

1840 David Lewis dies, April 28, age 74

Collection Overview

The David Lewis Papers span Lewis's career, and document some of his activities with his firm Wharton & Lewis, with the Phoenix Insurance Company, and as a merchant. It is divided in three series: Series I, Wharton & Lewis Company Records; Series II, Phoenix Insurance Company Records; and Series III, Miscellaneous Papers. Within the collection, writers from Philadelphia are not designated as such, but other cities are given, where they are known.

Series I, Wharton & Lewis Company Records (1793-1813) provide just a brief look at the men's twenty-year partnership. It is arranged in two subseries: Correspondence and Documents. The most important document of the firm's history is in Isaac Wharton's correspondence folder. Written to Wharton by David Lewis on June 26, 1807, it proposes and outlines the demise of their partnership, based on "repeated conversations we have had together." The firm closed the next month. There are a total of three letters from Lewis to Wharton in Wharton's file, with the rest sent from Wharton to Lewis.

Most of the remaining correspondence covers routine business matters such as reports of shipments, financial arrangements, etc. One exception is the folder of eighteen letters from John Langdon (1741-1819), a wealthy New Hampshire merchant who represented New Hampshire in the Continental Congress, United States Senate, his state's legislature, and as its governor. His letters date from 1797 to 1807 and primarily concern shipments of goods, but there is also a series of four letters requesting assistance in setting up a bank in Portsmouth in 1799. Langdon was in charge of procuring watermarked paper for the printing of currency, a task he delegated to Wharton & Lewis with instructions as to sheet size, watermark, etc. There are also four letters from Langdon's older brother Woodbury (1739-1805), a Portsmouth merchant who also spent time in Philadelphia.

A single, but interesting, letter appears from Fulwar Skipwith (1765-1839), who wrote to the firm from Martinique in August 1793 that he had just sent them sugar and coffee along with his personal possessions: two trunks, a box of books, and a "large Mahogany sitting chair" which he hoped they would store safely for him. Skipwith also reported that the island had been "plundered, ravaged and burnt," but much produce remained. The final letter in the subseries was sent to Matthias Hollenback from William Tilghman and Arnold Cott in Wilkes-Barre, regarding lands sold to Wharton and Lewis from the estate of Walter Stewart.

The Documents subseries holds a bill of lading and certificates of inspection for Wharton & Lewis's own shipments, as well as documents for shipments they insured for others. The Smith and Ridgway folder also holds a printed protest certificate issued in Roseau, Dominica, regarding the company's schooner *Illinois*, insured by Wharton & Lewis for a trip from Philadelphia to Cayenne and back, that was seized by a British frigate *Terpsichore*.