

Library Company of Philadelphia

McA MSS 006

BINNY & RONALDSON PAPERS

1805-1822

.42 linear feet, 1 box

Series I. Correspondence (1805-1822)
Series II. Documents (1807-1820)

April 2005

Descriptive Summary**Repository**

Library Company of Philadelphia
1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5698

Call Number

McA MSS 006

Creator

Binny & Ronaldson.

Title

Binny & Ronaldson Papers

Inclusive Dates

1805-1822

Quantity

.42 linear feet (1 box)

Language of Materials

Materials are in English.

Abstract

The Binny & Ronaldson Papers contains correspondence and financial documents relating to their type-founding firm, with some material on their ceramics factory and their personal accounts.

Administrative Information**Restrictions to Access**

The collection is open to researchers. It is on deposit at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and should be accessed through the Society's reading room at 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA. Visit their website, <http://www.hsp.org/>, for reading room hours.

Acquisition Information

Gift of John A. McAllister; forms part of the McAllister Collection.

Processing Information

The Binny & Ronaldson Papers were formerly interfiled within the large and chronologically arranged McAllister Manuscript Collection. The papers were reunited, arranged, and described as a single collection in 2005, under grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the William Penn Foundation. The collection was processed by Sandra Markham. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this finding aid do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Preferred Citation

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Online Catalog Headings

Subject Names

Binny, Archibald, 1762-1838
Ronaldson, James, 1768-1842
Binns, John, 1772-1860
Barlow, Joel, 1754-1812
Columbian Pottery (Firm)

Subject Topics

Binny & Ronaldson--Records and correspondence
Type and type-founding--United States
Type and type-founding--United States--Archives
Printing--United States--History
Inventors--United States
Type designers
Ceramic industries--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History
Potters--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History
Mourning customs--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia

Document Types

Bills of lading
Letters
Invoices
Receipts

Related Collections

The primary research collection of Binny & Ronaldson business records is in the American Typefounders Company's Typographic Library manuscripts, now at the Rare Book and Manuscript Department of the Columbia University Library. The papers include volumes of the firm's financial records (1817-1838) and correspondence (1819-1821, 1827-1828), as well as Binny's citizenship papers, and the August 1815 dissolution of partnership documents for the Binny & Ronaldson firm. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania owns a one-volume scrapbook holding some Binny & Ronaldson specimen sheets and other related material (Coll. 2001). For a history of the firm, see: Jennifer B. Lee, "Our Infant Manufactures": Early Typefounding in Philadelphia," *Printing History* 11, no. 2 (1989) 28-40.

Biographical/Historical Notes

Archibald Binny (1762-1838), a type founder, was born Archbald Binnie on November 25, 1762, in Portobello (now part of Edinburgh), Scotland. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1796, and became a United States citizen in 1802. James Ronaldson (1768-1842), also born near Edinburgh, arrived in America in the spring of 1794, and opened a bakery on Landenberger's Wharf in Philadelphia in 1795. After losing his business in a fire in 1796, he joined Binny in partnership as Binny & Ronaldson type founders, with Binny guiding the technical end of the business and Ronaldson the financial. Their first appearance in the Philadelphia directories was in 1801, where they were listed in James Robinson's *Philadelphia Directory, City and County Register, for 1802* as "Binny & Ronaldson letter founders Cedar above 10th." The earliest permanent type foundry established in America, the firm published its first specimen book, *A Specimen of Metal Ornaments Cast at the Letter Foundry of Binny & Ronaldson* in 1809, and their *Specimen of Printing Types from the Foundry of Binny & Ronaldson, Philadelphia* in 1812.

Binny and Ronaldson were also partners in second endeavor, the Columbian Pottery, which was located on Cedar (now South) Street near 13th Street, and operated from 1808 through about 1814. They advertised teapots, coffee pots, and sugar boxes made in queensware, also known as creamware, which was used extensively in the production of household china. Further information on Binny and Ronaldson's relationship with the Columbian Pottery and their master potter Alexander Trotter, who was the son of Binny's sister Elizabeth (Mrs. Alexander) Trotter, can be found in *Handcraft to Industry: Philadelphia Ceramics in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, by Susan H. Myers (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980).

Binny remained listed as a type founder in Philadelphia directories through 1814, the year he began to acquire property on Chesapeake Bay near Drayden, in southern Saint Marys County, MD. In August 1815 he retired there to an estate named Porto Bello, which by 1821 encompassed 5,000 acres. James Ronaldson continued on the type business with his brother Richard, and issued *Specimen of Printing Type, from the Letter Foundry of James Ronaldson, successor to Binny & Ronaldson* in 1816. The Ronaldson brothers were listed in the city directories as type founders through 1831 and appeared as gentlemen thereafter.

Archibald Binny's name was occasionally spelled Binney in correspondence and invoices, and it was the spelling used by his second wife, Charlotte Prager (1790-1875), and their children when they returned to Philadelphia after his death. "Binny" appears on his tombstone in Saint Mary's City, but "Binney" was used in an obituary printed in the May 11, 1838, issue of *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (which misstated his date of retirement):

DIED, at Porto Bello, his family's residence, in St. Mary's county, Maryland, on Wednesday, the 25th of April, ARCHIBALD BINNEY, Esq., in the 75th year of his age. Mr. Binney was a native of Scotland, but emigrated at an early age to this country, and was for many years in Philadelphia, successfully engaged in the business of type

founding, in partnership with James Ronalson [*sic*] under the well-remembered firm of Binney & Ronaldson. He retired from business, and settled in St. Mary's county, just before the breaking out of the war of 1812.

Collection Overview

The Binny & Ronaldson Papers spans the period from 1805 through 1822 and primarily contains correspondence and financial documents relating to their typefounding firm, with some material on their ceramics factory. The collection is divided into two series: Correspondence and Documents.

Series I, Correspondence (1805-1822) holds letters written to the firm, as well as some directed at James Ronaldson himself. Most of the correspondence is incoming to the partners, but there are two letters from Ronaldson to Binny while Binny was traveling in 1811, and two letters from Ronaldson written to his brother in 1820. The latter mention his visit to Archibald Binny at his home, Porto Bello, in Saint Marys County, MD. The remainder of the correspondence primarily covers topics such as type orders, shipments, and deficiencies, including several notes from the Irish-born newspaper publisher John Binns specifying exactly what he required, and special requests such as that from C.C. Adams of Poughkeepsie, who asked that his order be sent before Hudson River freezes for the season. Also appearing is a note of appreciation from the poet Joel Barlow, who thanked the firm "for your kindness & particular care in the elegant types you cut & cast for the *Columbiad*," his nationalist epic poem.

Several folders hold documentation of the partners' search for clay to be used by their pottery. In the fall of 1807, Binny & Ronaldson ran advertisements in the Philadelphia *United States Gazette* and other newspapers in New York and New England, searching for "clays or flints" with low iron content for the manufacture of ceramic ware, and requesting specimens accompanied by descriptions of the available quantity and "distance from water-carriage." Jacob Cist, Ralph Isaacs, Peter Lacour (addressing Alexander Trotter), Henry Mead, William Montgomery, and Arthur O'Neill responded with advice on the quality of clay banks and pits in their areas. A letter from B. Allison discusses window sashes for the pottery building.

Series II, Documents (1807-1820) holds a number of receipts for materials used by the firm; while they by no means cover either the firm's spans of time or business, the papers do give an indication of some of their transactions with printers and suppliers. The shortage of antimony was a constant concern; one file holds material documenting purchases from John Loullier in Philadelphia and Thomas Tenant in Baltimore, with a receipt for coopeage to ship the metal to Philadelphia. Used type was another commodity, and that folder contains receipts for purchases made from Jane and Robert Aitken, Michael Billmeyer, Thomas Bradford, John Crookes, Aaron Denman, James Humphreys, Neill & Hurley, and the Sellers family, among others.

The Miscellaneous receipts folder documents purchases of books, tea, gin, coal, wood, and oil, charged to the "house account," as well as various repair services billed to the firm. Included in this file is a bill of lading for "One Box Merchandise on Account" from William Scott & Co., printers in Greenock, Scotland, and an invoice for freight paid to ship a bundle of Hebrew type to Philadelphia from New York in 1813. Also there is a paid invoice from Dr. Alexander Anderson of New York, for two engravings on brass made for the firm, and three invoices from Adam Ramage, listed in the 1813 city directory as "printer's joiner and cabinetmaker," for rules, composing sticks, and other equipment for the foundry and the pottery. Four paid invoices show that Binny & Ronaldson were patrons of Oliver Evans's Mars Works in Philadelphia.

The Columbian Pottery is also documented in the Taxes and rents folder in Series II with a bill for taxes for 1812, and, in the Miscellaneous receipts file, an 1807 invoice from J Rose & Son for hooks and hinges for "potters shop building," and an undated invoice from Benjamin Bradfield for "weighing clay."

In addition, Binny and Ronaldson each have a file holding their personal and household receipts, for clothing, shoes, medical treatments, home repairs, etc.; Binny's folder includes a paid invoice for black crape and mourning attire for the family and a servant the day after the death of his first wife Elizabeth, on July 7, 1812, and a bill from Adam Ramage for her mahogany coffin, hearse, and other expenses of her burial.

One document was removed from the collection and catalogued separately: an 1816 invoice addressed to Ronaldson from Scottish cartographer and publisher John Melish (1771-1822), for the purchase of maps, which was written on his printed and engraved "*Prospectus of a six sheet map of the United States, and contiguous British and Spanish possessions...*"

Box Folder

SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE

1805-1822

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

1	1	Allison, B., Bordentown, NJ	1807 Nov 5
		Andrews, Ebenezer T. See: Thomas & Andrews	
	2	Barlow, Joel, Washington, DC	1811 Jun 7
	3	Beach, Samuel, Whiting, VT	1811
	4	Binns, John, Northumberland, PA	1805-1816
	5	Butler, G. P. W., Bellefonte, NJ	1816 Feb 12
	6	C. C. Adams & Co., Poughkeepsie	1810 Nov 10
	7	Carey, Mathew, Philadelphia	1805-1815
	8	Carleton, Henry, New Orleans	1820 Oct 21
	9	Carter, John, Providence	1809 Feb 20
	10	Cist, Charles, Philadelphia	1805 Jun 25
	11	Cist, Jacob, Wilkes-Barre	1807-1808
	12	Conrad & Holgate, Philadelphia	1811
	13	Daggett, William, Martha's Vineyard, MA	1809 Nov 21
	14	David Allinson & Co., Burlington, NJ	1811 Nov 2
	15	Desuvious, J., New York	1809 Dec 11
	16	Dickerson, Mahlon, Washington	1820 Jan 7
	17	Dorsey, John, Lancaster	1808 Jan 27
	18	Driscoll, Dennis, Augusta, GA	1809
	19	Duane, William, Washington	1808 Feb 9

Box Folder

SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE, cont.

[1]	20	Duane, William John, Harrisburg	1820
	21	Freneau, Peter, Charleston	1805
	22	Fry, William, Philadelphia	1805 Jan 4
	23	Fryer & Clark, Baltimore	1805 Dec 28
	24	G. & R. Waite, New York	1811
	25	Gales & Seaton, Washington	1820 Mar 13
	26	George Goodwin & Sons, Hartford	1822 Aug 26
	27	Gould & Van Winkle, New York	1809 Aug 14
	28	Greenough & Stebbins, Boston	1809
	29	Hamilton, William, Lancaster	1809 Nov 28
		Hastings, Etheridge & Bliss See: Greenough & Stebbins	
	30	Isaacs, Ralph, New York	1807 Nov 3
	31	Lacour, Peter, New York	1808
	32	LeFaure, Louis, Jamaica [?]	1821
		Levering, Benjamin See: Conrad & Holgate	
	33	Lewis, Samuel, Philadelphia	1811 Apr 19
	34	Maxwell, Hugh, Lancaster	1820 Aug 11
	35	Mead, Henry, New Haven	1807
	36	Miner, Charles, West Chester	1820 Nov 6
	37	Montgomery, William, Philadelphia	1808 Nov 15
	38	Nashee, George, Chillicothe	1820 Aug 10

Box Folder

SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE, cont.

[1]	39	Niles, Hezekiah and William Ogden, Baltimore	1820
	40	O'Neill, Arthur [outside Philadelphia]	1807 Dec 3
	41	Peacock, James, Harrisburg	1820
	42	Pollard, Nathan, Richmond	1820
	43	Poulson, John, Philadelphia	1811
	44	Priestley, Joseph, Northumberland, PA	1805 Jul 19
	45	Rakestraw, Joseph, Philadelphia	1805 Jun 25
	46	Ritchie, Thomas, Richmond	1811
	47	Robinson, Joseph, Baltimore	1820 Oct 3
	48	Ronaldson, James, Philadelphia	1811
	49	Ronaldson, James, Portobello, MD, and Baltimore	1820
	50	Rush, R., Philadelphia	1811 Jan 19
	51	Russell, Benjamin, Boston	1820 Sep 21
	52	Sanford, B. & William Henry	1820 May 17
	53	Thomas & Andrews, Boston	1822 Jan 22
	54	Thomas B. Wait & Co., Portland	1805 Jun 24
	55	Thomas, Isaiah, Jr., Worcester	1805 Jun 20
	56	Tiebout, John, New York	1805
	57	Tilghman, Benjamin, Philadelphia	1822 Jan 11
		Trotter, Alexander See: Peter Lacour	
	58	Willington, Aaron Smith, Charleston	1820 Oct 18

Box Folder

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
	SERIES II. DOCUMENTS	1807-1820
	Arranged alphabetically.	
	Household accounts	
[1]	59 Binny, Archibald	1812-1813
	60 Ronaldson, James	1812-1816
	61 Notes for protest	1820
	62 Receipts for purchase of ink	1813-1815
	Receipts for purchases of metal	
	63 Antimony	1815-1816
	64 Bismuth, brass, and tin	1813, 1816
	65 Lead	1813-1816
	66 Type (used)	1809-1816
	See also: G. P. W. Butler in Series I	
	See also: Mathew Carey in Series I	
	67 Subscriptions	1811-1816
	68 Taxes and rent	1813-1814
	Miscellaneous receipts	
	69 Anderson, Alexander	1810
	70 Ramage, Adam, Philadelphia	1812, 1816
	71 Funeral and burial expenses for Rebecca Grace	1815
	72 Goods and services	1807-1816, undated