, details on land transactions, religious sermons, marriage intentions, promissory notes, and bills and receipts.

Within this record unit, several classifications of documents are given. "Legal documents" usually refers to notarized papers, such as appointments or warrants. "Court documents" represents court dockets, the decision on court cases, testimonies, and petitions brought to the General Court. The majority of letters in this collection are personal correspondence, although a few may also be of a business nature. Subseries entitled "Land transactions" do not house the official deeds to properties, but rather deal with boundary disputes or the receipts from the sale of lands. Original deeds from this time period are currently housed in Box 130B [Deeds].

Of note in this collection are several documents with signatures of Governor Thomas Mayhew, and later his grandson Matthew Mayhew, from the late 17th century. Wills and estate inventories throughout the colonial period are also of interest. A propaganda booklet from London, printed in 1774, acknowledges that there is tension between the colonies and Britain due to taxation, but does not mention the impending war.

Series Descriptions

Series I: Pre-1700

This Series contains materials from 1662-1699. Within the Legal Documents, many papers deal with official land titles, notarized payments, and other "signed and sealed" items. The subseries on Land Transactions includes a transcription of land plots in Edgartown from 1659, as well as written materials concerning land disputes and boundaries. In the third subseries, there is a 1671 will of Nicholas Butler [first of his name on the Vineyard] as well as the 1679 will of his widow, Joyce Butler. Finally, the last subseries houses an order letter to Boston from Matthew Mayhew in 1691 as well as a 1693 shipping receipt. Several of these documents show the signatures of Governor Thomas Mayhew and later his grandson Matthew.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

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Folder 1: Pre-1700: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Land Transactions

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Folder 2: Pre-1700: Land Transactions

Subseries C: Wills

Box 1 of 3

Folder 3: Pre-1700: Wills

Subseries D: Order Letters and Receipts

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Folder 4: Pre-1700: Order Letters and Receipts

Series II: 1700-1709

This Series contains materials from 1700-1709. Within the Legal Documents, many papers deal with notarized payments, an appointment of Joseph Dudley as “Captain of the Indians” in 1706, and other signed and sealed items. The subseries on Court Documents lists a report of the goings-on of the General Court in Boston from 1704 and a voted petition in Edgartown from 1705. The third subseries on Land Transactions concerns a testimony about land at Chickamoo in 1703. Finally, bills and receipts from 1706 complete this series.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

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Folder 5: 1700-1709: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Court Documents

Box 1 of 3

Folder 6: 1700-1709: Court Documents

Subseries C: Land Transactions

Box 1 of 3

Folder 7: 1700-1709: Land Transactions

Subseries D: Bills and Receipts

Box 1 of 3

Folder 8: 1700-1709: Bills and Receipts

Series III: 1710-1719

This Series contains materials from 1710-1719. The Legal Documents subseries houses notarized testimonials concerning property boundaries and assault charges. The second subseries on Land Transactions holds a 1710 claim about a land dispute. Letters from 1713 and 1719 are included in the third subseries. Lastly, many bills and receipts from 1712-1718 complete the series.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

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Folder 9: 1710-1719: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Land Transactions

Box 1 of 3

Folder 10: 1710-1719: Land Transactions

Subseries C: Letters

Box 1 of 3

Folder 11: 1710-1719: Letters

Subseries D: Bills and Receipts

Box 1 of 3

Folder 12: 1710-1719: Bills and Receipts

Series IV: 1720-1729

This Series contains materials from 1720-1729. Within the Legal Documents subseries are notarized payment notes, land claims, and a warrant. The second subseries houses the 1727 will of Thomas Butler and the estate inventory of Peter Ray from 1728. The Religious Documents subseries has a signed declaration of prayer for Benjamin Luce, leaving the Vineyard for a voyage in 1728. Finally, various bills and receipts from 1722-1729 complete this series.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

Box 1 of 3

Folder 13: 1720-1729: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Wills and Estate Inventories

Box 1 of 3

Folder 14: 1720-1729: Wills and Estate Inventories

Subseries C: Religious Documents

Box 1 of 3

Folder 15: 1720-1729: Religious Documents

Subseries D: Bills and Receipts

Box 1 of 3

Folder 16: 1720-1729: Bills

Folder 17: 1720-1729: Receipts

Series V: 1730-1739

This Series contains materials from 1730-1739. The Legal Documents subseries holds a 1737 warrant and various notarized payments. The second subseries on Court Documents has petitions, court rulings, and a docket from 1737. Within Land Transactions, there are boundary listings and a 1731 lease for a house in Chilmark. Religious documents include a request for prayers. The fifth subseries comprises letters from 1730-1738. Finally, many bills and receipts from this decade complete the series.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

Box 1 of 3

Folder 18: 1730-1739: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Court Documents

Box 1 of 3

Folder 19: 1730-1739: Court Documents

Subseries C: Land Transactions

Box 1 of 3

Folder 20: 1730-1739: Land Transactions

Subseries D: Religious Documents

Box 1 of 3

Folder 21: 1730-1739: Religious Documents

Subseries E: Letters

Box 1 of 3

Folder 22: 1730-1739: Letters

Subseries F: Bills and Receipts

Box 1 of 3
Folder 23: 1730-1739: Bills
Folder 24: 1730-1739: Receipts

Series VI: 1740-1749

This series contains materials from 1740-1749. The Legal Documents subseries holds notarized payments, the sale of a slave in 1747, and other “signed and sealed” documents. The second subseries, Court Documents, holds a long docket of cases from 1742 as well as a 1744 petition to the court concerning debts. Wills of Ebenezer Norton [1746] and Edward Cottle [1748] are housed in the third subseries. Under Religious Documents, there is an affirmation of faith and a paper certifying the transfer of the McGee family from Chilmark to another church. The fifth subseries contains personal letters from 1740-1749. Finally, various promissory notes, bills, and receipts from this decade complete the series.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

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Folder 25: 1740-1749: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Court Documents

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Folder 26: 1740-1749: Court Documents

Subseries C: Wills

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Folder 27: 1740-1749: Wills

Subseries D: Religious Documents

Box 1 of 3
Folder 28: 1740-1749: Religious Documents

Subseries E: Letters

Box 2 of 3
Folder 1: 1740-1749: Letters

Subseries F: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts

Box 2 of 3
Folder 2: 1740-1749: Promissory Notes
Folder 3: 1740-1749: Bills
Folder 4: 1740-1749: Receipts

Series VII: 1750-1759

This series contains materials from 1750-1759. The Legal Documents subseries holds a warrant, an order to Dukes County from the Massachusetts Bay Colony House of Representatives, a 1753 agreement to pay a pregnant woman, licenses to leave the province, and other “signed and sealed” documents. The second section on Court Documents has decisions of court cases, information from the Judge of the Probate of Wills in 1759, requests to appear in court, and a 1756 speech read to the Court of Dukes

County. The third subseries includes information on land boundaries and the value of several estate properties. An indenture contract from 1757 is housed in the fourth section. Under Religious Documents is a printed booklet entitled "A Sermon Preached at Marshfield, Sept. 5. 1759" as well as marriage intentions from this decade. The subseries on Letters comprises personal correspondence from 1753-1757. Finally, various promissory notes, bills, and receipts from 1750-1759 complete the series.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

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Folder 5: 1750-1759: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Court Documents

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Folder 6: 1750-1759: Court Documents

Subseries C: Land Transactions

Box 2 of 3

Folder 7: 1750-1759: Land Transactions

Subseries D: Indenture Contracts

Box 2 of 3

Folder 8: 1750-1759: Indenture Contracts

Subseries E: Religious Documents

Box 2 of 3

Folder 9: 1750-1759: Religious Documents

Folder 10: 1750-1759: Marriage Intentions

Subseries F: Letters

Box 2 of 3

Folder 11: 1750-1759: Letters

Subseries G: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts

Box 2 of 3

Folder 12: 1750-1759: Promissory Notes

Folder 13: 1750-1759: Bills

Folder 14: 1750-1759: Receipts

Series VIII: 1760-1769

This series contains materials from 1760-1769. Under Legal Documents, there are announcements by the selectmen of Chilmark and Tisbury, votes for town officers, mustering orders for an Edgartown militia, and other "signed and sealed" documents. In the second section on Court Documents, there is a 1768 docket with various indictments for fornication, beating a dog, building on a neighbor's property, and more. The Land Transactions subseries contains a lengthy document on a land dispute from 1767. The fourth subseries houses the estate inventory of Samuel Pease [1765] and the will of Enoch Coffin [1761]. Under Religious Documents is a printed booklet entitled "A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew" from 1766, as well as marriage intentions from the decade. Letters from 1761-1768 are housed in the sixth subseries; of mention is a 1767 letter from the famous John Hancock to his friend

James Athearn. Finally, various promissory notes, bills, and receipts from the decade complete this series.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

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Folder 15: 1760-1769: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Court Documents

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Folder 16: 1760-1769: Court Documents

Subseries C: Land Transactions

Box 2 of 3

Folder 17: 1760-1769: Land Transactions

Subseries D: Wills and Estate Inventories

Box 2 of 3

Folder 18: 1760-1769: Wills and Estate Inventories

Subseries E: Religious Documents

Box 2 of 3

Folder 19: 1760-1769: Religious Documents

Folder 20: 1760-1769: Marriage Intentions

Subseries F: Letters

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Folder 21: 1760-1769: Letters

Subseries G: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts

Box 2 of 3

Folder 22: 1760-1769: Promissory Notes

Folder 23: 1760-1769: Bills

Folder 24: 1760-1769: Receipts

Series IX: 1770-1776

This series contains materials from 1770-1776. Under Legal Documents, there is an oversized appointment of Benjamin Smith as “Register of Wills, Administration, and other Writings” of Dukes County, in addition to other notarized payments and other “signed and sealed” documents. The second subseries on Court Documents includes records from trials, notifications of rulings, and other court-related papers. The next section on Land Transactions relates the boundaries of property on Chappaquiddick from 1772. Indenture Contracts from the fourth subseries include the years 1770 and 1772. The next section, Wills, houses Thomas Daggett’s will and estate inventory from 1773. Under Religious Documents are several marriage intentions from 1775 and 1776. The seventh subseries on Letters holds many letters from different writers throughout this period. Various promissory notes, bills, and receipts and kept in the eighth subseries. Finally, miscellaneous documents from 1770-1776 include a 1772 crew list from the ship *Union* and a printed booklet entitled “Considerations on the Measures Carrying On With Respect to the British Colonies in North America” from 1774.

Subseries A: Legal Documents

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Folder 1: 1770-1776: Legal Documents

Subseries B: Court Documents

Box 3 of 3

Folder 2: 1770-1776: Court Documents

Subseries C: Land Transactions

Box 3 of 3

Folder 3: 1770-1776: Land Transactions

Subseries D: Indenture Contracts

Box 3 of 3

Folder 4: 1770-1776: Indenture Contracts

Subseries E: Wills and Estate Inventories

Box 3 of 3

Folder 5: 1770-1776: Wills and Estate Inventories

Subseries F: Religious Documents

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Folder 6: 1770-1776: Marriage Intentions

Subseries G: Letters

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Folder 7: 1770-1776: Letters

Subseries H: Promissory Notes, Bills, and Receipts

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Folder 8: 1770-1776: Promissory Notes

Folder 9: 1770-1776: Bills

Folder 10: 1770-1776: Receipts

Subseries I: Miscellaneous

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Folder 11: 1770-1776: Ship *Union* Crew List, 1772.

Folder 12: 1770-1776: Booklet, "Considerations on the Measures Carrying On With Respect to the British Colonies in North America," 1774.

Series X: Undated

This series contains undated materials that are from the colonial period, based on writing style and names mentioned. These documents include court hearings, estate inventories, land disputes, letters, and bills and receipts. Of interest in the Miscellaneous subseries is a Latin diploma, a printed advertisement for "fine British ink powder" in both English and French, and an undated family record of a line of the Mayhew family.

Subseries A: Court Documents

Box 3 of 3

Folder 13: Undated, Court Documents

Subseries B: Land Transactions and Estate Inventories

Box 3 of 3

Folder 14: Undated, Land Transactions and Estate Inventories

Subseries C: Letters

Box 3 of 3

Folder 15: Undated, Letters

Subseries D: Bills and Receipts

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Folder 16: Undated, Bills and Receipts

Subseries E: Miscellaneous

Box 3 of 3

Folder 17: Undated, Miscellaneous

Series XI: Document Fragments

This series contains document fragments; in some instances a majority of the paper is present, while in others only a few inches remain. The first subseries holds materials where a date can be surmised from the paper. The second subseries has various undated document fragments, dealing with subjects from land boundaries to letters to bills and receipts.

Subseries A: Dated

Box 3 of 3

Folder 18: Dated Fragments, 1713-1765.

Subseries B: Undated

Box 3 of 3

Folder 19: Undated Fragments