

**Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum
Record Unit 270
Marchant Family Collection
By Michael Coulter**

Descriptive Summary

Repository: Martha's Vineyard Museum

Call No.

Title: Marchant Family Collection

Creator: Michael Coulter

Quantity: .5 Cubic Feet

Abstract: This collection of legal and business documents involving the Marchant family span the years of 1782-1838. Many of the documents involve one member of the family, Cornelius Marchant, the majority of which are legal notices to early members of the island community. Also included are lists of goods for personal and business needs, a diary of Mary Marchant's, and a biography written by Dr. Charles E. Banks for Henry Marchant in 1916.

Acquisition Information: The were acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum in _____ by _____.

Processing Information: Michael Coulter

Access Restrictions: none

Use Restrictions: none

Preferred Citation for Publication: Marchant Family Collection, Martha's Vineyard Museum, Record Unit 270

Index Terms

Cornelius Marchant, 1795-1832

Justice of the Peace, Edgartown, Massachusetts, 1808-1832

Henry Marchant, 1741-1796

Series and Subseries Arrangement

Series I. Family Papers

Subseries A. Mary Marchant

Subseries B. Other family members

Series II. Cornelius Marchant, 1791-1832

Subseries A. Correspondence, 1795-1832

Subseries B. Business Papers

Series III. Court Papers of Cornelius Marchant

Biography/Historical Note:

John Marchant came to America in 1638, moving frequently before his death sometime before 1670. His son, also John Marchant, acquired land on the island and is assumed to have moved here in 1682. There have been several prominent Marchants since that time. Edgar Marchant, for example, founded the Vineyard Gazette in 1847.

“The Vineyard’s most distinguished son”, Henry Marchant (1741-1796), whose mother and father died in 1745 and 1747 respectively was raised by the family of Isabel Ward, daughter of the Governor of Rhode Island, and second wife of his father, Huxford Marchant. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1762, and became a lawyer. He was the Attorney General of Rhode Island 1770-1777, and was chosen to be a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1777. After the American Revolution President Washington appointed Henry as a Judge of the United States Court in Rhode Island.

The most prominent figure in this collection is Cornelius Marchant. Cornelius served as Justice of the Peace in Edgartown for the years 1806-1831. Justices of the Peace are charged with the task of settling misdemeanor cases, as well as debt disputes. Many of Cornelius’s legal documents deal with the demands of his court to have someone pay someone else an amount of money.

Scope and Content Note:

The Marchant Family Collection consists of a variety of original documents which are organized chronologically by family member . There is a year-long diary that belonged to Mary Marchant during the year 1862. Many of the documents in this collection are from Cornelius Marchant’s time serving as Justice of the Peace (1806-1831) and many island names such as Pease, Norton, Daggett, and Coffin are mentioned. There are additional references to Cornelius Marchant in other archival finding aids relating to his time serving as a clerk under George Athearn, Judge of Probate and Wills.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Family Papers

Subseries A. Mary Marchant

Folder 1. Diary, 1862

Folder 2. Correspondence, 1839-1843

Subseries B. Other family members

Folder 3. Gamaliel Marchant, 1782

Folder 4. George Marchant, 1788-1825

Folder 5. John Marchant, 1790

Folder 6. Henry H. Marchant, 1833-1874
Folder 7. Hubbard Marchant, 1846
Folder 8. Edward D. Marchant, 1847-1928
Folder 9. Allen Marchant, 1865
Folder 10. C. B. Marchant, 1900-1904
Folder 11. George L. Marchant, 1902-1903

Series II. Cornelius Marchant, 1791-1832

Subseries A. Correspondence, 1795-1832

Folder 12. Incoming Correspondence, 1805-1832
Folder 13. Outgoing Correspondence, 1795-1825

Subseries B. Business Papers

Folder 14. 1791-1831

Series III. Court Papers of Cornelius Marchant

Folder 15: Court Papers, 1808-1832