

Lester-Garland Family fonds. - 1761- 1764, 1803 - 1930. - 5.5 cm

Administrative history

Benjamin Lester became the most powerful and wealthiest merchant in the Newfoundland fishing trade both in England and Newfoundland towards the end of the 18th Century. He dominated Poole politics serving as Mayor 1781 - 1783 and Member of Parliament 1790 - 1796. Until 1776, Lester spent summers in Trinity and occasionally overwintered. He married Susannah Taverner and had a son and four daughters. He left Trinity for good in 1776 after the Americans offered a bounty for his capture. Agents kept his business going until he died in 1802. Shortly after Lester's death, the whole of his estate was acquired by his son-in-law George Garland. Two of George's sons, John Bingley and George Jr. came to Trinity to work for their father and in 1824 the business became theirs. Between 1772 - 1774 Benjamin Lester raised a massive three storey Georgian style dwelling which was renovated by the Garlands in 1819. Although Trinity experienced some population decline in the late 19th century, the town still supported a few merchants and a sizeable middle-class. When the Ryan Brothers acquired the Garland Plantation in 1905, they re-established Trinity as a major mercantile centre. The decline of the salt codfish trade and the collapse of the Labrador fishery caused Ryan's to close in 1947.

Custodial history

The files that make up this fonds come from various sources: the diary of Benjamin Lester was donated by George Lester-Garland in February, 1970; correspondence came from the estate of John Lester Garland, 2006; and the ships log was donated by Corbett Pittman in May 2007. For the most part, Series 3 became via a visit to Trinity of Dr Alan Perry in the autumn of 2008 and are from the estate of John Lester Garlan.

Scope and content

The fonds consists of a diary written by Benjamin Lester between December 24th 1761 to June 15th 1764 as well as a typed transcription of the diary that was completed by David White, President of the Trinity Historical Society in 2004. It also contains a ship's log of the ship *Industry* from Trinity towards Poole and the ship *Minerva's* return trip from Poole towards Trinity in 1803 that was captained by Corbett Pittman as well as correspondence to various members of the Lester-Garland family from 1922 - 1930. There exists some considerable correspondence (dated from 1946 - 1973, with some undated) from Rachel Paterson to Miss Edith Lester-Garland sent from Australia and other points in S. E. Asia and N. E. Africa. Included also is a house plan as well as a pocket diary for 1891 (author unknown).

Notes

Supplied title based on provenance.

Series 1: Diary of Benjamin Lester. - 1761 - 1764. - 2cm

This photocopy of Benjamin Lester's diary was presented to Walter White, member of the Trinity Historical Society, from George Lester-Garland in February, 1970. The diary was written from Trinity and Poole between December 24th 1761 to June 15th , 1764. The diary was received November 17th. 1874 by John Bingley Garland the last surviving grandson of Benjamin Lester. The original diary is held in the Dorset County Records Office.

Series 2: Ship's Log. - 1803. - 0.5cm

Contains a record of the ship *Industry's* voyage from Trinity towards Poole and the ship *Minerva's* return voyage from Poole towards Trinity. The log records weather conditions, courses, direction of wind, etc

Series 3: Correspondence. - 1922 - 1930. - 0.5cm

Correspondence written within the Lester Garland family regarding the family business, etc

Series 3b: Correspondence. - 1946 - 1973. - 1cm

Correspondence from Australia, SE Asia and NE Africa to Miss E. Lester Garland, a pocket diary, extract on the firm of Messrs. Stilwell & Sons, floor plans of a house and garden, and a newspaper photo of "Bathurst Carrillon"

Series 4: Various. - 1.5 cm

(A) Writings of Edith Lester Garland re the genealogy of the Lester-Garlands. A manuscript in a hard cover book with lined pages. The book also includes instructions for the disposal of the property of Lester Vallis Lester-Garland (1860 -1944), written in his own hand.

(B) Several loose leaf notes of various handwritings related to the Lester-Garland genealogy.

(C) A newspaper clipping of the Rev. George Vallis Garland's last will and testament.

Location: Box 1