

# Tyler, Benjamin Owen calligraphy manuscript and Fenno family papers

Benjamin Owen Tyler calligraphic manuscript and Fenno family papers

1770, 1816

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## Title Statement

Tyler, Benjamin Owen calligraphy manuscript and Fenno family papers Benjamin Owen Tyler calligraphy manuscript and Fenno family papers MSS 16694

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

**Unit ID**

MSS 16694

**Unit ID**

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**Unit Date**

1770, 1816

**Mixed Materials**

1 (Ledger)

**Mixed Materials [X032669385]**

Archival Oversized Box S 7 (Flat\_Box)

**Container**

1/1 (Oversize\_Folder(Within\_an\_OSBox))

**Language**

English

**Extent**

0.4 Cubic Feet 1 box and oversize folder Memorial calligraphic broadside by Tyler, Fenno family bible with family birth and death dates, and two page letter from Mary Mansfield about the death of her brother Captain John Fenno Mansfield in General Hull's army in the War of 1812, Detroit, Michigan. broadside 12x10 inches

**Repository**

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

## Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Access**

The collection is open for research use.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

This collection was purchased from Ian Brabner by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 14 January 2019.

**Preferred Citation**

MSS 16694, Benjamin Owen Tyler calligraphic manuscript and Fenno family papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

## Biographical / Historical

Benjamin Owen Tyler (1789-aft. 1855) was born in Massachusetts and grew up in Vermont. He moved to New York City around 1814, where he taught penmanship and stenography and did ornamental writing for diplomas and other documents. In 1816, Tyler also taught penmanship at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He moved in January 1817, to Washington, D.C., where he taught handwriting and produced engraved portraits of famous Americans and created facsimiles of their letters. In 1818, he published what he considered the "first correct copy" of the Declaration of Independence. When he visited Monticello, he taught Thomas Jefferson's granddaughters how to improve their writing and "make pens scientifically." In 1820, he opened a lottery office in Washington with branches in other northeastern cities and operated it for a decade. He left Washington in 1830 and lived "in various parts of the United States and the Canadas," before returning briefly to Washington in 1834. When he returned, he offered some of his previous productions, as well as a few copies of his Declaration of Independence printing with facsimile signatures. He returned to the capital again in 1838, when he sold paintings and preserved paintings, drawings, and maps with a varnish invented by his wife. In 1840, Tyler created a pair of broadsides supporting the candidacy of Whig William Henry Harrison for president.

The Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library of the University of Virginia provides background on the Tyler printing:

After the War of 1812, American nationalism created a renewed patriotism, and interest in the nation's founding. In 1818, Benjamin Owen Tyler produced the first facsimile of the Declaration - an elaborate, painstakingly hand-copied engraving.

The book which Tyler used to take orders for his facsimile survives, in the Albert H. Small Declaration of Independence Collection. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, and other notables were among those who signed the book.

Source: 2022 Seth Kaller, Inc. • Historical Documents • Legacy Collections

Captain John Fenno Mansfield commanded the Cincinnati Light Infantry in the War of 1812 at General Hull's surrender in Detroit, Michigan. Soon after, Mansfield was seized by a fever while crossing Lake Erie and died. John Fenno Mansfield likely attended West Point, and thus the possible connection with this tribute accomplished by Benjamin Owen Tyler, given Tyler's tenure at West Point.

For more information on Captain Mansfield see

<https://thetroyhistoricalsociety.org/obits/Western%20Spy/Capt%20John%20Fenno%20Mansfield.htm>

## Content Description

Memorial of Captain John Fenno Mansfield (1788-1812) in this Eulogium in calligraphy by Benjamin Owen Tyler. At Westpoint Tyler designed and accomplished this memorial dated November 20, 1816. Calligraphically and stylistically, the broadside bears all of the hallmarks of Tyler's penmanship and design such as floating cherubic heads. The Eulogium's most telling couplet states: "Science and Taste, united, would have shed/ A living luster round his honored head."

Mansfield commanded the Cincinnati Light Infantry in the War of 1812 at General Hull's surrender in Detroit, Michigan. Soon after, Mansfield was seized by a fever while crossing Lake Erie and died. John Fenno Mansfield likely attended West Point, and thus the possible connection with this tribute accomplished by Benjamin Owen Tyler, given Tyler's tenure at West Point.

Also included is a Fenno family bible, and a 2 page signed letter from Mary Mansfield, (1792-1825), sister of Grace T. Mansfield and Captain Fenno, written in St. Croix, W.[est] I.[ndies], 1800 to her uncle Jacob Whitmore in Middletown, Connecticut about the death of her brother.

## Keywords

calligraphy (visual works)