

socially prominent in the city. Their daughter Rebecca (1760-1823), who became the wife of Sir Henry Johnson, was one of the prominent young Philadelphians who attended the Meschianza Ball. David Franks supplied provisions to the British army during the French and Indian War. His activities in the War for Independence included appointments again as a purveyor for the British Army, and as an intermediary in the exchange of prisoners. Perceived as a threat to the security of the United States, he was jailed briefly in 1778 by order of Congress, and then imprisoned again in 1780. After living in England for a time, Franks returned to Philadelphia in 1783, where he worked as a merchant, but returned again to England and died at Isleworth in October 1794. David Franks is not to be confused with the American patriot Col. David Salisbury Franks (ca. 1740-1793), who was born in Philadelphia, and died there in one of the city's yellow fever epidemics.

Joseph Simon (ca. 1712-1804) was an early resident in Lancaster, one of the few towns in the American colonies with a Jewish population in the pre-Revolutionary period. A merchant, he was an Indian trader, sold provisions to the British, and took as a business partner his nephew Levy Andrew Levy (1734-1829). Simon was involved in land speculation with the Gratz brothers, Franks, and Levy, particularly in the formation of the Illinois Company. The Company purchased land in the Illinois Country from three Indian tribes in 1773. Despite several years of lobbying, its claim was never recognized by the United States government.

Collection Overview

The Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers contains material from two generations of three families. The collection is arranged in four series: Series I, Barnard and Michael Gratz Papers; Series II, Hyman and Simon Gratz Papers; Series III, David Franks Papers; Series IV, Miscellaneous Papers.

Series I, Barnard and Michael Gratz Papers (1752-1806), is arranged in four subseries: Correspondence; Financial Documents; Legal Documents; and Miscellaneous Papers. The material includes both letters and documents that came in to the Gratz brothers as well as those issued by them.

The Correspondence in the series dates from 1759 to 1794. It is primarily with merchants along the East Coast, and is business-related in topic, discussing commerce, financial transactions, and goods. Most of the folders hold single letters; the exceptions are Isaac Adolphus (9 letters), Levy Andrew Levy (7), Elias & Isaac Rodriguez Miranda (7), and Joseph Simon (14). While English is the predominant language used, others appear as well. The Adolphus letters are written partly in Hebrew script, and two of the letters from Elias and Isaac Rodriguez Miranda of Curaçao are in Spanish. The letter from Andreas Groth sent to Barnard Gratz in London, begins in German schrift, quoting a letter that Groth had received from Adam Kimmel. All of the letters are fairly consistent in theme, though a few do stray beyond generic business transactions to reveal the circumstances faced by merchants at the time; some examples follow.