

John Glassford and Company

A Register of Its Records in the Library of Congress

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Revised by Harry G. Heiss and Mary A. Lacy**



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Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: Records of John Glassford and Company

Span Dates: 1743-1886

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1760-1820)

ID No.: MSS22939

Creator: John Glassford and Company

Extent: 227 volumes; 227 containers; 62 linear feet; 71 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Mercantile firm. Ledgers, journals, daybooks, inventories, cashbooks, and letterbooks of the various mercantile firms in Maryland and Virginia representing or succeeding the Glasgow, Scotland, firm of John Glassford and Company in the Chesapeake tobacco trade.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Names:

John Glassford and Company

Bayles, William

Byrd, William, 1728-1777

Campbell, John, fl. 1796

Carter, Landon, 1710-1778

Fairfax, George William, 1741-1809

Fergusson, Robert, fl. 1779-1817

Fitzhugh, William, 1741-1809

Glassford, Henry, 1764-1819

Gordon, James, fl. 1760

Hamilton, Alexander, d. 1799

Henderson, Archibald, fl. 1766

Jamieson, Neil

Lee, Henry, 1756-1818

Lee, Richard Henry, 1732-1794

Mason, George, 1725-1792

Plater, George, 1735-1792

Riddell, Henry, fl. 1760-1783

Ross, Hector

Washington, George, 1732-1799

Washington, Lawrence, 1718-1752

Boyle, Scott & Co.

Findlay, Hopkins & Co.

Glassford, Gordon, Monteath & Co.

Glassford, Henderson & Co.

Henderson, Fergusson & Gibson

James Brown & Co. (Glasgow, Scotland)

James Gordon & Co.

Jamieson, Johnstone & Co.

Shortridge, Gordon & Co.

Thompson, Edelen & Company

Vincent & Fergusson

Glassford, John, 1715-1783. Papers of John Glassford

Subjects:

Merchants--Maryland
Merchants--Scotland--Glasgow
Merchants--Virginia
Tobacco industry--Maryland
Tobacco industry--Scotland--Glasgow
Tobacco industry--Virginia
Alexandria (Va.)--Commerce
Baltimore (Md.)--Commerce
Bladensburg (Md.)--Commerce
Chaptico (Md.)--Commerce
Colchester (Va.)--Commerce
Dumfries (Va.)--Commerce
Georgetown (Washington, D.C.)--Commerce
Glasgow (Scotland)--Commerce
Leonardtown (Md.)--Commerce
Lower Marlboro (Md.)--Commerce
Newport (Md.)--Commerce
Norfolk (Va.)--Commerce
Nottingham (Md.)--Commerce
Piscataway (Md.)--Commerce
Port Tobacco (Md.)--Commerce
Upper Marlboro (Md.)--Commerce

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The records of the Scottish mercantile firm of John Glassford and Company were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1899.

Processing History:

The records of John Glassford and Company were processed in 1983. The collection description was revised in 2000.

Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Glassford and Company is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Microfilm:

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on seventy-one reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: John Glassford and Company Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The records of John Glassford and Company span the years 1743-1846, but bulk largest in the period 1760-1820. They include ledgers, journals, daybooks, inventories, cashbooks, and letterbooks for the various mercantile firms which represented or succeeded John Glassford and Company in Maryland and Virginia. The records are organized geographically into two series: [Maryland](#) and [Virginia](#).

John Glassford (1715-1783) was one of the most prominent and prosperous of the Scottish “tobacco lords.” Glassford, an original member of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures, was a leading force in the establishment of Glasgow, Scotland, as an international trading center. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, he controlled a major portion of the Chesapeake tobacco trade, despite having never travelled to America. Represented by agents or factors, Glassford established a system of branch stores along the Potomac River for the purpose of purchasing tobacco directly from planters. By this method of direct purchase, Glassford and his associates were able to pay higher prices for tobacco than English consignment merchants. While higher prices brought the Scottish firm new customers, its ability to extend credit and provide planters with consumer goods helped to insure its domination of the Chesapeake tobacco trade. The sale of goods such as hardware, rum, wine, sugar, salt, and slaves became a major source of revenue for the branch stores.

This collection reflects the daily transactions normally carried on in the branch stores. The transactions were often recorded in rough form on throw sheets and then carefully recorded in the store's journal (or daybook) and ledger (or account book). Accounts were maintained for each individual or firm trading with the store and for various types of produce or goods collected for export or resale. Numerous names of slaves appear in both the daybooks and account books. A major portion of the collection deals with the Revolutionary War era. The letterbooks of Alexander Hamilton, factor for Piscataway, Maryland, and Robert Fergusson, factor for Georgetown, Maryland, reveal the difficulty Glassford and Company and subsequent firms encountered when collecting pre-war debts. Inventories for the schooners *Felicity* and *Plato* also appear in the collection.

Under the firm name of Glassford and Company, Glassford operated stores in Maryland at Baltimore, Benedict, Bladensburg, Chaptico, Georgetown (later part of Washington, D.C.), Leonardtown, Llewellyn's Warehouse, Lower Marlboro, Newport, Nottingham, Piscataway, Port Tobacco, and Upper Marlboro. John Glassford and Archibald Henderson under the firm of Glassford, Henderson & Company operated stores in Virginia at Alexandria, Colchester, and other sites; and with associates James Gordon and Walter Monteath, Glassford operated Glassford, Gordon, Monteath & Company at Quantico, Dumfries, and Norfolk.

With the death of John Glassford in 1783, the surviving members of Glassford and Company, Henry Glassford, James Gordon, Henry Riddell, John Campbell, and Archibald Henderson, presented the power of attorney for the company to Robert Fergusson, factor for Georgetown. It is unclear when the company passed out of the hands of the Scottish merchants and into the control of local owners. From 1800 to 1816 the firm of Vincent & Fergusson carried on the bulk of the business. From 1816 to 1834 the firm was called Thompson, Edelen & Company. In Glassford and Company's most successful years, those prior to the American Revolution, the company owned a fleet of twenty-five ships and imported ten percent of all tobacco received by Great Britain. The value of Glassford's yearly imports over this period has been estimated to be in excess of £500,000.

The collection includes records of the following firms: Glassford and Company; Glassford, Henderson & Company; Glassford, Gordon, Monteath & Company; Henderson, Fergusson & Gibson; Findlay, Hopkins & Company; James Brown & Company; Boyle, Scott & Company; Jamieson, Johnstone & Company; Shortridge, Gordon & Company; James Gordon & Company; Vincent & Fergusson; and Thompson, Edelen & Company. Prominent names found in the collection include William Bayles, William Byrd (1728-1777), Landon Carter, George William Fairfax, William Fitzhugh, Neil Jamieson, Henry Lee, Richard Henry Lee, George Mason, George Plater, Hector Ross, George Washington, and Lawrence Washington.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in two series:

- [Maryland, 1743-1846](#)
- [Virginia, 1758-1830](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-162

REEL 1-51

Series

Maryland, 1743-1846

Cashbooks, daybooks, inventories, invoice books, journals, ledgers, letterbooks, lists of debts, lists of shipped tobacco, salesbooks, ship charges, and ship invoices for the various firms which represented or succeeded John Glassford and Company in Maryland. Arranged alphabetically by name of town and grouped chronologically therein.

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Virginia, 1758-1830

Cashbooks, cash receipts, firm accounts, journals, ledgers, and lists of debts for the various firms which represented or succeeded John Glassford and Company in Virginia. Arranged alphabetically by name of town and grouped chronologically therein. Microfilm reels are normally frame numbered starting with 0 for each reel. The frame numbers for volumes 163-226 diverge from this pattern and are herewith listed to avoid confusion.

Container List

Microfilm edition available. Shelf no. 18,978

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Virginia, 1758-1830

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Virginia, 1758-1830

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7	69	27	51	47	89	67	118	87	64	107	110
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12	16	32	37	52	98	72	126	92	72	112	129
13	17	33	50	53	99	73	131	93	73	113	130
14	20	34	44	54	103	74	2	94	75	114	133
15	23	35	21	55	104	75	134	95	76	115	132
16	27	36	53	56	105	76	135	96	77	116	136
17	33	37	71	57	106	77	137	97	78	117	138
18	32	38	74	58	107	78	139	98	84	118	140
19	24	39	79	59	108	79	143	99	87	119	141
20	25	40	80	60	109	80	144	100	91	[120]	142
Old	New	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
121	145	139	42	157	148	175	175	193	191	211	220
122	61	140	45	158	227	176	176	194	192	212	222
123	62	141	46	159	1	177	217	195	193	213	221
124	147	142	47	160	11	178	218	196	194	214	197
125	159	143	48	161	156	179	177	197	195	215	198
126	128	144	146	162	157	180	178	198	196	<u>216</u>	182
127	160	145	149	163	158	181	179	199	199	217	201
128	122	146	150	164	163	182	180	200	200	218	202
[129]	161	147	151	165	164	183	181	201	203	219	167
[130]	162	148	152	166	165	<u>184</u>	182	202	204	220	212
131	22	149	153	167	166	185	183	203	205	221	210
132	4	150	155	168	168	186	184	204	206	222	211
133	5	151	154	169	169	187	185	205	207	223	213
134	6	152	18	170	170	188	186	206	208	224	214
135	7	153	28	171	171	189	187	207	209	225	223
136	39	154	29	172	172	190	188	208	215	226	226
137	40	155	38	173	173	191	189	209	216	227	224
138	41	156	43	174	174	192	190	210	219	228	225

Old volumes 184 and 216 were combined to form new volume 182; 216 occurs first.