

Guide to the Freligh Family Papers

Special Collections
Benjamin F. Feinberg Library
Plattsburgh State University College
Plattsburgh, N.Y. 12901

By
James J. Reh
April, 1979

Introduction

The Freligh Family Papers contains correspondence, business accounts, bills, receipts, contracts, and miscellaneous materials of several generations of the Freligh family between 1772 and 1906 with an emphasis on the years 1800-1852. The Frelighs were merchants, professionals, and, above all, landowners in upstate New York, where they were settled and established prior to the American Revolution.

Little is known about the Frelighs prior to 1800 or after 1852. The earliest records are those of George Freligh, a merchant and landowner from Dutchess County, New York. The exact dates of his birth and death are not contained in these records, but his business records date from around 1772. In addition to his business (he was apparently a miller), he owned extensive real estate holdings in Onondaga, Clinton, and Essex Counties, New York. These holdings may have been granted to him for services rendered in the Revolution. Records in the Papers indicate that he conducted business with both Zephaniah and Nathaniel Platt, also of Dutchess County, the founders of Plattsburgh, New York.

George died around the year 1800 and his eldest son, Michael (1770-1853) became executor of the Freligh estate. Michael was a physician in the community of Niscayuna, New York near Schenectady and he apparently divided his time fairly evenly between his medical practice, the family real estate business, and service to his community. When he was a young man, Michael became financially insolvent, but this early setback sharpened his business acumen and he developed into a highly successful, if stern, businessman. He had business agents who conducted business on his behalf in all areas where there were Freligh holdings.

One of these agents was a younger brother, John G. Freligh, who lived in Plattsburgh. John corresponded regularly with Michael for a variety of business and personal reasons. Among his letters are eighteen written between 1808 and 1814. These contain John's observations and experiences during the War of 1812 era, including the Battle of Plattsburgh. Other correspondence comes from Michael's colleagues, his other brothers and sisters, in-laws, and his immediate family.

Among the collections other interesting materials are a diary of Michael's journey from Niscayuna to Plattsburgh in 1806 with a description of Plattsburgh and a reference to the Quaker settlement in Peru, New York. Several papers deal with slaves owned by Michael and there are two counterfeit one dollar bills of 1807 as well as documents signed by Zephaniah and Nathaniel Platt and Daniel D. Tompkins, the fourth Governor of the state of New York.

Over all, this collection presents a vivid picture of how life was lived and business was transacted in 18th and 19th century New York. In addition, the collection may be of special interest to those who want a primary source of information in studying the events in and around Plattsburgh during the War of 1812 era.

Contents

The Collection is housed in three Hollinger boxes and further subdivided by consecutively numbered Folders. Box 1 contains correspondence, Box 2 contains business materials, and Box 3 contains miscellaneous materials and the originals of certain materials of specialvalue. These are designated AUTOGRAPH - THEFT VALUE MATERIALS. Photocopies of these materials are filed in the appropriate folders within the boxes and the originals are not available except through permission of the Special Collections Librarian.

Box 1 CORRESPONDENCE 1784-1901

Folders

1. May 8, 1784-Feb. 12, 1799 24 ITEMS
2. March 15, 1799-Oct. 10, 1803 22 ITEMS
3. Oct. 17, 1803-April 6, 1808 22 ITEMS
4. May 2, 1808-Oct. 7, 1812 22 ITEMS
5. Nov. 17, 1812-Sept. 2, 1816 22 ITEMS
6. Sept. 9, 1816-July 25, 1825 23 ITEMS
7. Nov. 20, 1825-March 9, 1831 23 ITEMS
8. March 15, 1831-Jan. 21, 1834 23 ITEMS
9. March 1, 1834-Aug. 29, 1835 23 ITEMS
10. Oct. 13, 1835-Nov. 26, 1838 23 ITEMS
11. March 17, 1839-Dec. 29, 1843 23 ITEMS
12. Jan. 3, 1844-Aug. 29, 1901 23 ITEMS
13. UNDATED CORRESPONDENCE 13 ITEMS

Box 2 ACCOUNTS, BUSINESS - BILLS AND RECEIPTS 1772-1906

Folders

1. 1772-1799 24 ITEMS
2. 1800-1805 31 ITEMS
3. 1806-1810 39 ITEMS
4. 1811-1815 11 ITEMS
5. 1816-1820 36 ITEMS
6. 1821 27 ITEMS
7. 1822-1823 21 ITEMS
8. 1824-1825 24 ITEMS
9. 1826-1830 18 ITEMS
10. 1831-1835 15 ITEMS
11. 1836-1840 21 ITEMS
12. 1841-1849 13 ITEMS
13. 1866-1906 9 ITEMS
14. UNDATED BUSINESS ACCOUNTS 17 ITEMS
15. CONTRACTS, BUSINESS 1773 - 1846

Folders

1. March 16, 1773-April 25, 1800 16 ITEMS
2. Dec. 12, 1801-June 15, 1819 15 ITEMS
3. Feb . 6, 1822-March 7, 1846 16 ITEMS
4. BLANK OR UNEXECUTED 5 ITEMS
5. FRAGMENTS - UNDATED, UNSIGNED 5 ITEMS

Box 3 MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

Folders

1. COUNTERFEIT MONEY 3 ITEMS
2. DIARIES 3 ITEMS
3. ESTATE PAPERS - GEORGE FRELIGH 15 ITEMS
4. ESTATE PAPERS - NON FAMILY 6 ITEMS
5. FORMULAS - INK AND LAMPBLACK 4 ITEMS

Box 3 MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS (CON'T)

Folders

1. INSOLVENCY - MICHAEL FRELIGH 1798-1800 7 ITEMS
2. INSURANCE POLICIES - HOMEOWNERS 2 ITEMS
3. LAWSUITS - CONTRACTS DISPUTES 1810-1817 2 ITEMS
4. LAWSUITS - CONTRACTS DISPUTES - UNDATED 3 ITEMS
5. MEMORANDA AND EXTRACTS 1798-1822 11 ITEMS
6. MEMORANDA AND EXTRACTS - UNDATED 12 ITEMS
7. NEWSPAPERS - FRAGMENTS 8 ITEMS
8. PARTNERSHIP - DISSOLUTION 2 ITEMS
9. PRESCRIPTIONS - ANIMAL DISORDERS 7 ITEMS

10. PRESCRIPTIONS - HUMAN 62 ITEMS
11. PRESCRIPTIONS - HUMAN 29 ITEMS
12. PUBLICATIONS - FRAGMENTS 4 ITEMS
13. REAL ESTATE - DESCRIPTIONS, LOCATIONS 15 ITEMS
14. REAL ESTATE - MAP FRAGMENTS, SURVEYS 8 ITEMS
15. RECIPES - HOME REMEDIES 9 ITEMS
16. SCHOOLS 1814-1834 5 ITEMS
17. SLAVES - PURCHASE AND RELEASE OF 5 ITEMS
18. SUBPOENAS 4 ITEMS
19. UNRELATED MATERIALS - FRAGMENTS 15 ITEMS
20. UNRELATED MATERIALS - WRAPPING PAPER 7 ITEMS

BOX 4
AUTOGRAPH - THEFT VALUE MATERIALS

Folders

1. Eighteen (18) Letters concerning events in Plattsburgh during the War of 1812 era.
2. 1808-Nov. 27
3. 1809-June 2
4. 1812-May 19, July 8, Aug. 11, Sept. 9, Oct. 7, Nov. 29.
5. 1813-June 11, Sept. 8, Sept. 17, Sept. 22, Sept. 29.
6. 1814-Jan. 11, Feb. 24, June 28, Sept. 20, Nov. 3.
7. 18 ITEMS

Folder

1. 59 Two (2) Counterfeit one dollar bills
2. One (1) Letter accompanying counterfeit bills
3. One (1) Letter signed by Nathaniel Platt
4. One (1) Contract containing signature of Nathaniel Platt
5. Two (2) Contracts containing signature of Zephaniah Platt
6. One (1) Contract containing signature of Daniel D. Tompkins

8 ITEMS

NUMBER OF ITEMS:

Box 1: 286

Box 2: 363

Box 3: 248

Box 4: 26

TOTAL: 923

Includes 26 photocopies of Autograph-Theft Value Materials listed above.