

McClure Papers (1778-1843)

The McClure Papers contain 62 items in one box and cover the years 1778 to 1867. The papers of James McClure (1750-1791), Exeter merchant, include 47 items and cover the years 1778 to 1791. These items consist predominantly of letters from James McClure to his wife Betsy. The papers of John McClure (1784-1869), Exeter merchant and Boscowen farmer, include 15 items and cover the years 1799 to 1867. These items are mostly family correspondence, but also include two small account books and a log kept aboard the ship "Ganges".

The McClure Papers are a permanent gift to the New Hampshire Historical Society. They were a gift from the estate of Sara E. McClure. What follows are biographic sketches of James and John McClure, an inventory of their papers, and a list of card titles pertaining to this collection filed in the Manuscript Room card file.

James McClure (1750-1791)

James McClure was born on February 25, 1750 in Boston. He was the sixth of thirteen children of John McClure (d.1769) and Rachel McClintock McClure. Both John and Rachel were natives of the Londonderry area of Ireland, and had migrated together to Boston where they were married.

Little is known of James, as he has been overshadowed by his more famous brother, Rev. David McClure (1748-1820). At some time prior to October 1774, James McClure moved to Exeter and married Elizabeth Rundlett (1750-1840), the daughter of Charles Rundlett of Exeter. Exactly when he first went to sea is unknown, but by 1774 he was associated with Capt. Eliphalet Giddinge (Giddings) and Capt. Eliphalet Ladd. In 1776, James was preparing harbor defences with Piers Long in Portsmouth. Long was commanding officer of the First N.H. Regiment, and James was his adjutant. In February of 1777, James accompanied his unit to Fort Ticonderoga. McClure later fought at Bennington as a Second Lieutenant. By the end of the war he had attained the rank of Major. At least two of James' brothers, Samuel (1743-1815) and John (1745-1785) were officers in the Continental Army. The oldest of the McClure children, William (1741-1783), was a privateer during the Revolution, and died shortly after being captured by the British.

In 1783, James McClure had returned to the sea as Captain of the ship "Hannah". After a long and rather unsuccessful voyage, James formed a partnership with Nicholas Gilman. The firm of McClure and Gilman opened its doors in Baltimore in 1785. The firm was a failure from the start. Gilman wound up attending the Constitutional Convention and the firm was finally liquidated.

During 1787, McClure spent the year commanding the ship "Exeter". In the latter part of 1788 he was off again on the ship "Abigail". In 1789 he commanded the ship "Eliza". He traded in London, along the coast of France, and

in the West Indies. In October, 1790, James sailed toward Dublin on the ship "Cleopatra", of which he was one-third owner and Eliphalet Ladd two-thirds owner. While in Dublin, McClure died of fever.

McClure and his beloved "Betsy" had four children; James, Fanny, John, and Charles. He was not a wealthy man, and the job of keeping house, managing business affairs, and raising the children on meagre means was left to his wife. Upon his death, Betsy lived in Exeter and continued to raise the children. In 1803, she married Rev. William Powers of Gilmanton but seems not to have been living with him at the time of his death in 1826. She died in 1840 while living with her son John in Boscawen.

John McClure (1784-1869)

Even less is known of John McClure than of his father. Young "Jack" or "Jacky" apprenticed for the merchant trade with his uncle Thomas McClure in Boston and Bristol (Me.). In 1810 he signed on as a second mate on the ship "Ganges" which went to Canton. By 1811 he was commanding his own ship, but had quit the sea forever in 1812.

John McClure never liked the sea, and much to his mother's delight, always dreamed of owning a farm. By 1807, he owned land in Springfield, N.H., and was having a house built there. Sometime around 1823, however, he moved to a farm in Boscawen. He spent the rest of his life in Boscawen, dying on March 20, 1869. He had married Sally Potter (1786-1876) from Pittsfield, and they had three children; Louisa L., John A., and Mary.

Inventory

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Folder I: James McClure Papers (1778-1786)--16 items

This folder contains 10 letters from James McClure to his wife Betsey in which he discusses his voyage to Tobago, London, and Baltimore. There are also two letters to Eliphalet Ladd, a business letter to Tobago, a letter from Nicholas Gilman, a letter of David McClure's to Moses Leavitt at West Point, and a deed to James McClure for land in Exeter.

Folder II: James McClure Papers (1787-1791)--31 items

This folder contains 27 letters from James McClure to his wife Betsy discussing events taking place on his various voyages during these years. There is also a letter to Betsy from David McClure, one from David to James McClure, a Nicholas Gilman letter, and a letter from James McClure to John McEachan in Tobago.

Folder III: John McClure Papers (1799-1812)--11 items

This folder contains letters to and from John McClure, involving his mother, his uncle Thomas, a cousin, Benjamin Boardman, Nathaniel Parker, and Rev. Walter Powers. There are also some shipping instructions from Aaron Blaney, Jr. and a page of John McClure's lesson book.

Folder IV: John McClure Accounts (1810-1867)--3 items

Log Book (Mar 1810-Oct 1810)-John McClure's ship log for the "Ganges" on a return voyage from Canton. Entitled "Hand Journal from Canton towards Boston".

Account Book (1823-1842)-John McClure's account book (Ledger) listing his accounts with various people in Boscawen. There are a few accounts penciled in the rear of the book for the year 1873. These were put there by John McClure's son, John A. McClure.

Account Book (1830-1867)-John McClure's day book kept while he lived in Boscawen.

The following card headings have been placed in the name file in the Mss Room.

Blaney, Aaron Jr.
Boardman, Benjamin
Gilman, Nicholas
Ladd, Eliphalet
Leavitt, Moses
McClure, Rev. David
McClure, Elizabeth Rundlett (Betsy)
McClure, James
McClure, John
McClure, Thomas
Parker, Nathaniel
Powers, Rev. Walter
Warner, Daniel

The following card headings have been placed in the subject file in the Mss. Room.

Agriculture
Canton
Occupations-Farmers
Occupations-Merchants
Shipping
Trade and Commerce