

**Melancton Smith
Papers, 1767-1795****SC14382**

QUANTITY: 2 boxes (0.50 cubic ft.)
ACCESS: Open to research.
ALTERNATE FORMAT: Also available on microfilm: MB/FM,342.73029,S655,206-7293. Microfilm does not include single accessions added in July 2007.
ACQUISITION: Manuscript accession - April 1959; collation with manuscript single accessions 955, 2091-2113, 3377, 14541, 15027 and 10856 - July 2007
PROCESSED BY: Manuscripts and Special Collections, 1964; revised July 2007

Biographical Note:

Melancton Smith was born in Jamaica, Long Island, New York, May 7, 1744. The family later moved to Poughkeepsie where he became engaged in the mercantile business. He also became involved in politics, particularly the cause of liberty and independence for the colonies. Smith served as a delegate to the First Provincial Congress in New York, May 22, 1775, and shortly thereafter, on June 30, 1775, joined the Continental Line Regiment. Later he organized and became captain of the Dutchess County Minutemen. In 1777 and 1778 he served as secret service commissioner and sheriff of Dutchess County, New York. After the Revolutionary War, he moved to New York City to further his interests in the mercantile business. His interest in politics and government continued too. He served in the Continental Congress, 1785-1787, as a member of the state ratification convention at Poughkeepsie in 1788 and in the state assembly in 1791. He died in New York City, July 29, 1798, and was interred in Jamaica Cemetery, Jamaica, Queens County, New York.

Scope and Content Note:

These papers are organized into two series: I. Constitutional Convention Papers, 1787-1792; II. Letters, 1767-1795. The documents are arranged chronologically within each series.

The first series consists of minutes of proceedings, notes, memoranda, speeches, revisions, and other papers relating to the ratification and adoption of the Federal Constitution at the New York State Constitutional Convention, Poughkeepsie, New York, 1788, to which Smith was an anti-Federalist delegate. Speeches and statements by James Duane, Alexander Hamilton, Robert R. Livingston and William Morris are recorded, along with notes and commentary by Smith during the debate over various provisions considered for the constitution. Also includes papers related to the disputed New York State gubernatorial election in 1792 between George Clinton and John Jay

The second series consist chiefly of letters from Melancton Smith to James Cooper concerning business and financial matters. Also includes three letters addressed to Gilbert Livingston that discuss issues relative to politics and government. In particular, Smith's letter of May 15, 1789,

details his thoughts about the federal constitution. The earliest letter, in which the recipient is not identified, reveals Smith's zeal for the cause of liberty. The letters were originally accessioned and catalogued separately.

CONTAINER LIST

Constitutional Convention papers, 1786-1792

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	Pinckney's answers to Jay's report (Jay-Gardoqui negotiations), 1786. (4 p.) SEE Journal of the Continental Congress 1786
1	2	Defense of New York State against Congressional resolution on impost, [1786]. (6 p.) SEE Journal of Continental Congress 1786
1	3	"On the Constitution reported by the Convention" indorsed "Minutes of Debates on the new Constitution" [September 20-28, 1787]. (8 p.) SEE <i>Documentary History of the Constitution of the United States of America, 1786-1870</i> , vol. 4, pp. 293, 297
1	4	"Amendments" - Article 2 of Federal Constitution, [1787]. (2 leaves)
1	5	"Amendments" - Articles 1-3 (incomplete - 1 leaf, numbered 3, 4)
1	6	"Amendments proposed to the new Constitution of Government" -- Work of Committee to prepare a Bill of Rights; varies in some respects from Lansing amendments of July 7, 1788 as they appear in McKesson Papers, New-York Historical Society. (8 p.)
1	7	Preliminary draft (1 st) of proposed mode of adoption of Constitution (4 p.)
1	8	Preliminary draft (2 nd) of proposed mode of adoption of Constitution. With some deletions, very similar to copy of Smith's mode of adoption of Constitution enclosed by John Jay in a letter to George Washington, July 17, 1788. (4 p.) SEE <i>Documentary History of the Constitution of the United States of America, 1786-1870</i> , vol. 4, p. 796
1	9	Convention of the State of New York. Reasons for objections to the Constitution as proposed September 17, 1787. Poughkeepsie, July 1788. (4 p.)
1	10	Convention of the State of New York. Draft of appeal to other states; differs from circular letter, [1788?]. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, Jonathon. <i>Debates on the Federal Constitution</i> , vol. 2, p. 413-4
		Poughkeepsie Convention notes, June 19-July [21?], 1788: Items 11-35
1	11	June 19, 1788: Chancellor Livingston's opening speech. (2 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 208-216
1	12	June 20, 1788: Hamilton's arguments. (1 leaf) SEE Elliot, p. 230ff
1	13	[June 20-21, 1788]: "The Arguments to prove the Sufficiency of Representation considered" (2 p.) SEE Elliot, vol.2, p. 228-9, 245
1	14	June 21, 1788: Smith, on representation. (8 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 243-8
1	15	June 21, 1788: Smith's "Answer to the Argument that so small a number are not safely to be trusted, considered" (4 p.)
1	16	June 21, 1788: Hamilton, on representation. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 251ff, 256-7
1	17	June 23, 1788: Harrison. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, p. 269ff; Jay. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, vol.

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		2, p. 282ff
1	18	June 24, 1788: Chancellor Livingston. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 291-3
1	19	June 24, 1788: Morris, Harrison, Chancellor Livingston, Hamilton. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 296-307
1	20	[June 25, 1788]: Smith "On the Senate"; ideas expressed, June 25. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 309
1	21	June 25, 1788: Smith, on the Senate. (2 p.), variation of previous document)
1	22	[June 26, 1788]: Elections - time and place debated; arguments of Mr. Harrison and Mr. Duane. (4 p.)
1	23	[June 26, 1788]: Smith, on time and place of elections. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 327
1	24	June 27, 1788: Smith, on the powers of government - to be defined and limited. (8 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 332-7
1	25	June 27, 1788: Chancellor Livingston, on Powers of government. (4 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 341-7
1	26	June 27 and 28, 1788: Hamilton, on powers of government. (12 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 347-56, 360-71
1	27	June 30, 1788: Smith, on Powers of government and on representation. (8 p.-- Section numbered 5-7 may not belong here) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 376-7 [McKesson notes in New-York Historical Society, 3½ pp. - wording differs considerably]
1	28	July 1, 1788: Smith, on Powers of government. (8 p.) SEE Elliot, vol. 2, p. 377-8 (Not located in Gilbert Livingston's or in Hamilton's notes)
1	29	July 2, 1788: Jay, Hamilton, Morris, on actions, loans, wars, etc. (4 p.) (Not located in Elliot; varies considerably from McKesson)
1	30	July 12, 1788: Jay, Hamilton, on power of Congress to accept or reject, etc.
1	31	July 14, 1788: Jay, Harrison, and Hamilton on adoption of proposed constitution (4 p.) [Identified from Gilbert Livingston's notes; not in Elliot or McKesson]
1	32	July 14 or 15, 1788: Jay on ratification of proposed constitution [Gilbert Livingston mentions speeches by Jay on both days]
1	33	July 15 and 16, 1788: Chancellor Livingston, Morris, Jay, on conditional mode of adoption and powers of congress. (8 p.) [Gilbert Livingston notes refer to speeches of these dates]
1	34	July 17, 1788: Smith, on ratification; presents resolution for conditional adoption.(2 items – 8 p.) [Gilbert Livingston notes mention only; not in Elliot or McKesson]
1	35	July [21?], 1788: Jay, on standing troops in time of war; Duane, on excise and direct taxes. (8 p.) [Gilbert Livingston notes say he was ill on July 21 when excise and direct taxes were considered]
1	36	[1788] Smith - Revisions of Articles 1 and 2 of Constitution. (4 p.)
1	37	[1788?] Smith - draft of letter to [?] on choosing electors. 2 p.
1	38	[1792] Smith - draft of opinion on disputed Clinton-Jay gubernatorial election of 1792 (6 p. – numbered 5-12)

Letters and documents transferred from the single accession collection.

Box	Folder	Description	Date	Year	Accession Number
2	1	Letter from Smith to [?]	December 2	1767	10856
2	2	Letter to George Clinton	April 3	1783	15027
2	3	Receipt from Smith to Thomas Steward	December 6	1785	2096
2	4	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	January 11	1787	2097
2	5	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	April 30	1787	2098
2	6	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	May 4	1787	2099
2	7	Letter from Smith to [James Cooper?]	January 23	1788	2100
2	8	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	August 16	1788	2101
2	9	Letter from Smith to [James Cooper]	September 12	1788	2102
2	10	Letter from Smith to Gilbert Livingston	January 1	1789	955
2	11	Statement of interest on bond	February 14	1789	2103
2	12	Letter from Smith and Peter Ketaltas to Messrs. Livingston & Kent.	May 15	1789	14541
2	13	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	June 13	1789	2104
2	14	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	September 4	1789	2105
2	15	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	September 11	1789	2106
2	16	Letter from Smith to Gilbert Livingston	April 24	1790	2107
2	17	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	September 24	1790	2108
2	18	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	July 15	1791	2109
2	19	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	August 19	1791	2091
2	20	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	August 26	1791	2092
2	21	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	November 5	1791	2093
2	22	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	December 17	1791	2094
2	23	Letter from Smith to Gilbert Livingston	May 24	1792	2110
2	24	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	October 10	1792	2095
2	25	Receipt from Smith to James Cooper	January 29	1793	2111
2	26	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	March 28	1795	3377
2	27	Letter from Smith to James Cooper	April 18	1795	2112
2	28	Evaluation of land and grist mill holdings	[no date]		2113

Selected documents related to Melancton Smith found in other collections.

Description	Date	Year	Call Number
Letter from Smith to Henry Livingston, Jr. (oversize single accession)	February 2	1771	X7089
Letter from Smith to John Tayler (in John Tayler Collection)	December 17	1783	SC20183 Box 1, Fol. 5
Report of the 1792 election canvassing committee	June 12	1792	1210

(re: New York /State election of governor, lieutenant governor, and senators)			
Letter from Smith to Pierpont Edwards (in Abbot Collection)	August 20	1792	SC9691-651

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