

A Guide to the Webb-Prentis Family Papers

Webb-Prentis Family Papers, 1735-1942

1735-1942

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History

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A Guide to the Webb-Prentis Family Papers

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Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

4136-d

Language

English

Extent

ca. 1300 items

Repository

Special Collections, University of Virginia Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

No copies of the Civil War diary of Joseph Prentis Webb may be made without written permission of owner of original diary.

See the [University of Virginia Library's use policy](#).

Acquisition Information

This collection was given to the Library on 15 May 1978 by Mrs. Robert H. Webb, Charlottesville, Virginia, and Dr. Joseph Prentis Webb, Central Lake, Michigan.

Preferred Citation

Webb-Prentis Family Papers, Accession #4136-d, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

Scope and Content

This collection, consisting of ca. 1300 items and 29 bound volumes, (4 boxes, 1 oversize folder, 1.5 linear shelf feet), is an addition to the papers of the Webb and Prentis families given to the Library on 24 November 1972 (accession number 4136), and contains papers of the related Dardens, Allen, and Riddick families, all of Suffolk, Nansemond County, and of Williamsburg, Virginia. The collection spans the years 1735 to 1942, but the bulk of the papers date from ca. 1850 to 1890. Most of the papers relate to members of the above families who lived in Suffolk, with only a few papers pertaining to the branch of the Prentis family which resided in Williamsburg.

The personal papers in this collection consist of scattered correspondence, financial papers, miscellaneous manuscripts, memorabilia and printed material. The correspondence dates from 1823 to 1939, and for the most part is made up of invitations and calling cards received by members of the above families.

The financial papers date from 1735 to 1887, and consist of 18th century tax receipts from land owned in Virginia, probably by the Prentis family in Williamsburg; bills of exchange, bonds, and bills of lading belonging to William Prentis, John Prentis, and Robert Prentis; and miscellaneous financial papers of various members of the above families.

The miscellaneous manuscripts date from 1771 to 1888, with much of the material undated. These papers consist of poems, quotations from books, songs, memoranda of children's birth dates, lists of subscribers, compositions, gardening notes, recipes, and other assorted papers. Of particular interest in this section is the photocopy of a Civil War diary kept by Joseph Prentis Webb, ca. 1862 to 1863.

The memorabilia is for the most part undated and unidentified, and consists of such items as paper dolls, silhouettes, and locks of hair. There is also a photograph of "Rose Hill," an early home of the Allen family in Suffolk. The printed material dates from 1774 to 1942, and is comprised of newspaper clippings, programs, and advertisements. Of particular interest for local history relating to this collection is a Sketch Book of Suffolk, Virginia, dating from ca. 1886.

The professional papers of Robert Riddick Prentis comprise the next main series in this collection. These papers, mainly correspondence and some related legal material, concern four cases of estate settlement and other fiscal litigation handled by Withers and Prentis, the Suffolk law firm in which Robert R. Prentis was a partner. The series dates from 1812 to 1887. Robert R. Prentis (born 11 April 1818) was the son of Joseph Prentis, Jr., who served as clerk of the Circuit and County Courts for Suffolk, and surveyor and inspector of the port of Suffolk, and Susan Caroline Riddick. Robert R. Prentis served as mayor of Suffolk from 1883 to 1885, and practiced as an attorney in the courts of Nansemond, Isle of Wight and Southampton counties, and the United States District Court at Norfolk.

A major portion of this collection consists of the financial papers of Joseph Prentis Webb. Webb was the son of Robert S. Webb and Margaret Susan (Prentis) Webb, the sister of Robert R. Prentis. He was born in Suffolk on 30 October 1843, and served in the 13th Virginia Cavalry with the Army of Northern Virginia from 1862 to 1865, during which time he wrote the diary referred to earlier. Immediately after the war he started a drug company in Suffolk, and later expanded the business to include paints, building supplies, books, stationery, and a variety of other goods. He served as treasurer of the board of vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Suffolk, a vice-president of the Suffolk Y.M.C.A., and was treasurer of the Suffolk Street Railway Company (formerly the Suffolk Street Car Company).

Webb's papers, dating from 1838 to 1892, are financial and legal records from his various business and service activities. In addition to receipts, accounts, and correspondence relating to his building supply contracts and store, there are deeds, bonds, and other legal records of property ownership, tax and license receipts, pension records, receipts of dues paid the Knights of Huron, and records from Webb's other activities as listed above. Webb's papers extend to within two months of his death on 27 December 1892.

In 1885, a fire swept through Suffolk, destroying not only Joseph P. Webb's store but the business of Darden and Eley. This dry goods and hardware store was established in 1866 by Robert Seth Eley and Algernon

Sidney Darden, president of the Commercial Bank of Suffolk, whose daughter, Annie Jordan Darden, in 1881 had married Joseph Prentis Webb. Following the fire the two businesses cooperated in building a new store on Washington Square in Suffolk to house them both. Robert S. Eley died in 1886, and the business was carried on by A. S. Darden who continued to build and expand it in cooperation with Webb, and to divide the profits from the business with Eliza P. Eley (possibly the former Eliza Jackson (Prentis) Vickery), the widow of R. S. Eley.

The records of the business of Darden and Eley form the last major series in this collection. These papers, which date from 1867 to 1905, consist mainly of deeds, receipts, and accounts, and chronicle the changes the business went through as a result of the events related above. They include: store receipts of Darden and Eley; deeds made by Darden, Webb, Eley, and others; tax receipts; accounts from the settlement of the estate of R. S. Eley; and receipts and invoices from the building of the new store.

The remainder of the collection is comprised of ledgers, oversized materials, and Bible records. The ledgers and oversized items are listed at the end of this guide. The ledgers date from 1733 to 1907, and include court memoranda books of Joseph Prentis and an 18th century Robert Prentis, various financial ledgers and cashbooks, commonplace books, a diary of Joseph P. Webb, and some pastoral notebooks of the Reverend James Murray. Papers formerly inserted in the ledgers and photocopies made of fragile material in the ledgers can also be found in this section. The oversized material consists of six scattered items pulled from various parts of the collection. The Bible records are electrostatic copies of pages in Bibles of the Allen family, the Darden-Allen-Webb-Prentis family, and the Prentis-Riddick-Webb family, and they are filed in the Bible transcripts tray in the Reading Room. The originals were returned to the owners.

Arrangement

The Webb-Prentis papers are arranged in six series: I. Personal Papers of the Prentis, Webb, Darden, and Allen Families; II. Professional Papers of Robert Riddick Prentis, Attorney; III. Financial Papers of Joseph Prentis Webb; IV. Business Papers of Darden and Eley; V. Ledgers; and VI. Oversize .

The personal papers are arranged in five sub-series: 1. correspondence, 2. financial papers, 3. miscellaneous manuscripts, 4. memorabilia and photograph, and 5. printed material. Sub-series one and three--the correspondence and miscellaneous manuscripts--are divided between the 18th and early 19th century papers of the Prentis and Riddick families and the late 19th century papers of the Webb and Darden families, with some exceptional items foldered separately. The financial papers comprising sub-series two are divided according to type of document. Each sub-series has been arranged chronologically.

The professional papers of Robert R. Prentis--Series II are grouped according to case, as they were arranged when they arrived in the Library. Any notations which appeared on the original wrappings of the papers have been transferred to the present folder headings. Series III, the financial papers of Joseph Prentis Webb, and Series IV, the business papers of Darden and Eley, have also been kept in their original order as far as it existed, and any original labelling which survived has been copied onto the new folder headings. These three series are in chronological order.

The ledgers and oversized material comprising Series V and VI are arranged chronologically. Any titles which appeared on the ledgers have been incorporated in quotation marks into the listing. Papers pulled from the ledgers and photocopies made from the ledgers are filed in chronological order at the end of the ledger series.

Container List

I. PERSONAL PAPERS OF THE PRENTIS, WEBB, DARDEN, AND ALLEN FAMILIES

Correspondence: Prentis and Riddick Families

Unit Date 1823 Dec 18-1862 Feb 24, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent

24 items

Correspondence: Webb and Darden Families

Unit Date 1881 Jan 27-1939 May 19

Container Box 1

Extent

10 items

Financial Papers: Tax Receipts

Unit Date 1735 Oct 17-1750 Jun 14

Container Box 1

Extent

104 items

Financial Papers: Bills of Exchange, Bonds and Bills of Lading

Unit Date 1754 Jul 24-1780 Feb 7

Container Box 1

Extent

16 items

Financial Papers: Miscellaneous Financial Material

Unit Date 1778 Nov 5-1887 May 31

Container Box 1

Extent

9 items

Miscellaneous Manuscripts: Prentis Family of Suffolk and Williamsburg, and the Allen and Riddick Families

Unit Date 1771 Sep 16-post 1861, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent

21 items

Miscellaneous Manuscripts: Darden and Webb Families

Unit Date 1862 Feb 22-1888 Mar 22, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent

12 items

Miscellaneous Manuscripts: Civil War Diary of [Joseph Prentis Webb] (photocopy)

Unit Date ca. 1862-1863

Container Box 1

Extent

1 item

Miscellaneous Manuscripts: Deed from Wm. W. Eley to Robert R. Allen

Unit Date 1881 Dec 13

Container Box 1

Extent

1 item

Memorabilia and Photograph

Unit Date 1870 Jul, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent

13 items

Printed Material

Unit Date ca. 1774-1942 Jul 19, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent

51 items

II. PROFESSIONAL PAPERS OF ROBERT RIDDICK PRENTIS, ATTORNEY

Correspondence and Related Material re Whitehead vs. Whitehead (2 folders)

Unit Date 1812 Jun 23-1887 Jul 27, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent

110 items

Chancery Papers re Ballard Copeland vs. Dempsey Reed's Heirs

Unit Date 1882 Aug 29-1883 Apr

Container Box 2

Extent

7 items

Correspondence and Related Material re Court Cases Handled by Withers & Prentis

Unit Date 1883 Jun 13-1887 Dec 28, n.d.

Container Box 2

Extent

11 items

III. FINANCIAL PAPERS OF JOSEPH PRENTIS WEBB

Miscellaneous Legal Papers, mainly of Joseph Prentis Webb

Unit Date 1838 Jan 20-1890 Nov 11

Container Box 2

Extent

18 items

Overdue Notes

Unit Date 1855 Sep 19-1889 Aug 7, n.d.

Container Box 2

Extent

29 items

Miscellaneous Business and Financial Papers of Joseph Prentis Webb

Unit Date 1871 Jan 24-1892 Oct 22, n.d.

Container Box 2

Extent

86 items

Tax and License Receipts

Unit Date 1873-1890 Jul 1, n.d.

Container Box 2

Extent

95 items

Knights of Huron Dues Receipts

Unit Date 1880 May 4-1888 Sep 1

Container Box 2

Extent

143 items

Papers of Joseph Prentis Webb as Treasurer of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Suffolk, Virginia

Unit Date 1882-1892 Oct 10

Container Box 2

Extent

99 items

Correspondence with Nash, Porter & Co. and Others re Business Deal with Joseph Prentis Webb

Unit Date 1886 Sep 22-1887 Mar 14, n.d.

Container Box 2

Extent

18 items

Suffolk Street Railway Company Papers

Unit Date 1891 Jul 8-1892 Apr 30, n.d.

Container Box 2

Extent

51 items

IV. BUSINESS PAPERS OF DARDEN & ELEY

Deeds Relating to the Business of Darden & Eley

Unit Date 1867 Nov 14-1905 Jan 18, n.d.

Container Box 3

Extent

25 items

Receipts, Accounts, and Invoices from the Building of New Stores by D & E and JPW

Unit Date 1884 Jan 11-1887 Feb 11, n.d.

Container Box 3

Extent

60 items

Receipts, Accounts, etc. of Darden & Eley

Unit Date 1885 May 23-1887 Oct 29

Container Box 3

Extent

100 items

Receipts and Accounts from the Settlement of the Estate of R. S. Eley

Unit Date 1886 Mar 10-1893 Jan 13

Container Box 3

Extent

55 items

Notes on the Settlement of Building Costs Shared by D & E and Joseph Prentis Webb

Unit Date ca. 1886

Container Box 3

Extent

13 items

Receipts and Accounts of A. S. Darden and Joseph Prentis Webb from Building Projects

Unit Date 1887 Jun 1-1892 Feb 25

Container Box 3

Extent

42 items

Tax Receipts of Darden & Eley

Unit Date 1887 Nov 28-1892

Container Box 3

Extent

12 items

V. LEDGERS

Ledger [of Robert Prentis, Attorney]

Unit ID 1

Unit Date 1733, 1745-1782

Container Box 4

Ledger, Letterbook and Memoranda Book

Unit ID 2

Unit Date 1743, 1754-1760

Container Box 4

Account Book - "List of Debts due to Richard Wall when he left Wmsburgh," [kept by John Prentis]

Unit ID 3

Unit Date 1764-1768

Container Box 4

Ledger of Joseph Prentis & Co.

Unit ID 4

Unit Date 1778-1779

Container Box 4

Pocket Ledger with Index

Unit ID 5

Unit Date 1782-1787

Container Box 4

Court Memoranda Book - "York [Causes]"

Unit ID 6

Unit Date 1786-1788

Container Box 4

Court Memoranda Book - "Elizabeth City Docket"

Unit ID 7

Unit Date 1786-1788

Container Box 4

Memoranda Book of Joseph Prentis

Unit ID 8

Unit Date 1790 Feb, 1807

Container Box 4

Scope and Content

(Please use photocopies filed at back of box -original very fragile)

Cashbook

Unit ID 9

Unit Date 1805-1809

Container Box 4

"Memoranda-Nansemond Superior Court - Joseph Prentis"

Unit ID 10

Unit Date 1815, 1824-1838

Container Box 4

Account Book of the Estate of Daniel Webb

Unit ID 11

Unit Date 1816-1819

Container Box 4

Commonplace Book of Robert H. Webb

Unit ID 12

Unit Date 1818-1819, 1838-1845

Container Box 4

Lawyer's Notebook and Account Book

Unit ID 13

Unit Date 1820-1822

Container Box 4

Bank Book of Joseph Prentis

Unit ID 14

Unit Date 1824-1835

Container Box 4

Sunday School Record Book of Margaret Susan Prentis

Unit ID 15

Unit Date 1828

Container Box 4

Commonplace Book

Unit ID 16

Unit Date 1847-1853

Container Box 4

Register of Members of the Episcopal Parsonage Society

Unit ID 17

Unit Date 1857-1860

Container Box 4

Diary of Joseph P. Webb

Unit ID 18

Unit Date 1858, 1864

Container Box 4

Songbook and Autograph Book

Unit ID 19

Unit Date 1863-1865

Container Box 4

Commonplace Book of Joseph P. Webb

Unit ID 20

Unit Date 1864-1865

Container Box 4

Pastoral Notebook of the Rev. James Murray

Unit ID 21

Unit Date 1871-1883

Container Box 4

Journal and Cashbook of the Rev. James Murray

Unit ID 22

Unit Date 1873-1876

Container Box 4

Pastoral Notebook of the Rev. James Murray

Unit ID 23

Unit Date 1883-1884

Container Box 4

Pastoral Notebook of the Rev. James Murray

Unit ID 24

Unit Date 1884-1885

Container Box 4

Commonplace Book

Unit ID 25

Unit Date 1890, 1902

Container Box 4

Political Notebook

Unit ID 26

Unit Date ca. 1892

Container Box 4

Scope and Content

(Newspaper clippings and photocopies at back of box)

Register of Insurance Policies of R. R. Allen

Unit ID 27

Unit Date 1905-1907

Container Box 4

Index

Unit ID 28

Unit Date n.d.

Container Box 4

Index

Unit ID 29

Unit Date n.d.

Container Box 4

Papers Pulled from Ledgers No. 1, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, and 25

Unit Date 1765-1818, n.d.

Container Box 4

Extent

41 items

Photocopies of Ledger No. 8, "Memoranda Book of Joseph Prentis"

Unit Date 1790 Feb, 1807

Container Box 4

Scope and Content

(Original fragile -please use photocopies)

Photocopies of Folded Newspaper Clippings in Ledger No. 26, "ca. 1892 Political Notebook"

Unit Date ca. 1892

Container Box 4

Newspaper Clippings and Photocopies pulled from Ledger No. 26, "ca. 1892 Political Notebook"

Unit Date ca. 1892

Container Box 4

Extent

13 items

Commonplace book of Mary S. Allen

Unit Date 1852-1861

Container Box 4

VI. OVERSIZE FOLDER

Broadside - "To Hugh Blair Grigsby," Norfolk, mailed to Joseph Prentis, Virginia Convention, Richmond

Unit Date 1829 Dec 10

Container Oversize (box)

Diploma - from Wesleyan Female College, Murfreesboro, North Carolina, awarded to Lucie F. Allen

Unit Date 1859 Jul 20

Container Oversize (box)

Broadside - announcing a concert for the benefit of yellow fever sufferers

Unit Date 1878 Nov 8

Container Oversize (box)

Notice and plat of lands to be sold in Charlottesville, Virginia, in settlement of the case of Whitehead vs. Whitehead

Unit Date 1882 Dec 28

Container Oversize (box)

"W. B. Whiteheads plat" of land

Unit Date n.d.

Container Oversize (box)

"Plat of Land near Bethesda Church I. of Wt. Co. Va.[-] Land bought by Jno. R. Kilby of R. H. B. Deusen"

Unit Date n.d.

Container Oversize (box)

Genealogical chart of the Jordan family

Unit Date n.d.

Container Oversize (box)

CURRENCY FILED IN MONEY TRAY

VIRGINIA: ten pound note (serial no. 5127)

Unit Date 1757 June 8

Container Money tray (box)

VIRGINIA: 100 shilling note (serial no. 147)

Unit Date 1758 Oct. 12

Container Money tray (box)

NORTH CAROLINA: Half dollar note (Spanish dollar) (serial no. 2891)

Unit Date 1775 Aug. 21

Container Money tray (box)

NORTH CAROLINA: Four-dollar note (Spanish dollars) 5 items: a) serial no. 3; b) serial no. 428; c) serial no. 616 (right half missing); d) serial no. 1435 (right half missing); e) serial no. 2091

Unit Date 1775 Aug. 21

Container Money tray (box)

UNITED COLONIES: Four-dollar note (Spanish dollars) serial no. 25462

Unit Date 1777 Feb. 26

Container Money tray (box)

VIRGINIA: Fifteen-dollar note (Spanish dollars) serial no. 1348

Unit Date 1778 Oct. 5

Container Money tray (box)

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA: One dollar note

Unit Date 186-Dec. 2

Container Money tray (box)

