

One facet of the commission merchant profession can be gleaned from the four folders of letters from Samuel M. Moore and (with partner Samuel Haigh) from Moore & Haigh of Baltimore, which discuss the sales made by Moore there on behalf of the Lapsleys.

As damage to merchandise was a regular occurrence – both from sea water and abrasion during shipment – many of the letters hold reports and complaints as well as accounts of damaged merchandise sold at auction (see, for example, correspondence regarding the 1809 *Herkimer* damage with Alexander Cranston, Delafield & Ferrers, and Charles Chauncey in Series I, and in Series II, auction accounts with Silas Weir and William Barber & Co. (1810)).

Most of the files have just a few letters to the brothers. One exception is the New York merchant Donald Malcolm, whose file has twenty letters to William Lapsley regarding sales of Brussels and Venetian carpeting in 1810; other exceptions are Samuel Moore, with three folders of correspondence, and Alexander Cranston & Co. with two folders.

In America, the Lapsleys had many business contacts in Georgetown, an active port and commercial and industrial center on the Potomac River (which had by then been included in the recently-created District of Columbia). One client there was the firm of McKenney & Osborn, which ordered carpet for the personal use of Thomas L. McKenney, the first director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and publisher of *The History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (Philadelphia: 1837-1844).

Because the Lapsleys worked in various partnership configurations, the decision was made not to divide the collection into series by recipient but instead to file the papers together as one family business collection with correspondence arranged alphabetically by sender; in some cases, merchants and forwarders were dealing with one or more of the brothers over time. Most of the letters are addressed either to William M. Lapsley or to Lapsley & Ikin; however, for ease of identification, the brothers and firms (as recipients) have been identified in the folder list by their initials (WML), (L&I), (DLJr), (JL), or (L&B) following each entry, and when known, cities have been included to give an overview of the scope of the family's operation. In almost every case, correspondence is one-way to the brothers; an exception is the New York firm Denton, Little & Co., for which there are letters in both directions, and a single letter from a supercargo, William Nesbitt. The only other cache of outgoing material is a ten-page copybook recording letters sent by John Lapsley and his firm Lapsley & Blackwood from December 1816 through July 1817, and covering his various business dealings in Pennsylvania, New York, Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

In addition to the four Lapsley brothers, one cousin appears to have had a business affiliation with the family: Richard Gray was traveling in La Quira (in what is now Venezuela) in 1809 and selling ribbon and waistcoat patterns; his folder holds a power of attorney document for that trip.