Special Collections Department

Grubb Family Papers

1737 -1940

Manuscript Collection Number: 355
Extent: .5 linear ft.
Content: Ledgers, estate records, bills, receipts, funeral notices, correspondence, legal documents, personal notes, and miscellany.
Access: The collection is open for research.
Processed: November 1997 by Arthur Siegel.

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Biographical Note

The Grubb family were prominent owners of agricultural and mining lands in the Delaware River valley of Delaware, southeastern Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The family could trace its roots back to Denmark in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and by the sixteenth Henry Grubbe, Esq., the direct ancestor of the American Grubbs, was residing in Cornwall, England. John Grubb (1652-1708) came from Cornwall in 1679 to Upland (what is now Chester, Pennsylvania) and purchased land there, and his son, Emanuel Grubb, was apparently the first male child to be born of English parents in the new colony of Pennsylvania. Emanuel and another son, John Grubb II (1684-1757) settled in Brandywine Hundred, in what was to be known as Grubb's Landing, and lived on "Stockton Plantation," a property of some 600 acres that would remain in the family possession for generations. Grubb's Landing was one of the first shipping points in New Castle County, Delaware, and was one of the points of access to the colonies by British ships during the American Revolution. In 1727 Emanuel was commissioned as a justice in the Court of Common Pleas.

The Grubb family was very well connected, maintaining personal and marriage ties with other politically prominent regional families. Some of these included the Bassets, the Talleys, the Crawfords, and the Claytons. Indeed, Emanuel Grubb's grandson James Grubb (1768-1827) married Sarah Ford, who was the granddaughter of William Clayton, governor of Pennsylvania and president of the Colonial Council and of the Upland Court. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they embraced the religion of the Society of Friends, and when the American Revolution broke out, John Grubb II's grandson, Isaac Grubb (1749-1831) refused to fight on account of his pacifist beliefs. Therefore, he paid for a substitute to take his place.

There are a vast number of individuals within the family, but only a small handful of these are found in the collection. Moreover, the details of their lives are generally very sketchy at best. Isaac Grubb was a Federalist, and it is uncertain what the family politics were before and during the Revolution, but it would seem that, after Jefferson took office, the family became supporters of the Democratic party. Adam Grubb (1787-1867), for example, was an ardent Jacksonian Democrat, and was a prominent member of his party. He was also an exhorter and class-leader of his church, a Methodist church, suggesting a movement away from Quakerism. Both he and his wife Julia were buried in Siloam Methodist Episcopal graveyard in Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

After receiving a basic public school training, Isaac N. Grubb (1823-1904) continued the family occupation as farmer and stock raiser. He was also prominent in the local politics of Brandywine Hundred. He was a tax collector and a school commissioner for District 4, Brandywine Hundred. In 1884 he was elected Levy Court Commissioner and was re-elected to that post in 1888, as well as holding the office of president of the board of commissioners from 1886-1890. As such, he was responsible for a vast number of internal improvements within the New Castle County area. He was also a member of the Fire Insurance Company of Mill Creek Hundred, and of various secret societies.

Overall, despite the proliferation of legal and personal documents, the collection by itself provides an incomplete and confused record of family relationships. Though a partial genealogical reconstruction is possible in relation to several of the major figures, the constant recycling of given names -- such as John, Adam, Isaac, and Samuel -- makes much of this guesswork. The situation becomes even more problematic when dealing with extended family, as a reference may be as vague as "cousin William," when there are three or four Williams in one generation. Fortunately, this confusion is alleviated somewhat by the following genealogical table, which was constructed from information provided in Scharf's The History of the State of Delaware. However, not all family members are included in this chart, as the relationships of various William and Henry Grubbs remain unclear. Moreover, virtually nothing can be said for other members of the family, such as Mary Grubb, who figure prominently in the collection.
Genealogical Chart

Descendants of John Grubb

* Names in bold type are included in the collection

John Grubb (1652-1708)
  Emanuel Grubb (1682-1767)
    Emanuel Grubb (1729-1799) m. Anne
      James Grubb (1768-1827) m. Sarah Ford (g.daughter of Wm. Clayton)
        Wellington Grubb (1811-1853)
          Ignatius C. Grubb (b.1841)
  Peter Grubb
  Edward Grubb
  John Grubb II (1684-1757) m. Rachel (b.1690)
    William Grubb (1713-1775) m. Lydia
      Mary (Grubb) Robinson m. Charles Robinson
    Samuel Grubb (1722-1769)
      Mary Grubb (b.1715)
        Rachel Grubb (1720-1778)
      Adam Grubb (1724-1798)
        Richard Grubb (b.1726)
      Hannah Grubb (1728-1818)
  John Grubb III (1718-1780) m. Rebecca (1727-1760) and Lydia
    Sarah (Grubb) Hewin (1764-1830) m. Thomas Hewin
    Jemima (Grubb) Staples (1747-1796) m. John Staples
      Rebecca (Grubb) Dickenson (1760-1797) m. Daniel Dickenson
      Jemima Dickenson
      Rachael (Grubb) Jefferies (1758-1799)
    Samuel Grubb (1752-1778) m. Lydia
      Thomas Grubb
      Prudence Grubb (b.1754)
      Mary Grubb (1756-1791)
      Charity Grubb (b.1762)
      Lydia Grubb (1766-1834)
    John Grubb IV (b.1768)
  Isaac Grubb (1749-1831) m. Margaret Crawford (1753-1825)
    Samuel Grubb (b.1775)
    Rebecca (Grubb) Talley (1777-1836) m. Harman Talley (1775-1858)
    John Grubb (b.1781)
    Hannah (Grubb) Hickman (1779-1803) m. James Hickman
    Isaac Grubb (1783-1850)
      Prudence (Grubb) Lodge (b.1785) m. Henry Lodge
      Clarissa (Grubb) Wilson (b.1790) m. Samuel Wilson
      Lydia (Grubb) Martin (b.1793) m. Thomas Martin
      William Glover (b.1795)
      Anna Maria Grubb (1800-1884)
    Adam Grubb (1787-1867) m. Julia Ann Talley (1798-1877)[daughter of Harman and Priscilla (Foulk) Talley]
      Lewis Grubb (1817-1888) m. Mary Ford
      Harman Wesley Grubb (1818-1897) m. Sidney(1826-1908) [daughter of David Smith]
      Priscilla Grubb (b.1821)
      John T. Grubb (b.1825)
      Anna Maria (Grubb) Smith (1829-1884) m. George Smith
      Francis H. Grubb (1832-1856)
      Rebecca Grubb (b.1835)
      Charles E. Grubb (1837-1887)
      Isaac N. Grubb (1823-1904) m. Julia E. Smith (1831-1881)[daughter of William and Rebecca Smith]

Scope and Content Note

The Grubb Family Papers concern the business, legal, and personal affairs of the Grubb family, prominent landowners in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The collection, spanning from 1737-1940, consists of one linear foot of material comprising correspondence, wills, estate records, account ledgers, receipts and discharges, funeral notices, certification notices, legal items, newspaper clippings, and ephemera. The collection is divided into three main series: I. account books of Isaac Grubb, Sr., II. personal and estate papers, III. financial and legal affairs.
The first series spans the period 1800-1863, and contains four account books which deal with the financial business of Isaac Grubb, Sr., Adam Grubb, and Isaac N. Grubb. The second series spans the period 1759-1927 and concerns a narrow aspect of the personal affairs of the Grubb family. Included are personal letters (1834-1827), as well as funeral notices and legal and financial papers regarding the estates of John Grubb, Mary Grubb, Samuel Grubb, Sr., Adam Grubb (1789-1799), John Crawford, Jemima Staples, Catherine Plankinton, Isaac Grubb, and Adam Grubb (1859-1877). The third series spans the period 1737-1940, and deals with a wider scope of the financial and legal affairs of the Grubb family. Included are bills; receipts; indentures; promissory notes; bonds; articles of agreement; tax and banking information; certification notices; conditions of sale; and a number of miscellaneous financial, legal, and personal items.

Though the scope of this collection deals with the Grubb family throughout a long period which saw the eruption of several major wars, most notably the American Revolution and the Civil War, there is surprisingly little spoken of these conflicts. One of the few references made to war was in an 1861 letter from Clarissa Wilson, who wrote that the sons of her brother William may have volunteered in the army. Indeed, in the convulsions of the American revolution many wealthy families found themselves faced with financial ruin or confiscation of their property, but the silence of the records seems to suggest that the Grubb family escaped this fate. Unfortunately, the bulk of the data from the 1770s and 1780s concerns legal and financial business regarding the estates of Mary and Samuel Grubb Sr., thus leaving few general records with which to work. One interesting item, however, is an 1861 notice from the Board of Enrollment excusing Isaac N. Grubb from service in the Union army. He managed to escape the draft by hiring someone to serve in his place, a common method used by those who could afford it.

The account books of Isaac Grubb, Sr. contain a record of the names and occupations of businessmen and tradesmen from various places in Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, and include such varied professions as clock makers, wheelwrights, shoemakers, and tanners. In addition, those with whom he did business were asked to sign his account book in receipt of payment. These books provide a useful source of social and economic history. It is possible to get a good sense of the activities of a landowner and tradesman, as he buys and sells goods at market, makes repairs on his properties, and takes in lodgers and indentured servants. Moreover, the buying and selling price of numerous commodities are listed, providing valuable economic data for the region and allowing researchers to study prices fluctuations. Isaac Grubb also used his account books to document personal happenings among family and friends, and as a place to list various medical remedies.

The estate papers of members of the Grubb family include wills, receipts, and other legal items pertaining primarily to the settlement of accounts between executors and beneficiaries. Only the wills of Mary Grubb (probably the daughter of John Grubb II), Jemima Staples, and Catherine Plankinton are provided in this collection, and these provide an informative, though limited, source of information on family relationships. It is interesting that these papers stretch occasionally over several decades, indicating the dilatory nature of action on the part of executors as well as the legal battles which frequently ensued. Indeed, the records seem to suggest that members of the family did not hesitate to take legal action against one another (such as the apparent wrangling between Samuel and Isaac Grubb over the estate of their father John Grubb II), nor was indebtedness between close relatives uncommon. For most of these individuals, however, the only way to determine the stipulations in their wills is through receipts and discharges provided by their executors.

The family was involved in a multitude of other legal activities, as the articles of agreement and contracts of indenture would indicate. As prominent landowners they must have had a large number of tenants, including other members of the Grubb family. Such was the case with a certain Samuel Grubb, who was renting his land from others. Indeed, it would seem that there was a decline in the fortunes among some of the peripheral branches of the family, as several individuals lived and died in a significant amount of debt. Nevertheless, the records indicate a wide network of interdependence among relatives and close friends, as the institution of legal guardianship over orphaned children was an occasional occurrence. Other items of note include an 1882 list of registered voters in Brandywine Hundred, which lists 189 names and provides a good record of residents and families in the region. The numerous receipts in the collection show the economic activities of members of the family (goods purchased and loans made). In addition, many of the legal documents, such as the promissory notes, contain witness lists, and it is often only through these that mention is made of some of the more peripheral members of the family.
This is essentially a continuation of the account book listed above, except that the British monetary system has been changed to "D[ollars]" and "C[ents]." There are also notes written on the inside of the front cover. Included towards the back is a loose sheet of devotional narrative entitled: "Whoa shall the ungodly Apear /are the godly .", and on the inside back cover is written a medical cure "receipt to stop blood."

Series 2. Personal Business
This series spans the period 1759-1928 and includes personal correspondence among members of the Grubb family; funeral notices and legal and financial business regarding the wills and estates of deceased relatives; and miscellaneous papers, including such items as newspaper clippings, a list of registered voters in Brandywine Hundred, a frontispiece illustration, and a poem.

F5 Letters, 1834-1927 (29 items)
These are primarily family letters, and often contain correspondence from two or three individuals in a single letter. Several are written from Louis and Mary Grubb to their parents, and several are written and received by Adam Grubb. Other individuals include members of the prominent Talley family, and Clarissa G. Wilson, sister of Adam Grubb. Also included are two notices of termination of lease by Adam Grubb, dated to 1862 and 1866.

F6 Funeral Notices, 1859-1881 (7 items)
Wills and Estate Records, 1759-1877
These include the financial and legal business for the estates of several members of the Grubb family. There are a few wills, but most of the items are receipts, accounts, and discharges of payment to beneficiaries stipulated in the wills of the deceased. The executors of the estates, clearly named in each case, were responsible for this financial business, and whose name and signature is found on virtually every item.

F7 John Grubb, 1759-1765 (3 items)
Includes receipts and a financial account of Samuel Grubb, executor.

F8 Mary Grubb, 1775-1782 (15 items)
Includes a will, discharges, and receipts.

F9 Samuel Grubb, Sr., 1778-1807 (14 items)
Includes agreements, discharges, and receipts from Isaac Grubb, executor.

F10 Adam Grubb, 1789-1799 (8 items)
Includes an Administration Account on estate, statement of account, discharges, releases, and receipts.

F11 John Crawford, 1790-1798 (12 items)
Includes accounts of estate, Account of Receipt for Samuel and John Crawford Jr., receipts, and a Notice of Award of Estate to Isaac and Samuel Grubb.

F12 Jemima Staples, 1790 Jul 28 (1 item)
Includes her will.

F13 Catherine Plankinton, 1813 May 18 (1 item)
Includes her will.

F14 Isaac Grubb, 1838-1839 (3 items)
Includes discharges of financial obligation by executor.

F15 Adam Grubb, 1859-1877 (3 items)
Includes wills and receipts.

Miscellaneous Items, 1784-1928 (13 items)
Includes a wide variety of items:
- a circular from the Garfield National Masonic Memorial Association, sent by secretary W. A. Reynolds and dated 1882.
- undated directions for Isaac Grubb to a property in Iowa.
- an undated notice from peach tree inoculations.
- an undated and unidentified personal note regarding the estate of Rebekah Booth;
- an undated and unidentified list of "Questions to ask Thomas Hall."
- a "Plan of Chester Circuit for the Years 1843-4" for preachers and exhorters, whose names are recorded as well as a calendar providing location, day, and time of their planned activities.
- an 1864 Certificate of the Board of Enrollment certifying that Isaac N. Grubb found a substitute for military service.
- an 1882 holographed list of registered voters in the East District of Brandywine Hundred.
- a portion of the Pennsylvania Packet, dated October 2, 1784.
- a clipping from the Greensboro Daily News dated May 27, 1928. It was sent to Newton Grubb by Henry N. Blake of North Carolina, and concerns a memorial to Jacob Bason.
- a poem entitled "The Dying Husband to his Wife," copied by Isaac Grubb for his mother, Margaretta Grubb (dated April 1818).
- a March 1863 survey of property belonging to Isaac N. Grubb.
- an undated frontispiece Illustration, from "The Captur'd Frolick."
engraving is of "Captain Jones / Commander of the Macedonian." A work
published by J. Kneass, in Philadelphia.

2 Series 3. Financial and Legal Records
This series concerns the financial and legal business of the Grubb family, and
spans the period 1737-1940. Included are receipts, promissory notes, notices of
certification, indentures, conditions of sale, bills, and other legal items.

F17 Miscellaneous Legal Items, 1737-1805 (4 items)
Includes a quitclaim by Susanna Bellerby on the estate of her brother, Isaac
Bellerby; a release, dated 1763, by Richard Mosely and wife to John Crawford
and wife (partly destroyed); a discharge, dated 1777, of John More from service to
Isaac Grubb; and an 1805 statement of Ann Smith which gives power of attorney
to her son, Thomas Smith.

F18 Payment Receipts, 1742-1897 (58 items)
These are written on scraps of paper, and signed by the individual who received
payment. Many of these are for goods and services. Receipts for payment by
executors of estates are filed with the financial papers of the relevant
individual.

F19 Bonds, 1745-1884 (12 items)
These are notices of indebtedness.

F20 Bills, 1758-1866 (10 items)

F21 Conditions of Sale, 1760-1877 (4 items)

F22 Indentures, 1762-1847 (6 items)
Includes: an indenture of Joseph Trewman to Samuel and Lydia Grubb (1762); an
indenture of Benjamin and Mary Pierce to Isaac Pierce (1842); a lease between
Samuel Grubb and George W. Cook (1776); a deed by Thomas B. Guest to
Thomas G. Smith (1825); a deed by Joseph Pierce and wife to William W.
Bennett (1848); and a mortgage by Adam Grubb and wife to Sarah Woolley
(1847).

F23 Miscellaneous Accounts, 1765-1803 (3 items)
Includes accounts for Mary Grubb to Thomas Gibbons (1765) and Isaac Grubb to
George W. Cook (1776), both for goods and services. The last is an account of
Charles Hambleton to Isaac Grubb (1803) for wood measured and cut.

F24 Promissory Notes, 1774-1863 (11 items)
Holographed on slips of paper and possess witness' signatures.

2 Series 3. Financial and Legal Records (cont'd)

F25 Articles of Agreement, 1782-1880 (7 items)
The bulk of these are from the period 1782-1793; only one is dated 1880. Part of
the second page of a 1778 agreement, with witness list and seals, is missing.

F26 Orphans Court, 1782-1880 (8 items)
Legal business settled at the Orphans Court of New Castle County, Delaware.
Included are guardianship contracts of Isaac Grubb over Isaac Bilerby, Isaac
Grubb over John Grubb, Isaac Grubb and William Talley over the children of the
late George Robinson, Isaac N. Grubb over Harriet D. Smith (1880), and the
settlement of a supplemental account.

F27 Notices of Appointment and Certification, 1835-1904 (10 items)
These include certificates issued to Adam Grubb for the right of exhortation and
prayer in Bethel Methodist Church for the years 1835, 1836, 1837, & 1843, and in
Siloam Methodist Church for the years 1862 and 1865. Also included are notices
of appointment issued to Isaac N. Grubb for Supervisor of Grubb's Landing Road
(1855), Collector of County Taxes for New Castle County (1878), and a
consideration of the appointment to Recorder of Deeds for New Castle County
(1870s). In addition, there is a voting registration certificate issued by
New Castle County to Isaac N. Grubb (1904).

F28 Tax and Bank Papers, 1849-1868 (6 items)
Includes three check stubs from The Farmers Bank at Wilmington, all of which
were written by Isaac N. Grubb. Also included are two tax receipts and a tax form
with a written note.

F29 Miscellaneous Calculations, 1939-1940 (5 pp.)
Written in pencil, an accounting of "Baffin?? Sales"