

Duponceau, Pierre Etienne, Papers

Pierre Etienne Duponceau papers

1781, 1844-1845



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Container

1 (Folder)

Language

English French

Creator

Steuben, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludolf Gerhard Augustin, Baron von, 1730-1794

source

Frith, Mimika Farish

Extent

0.1 Linear Foot

Repository

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Gift of Mimika Farish Frith.

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Pierre Etienne Duponceau Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Biographical Information:

Peter Stephen DuPonceau (born Pierre-Etienne Du Ponceau) was a French linguist, philosopher, and jurist. He was born in St-Martin de RÃ© on June 3, 1760, and died in Philadelphia on April 1, 1844. He spent the majority of his life in the United States.

DuPonceau's education took place at Benedictine College, where he gained an interest in Linguistics. However, he abruptly ended his education after only 18 months over a dissatisfaction with the scholarly philosophy taught at the college. He emigrated to America in 1777, at age 17, with Baron von Steuben. Once there, he served as a secretary for Steuben in the Revolutionary Army. After the war, he moved to Philadelphia, where he would spend the rest of his life.

DuPonceau joined the American Philosophical Society in 1791 and served as president of it from 1827 until his death. He became famous in the field of linguistics for his analysis of Indigenous languages of the Americas, as a member of Society's Historical and Literary Committee, he helped build a collection of texts detailing the native languages of the Americas. His book concerning their grammatical systems (*MÃ©moire sur le systeme grammatical des langues de quelques nations Indiennes de l'AmÃ©rique du Nord*) won the Volney prize of the French Institute in 1835.

DuPonceau was also one of the first western linguists to hold the view that Chinese writing was based on spoken words, and not ideas and concepts. He used the example of Vietnamese using chu Nom at the time to show that the Vietnamese employed Chinese characters primarily for sound and not for meaning. It would be over 100 years before this idea would become accepted in linguistic circles. Further information about this individual or organization may be available in the Special Collections Research Center Wiki:

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individual or organization may be available in the Special Collections Research Center Wiki:
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Scope and Contents

Letter, 1781 August 29, from Baron von Steuben, Charlottesville, Virginia, to Pierre Etienne [Peter Stephen] Duponceau, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Duponceau's Carte de Visite. The letter is written in French and von Steuben states he has had no reply to letters sent to Pres. Washington and to the Secretary of the Congress; von Steuben plans to leave for Carolina to join Gen. Greene.

In French. ALS. Four newspaper clippings concerning Duponceau. 1844-1845.

Carte de Visite of Pierre Etienne Duponceau (possibly of a statue) with notation, "Presented by Mis Mimika Farish Frith, of St. Louis and Paris, June 11, 1938.

Also included are a typed transcription of the letter and clippings about Duponceau (1844-1845).

Keywords

United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783

Visiting cards

Clippings (information artifacts)

Letters (correspondence)

Duponceau, Peter Etienne, 1760-1844

Frith, Mimika Farish