

of his six children. Charles Bird was buried in the Laurel Hill Cemetery; his funeral was held April 24, 1849. Bird's death was announced not only in the Philadelphia papers, but also those in New York and New England.

Collection Overview

The Charles Bird Papers are arranged in three series: Correspondence; Financial Documents; and Legal Documents.

Series I. Correspondence (1803-1830) contains primarily business letters written to Charles Bird, ranging from simple notes requesting "please let the bearer have" various goods, to longer detailed discussions of commodities and finance. The letters generally fall into two categories, either discussing merchandise or real estate. Most of the correspondence carries requests for goods, payments, describes mistakes in shipments, or makes general inquiries about business opportunities and partnerships. Some folders contain extensive detail about merchandise being traded. For example, the file for Thomas Fiddian of Birmingham holds a number of invoices that list the current prices of steel items such as scissors, shears, buttons, anvils, kettles, and knives (including sportsmen, women, boys, children, pruning, and pocket styles), as well as a wide variety of brushes that he shipped to Philadelphia in 1817. From New York, T. S. Uffington offered prices for sheets of gold leaf made at his manufactory as opposed to those imported from England. The folder for Liverpool commission merchants William (1787-1868) and Richard (1788-1860) Rathbone holds more than a dozen manuscript letters and printed circulars with discussions of trade matters and current prices; the brothers, who were active opponents of the slave trade, had just begun their partnership when they were writing to Bird. A few correspondents, including Samuel St. John Jr., Victor David, and George Handy, described the cotton market in a variety of southern United States cities. Other correspondents, such as Bryac & David, advised Bird on foreign manufactured products that they thought would sell well. Some points of interest within the correspondence include a request for Bird to have a man arrested (see George Suckley), insight into the legal profession from a young attorney (George Mifflin Dallas), a discussion of steam mills (W. C. Holly), business prospects in Venezuela (John H. Chisholm), a mention of privateering (William Lang), and a mention of a revolution in Havana and smuggling (Andrew Prevost). Edward Ingersoll wrote from Washington to report his lobbying activities on behalf of Bird.

While there are multiple letters from some merchants, such as the twenty from Jacob Mark and his nephew Louis in New York, more than half of the folders contain single letters and provide just snapshots of the mercantile trade in early nineteenth-century America. Luther Morey offered to manufacture brushes for Bird, and Philadelphia engravers Murray, Fairman & Co. sent a messenger to pick up a sheet of copper. Several patrons mentioned that looking glasses had shattered during shipment; one, Andrew Prevost, wrote in 1810 that the glass globes on a chandelier had broken while in transit to Havana but, "On another hand," he admitted, "the state of revolution of the Colony is very unfavorable to articles of mere luxury."