

**Cercle des Philadelphes du Cap François Collection**

**1784-1787**

**Mss.506.7294.C33.1**

American Philosophical Society

2004

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	American Philosophical Society
<b>Title</b>	Cercle des Philadelphes du Cap François Collection
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1784-1787
<b>Call number</b>	Mss.506.7294.C33.1
<b>Extent</b>	0.25 Linear feet
<b>Location</b>	LH-MV-B-11; LH-SB-Black Case-15 (no.3, OS)
<b>Language</b>	French
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Founded in Cap François, Saint Domingue (now Haiti) in August 1785, the Cercle des Philadelphes was one of the most prestigious colonial learned societies of the Ancien Regime. During its brief seven year existence, the Cercle pursued an agenda of promoting improvements in agriculture, manufactures, the arts and sciences, published five volumes of memoirs, and established correspondence with their peers in the American Philosophical Society and other learned societies. Their foreign membership included both Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush. The Cercle des Philadelphes Collection is a small, but important assemblage of documents relating to French colonial science. Each of the documents is associated with Louis Narcisse Baudry de Lozières, the first president of the Cercle, including three certificates appointing him to office, and two important addresses. The first of these appears to be his opening remarks to the Cercle at its first public meeting on Aug. 15, 1784. The second is an early, but undated document outlining the organization of the Cercle and its aims.</p>

**Preferred Citation**

Cite as: Cercle des Philadelphes du Cap François Collection, American Philosophical Society.

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## Background note

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In the 1780s, Cap François was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the western hemisphere, the cultural capital of Saint Domingue (now Haiti). Blessed with a favorable climate and fueled by the extensive exploitation of slave labor, Saint Domingue emerged as the most profitable of all New World colonies during the last half of the eighteenth century, and during the summer 1784, a group of white residents of Cap François conceived of a plan to elevate the intellectual culture of their colony to match their financial success. Announcing that no society could exist "without the assistance of the sciences and arts," they created the Cercle des Philadelphes.

Although formerly viewed as an outgrowth of freemasonry, the Cercle is now more generally seen as having been motivated by a complex mixture of both Royalist and patriotic impulses among the colonial elite. Devoted to "bonheur commun," they said, and motivated by "l'amour fraternal," the members of the Cercle applied themselves to study of the physical conditions, natural history, and medicine of the colony -- in essence, anything to promote the agriculture, manufactures, sciences, or arts. <sup>1</sup> The president, Louis Narcisse Baudry de Lozières, particularly emphasized the social benefits of "bonne intelligence" and the obligation for gentlemen to commit themselves to intellectual reciprocity and mutual assistance. <sup>2</sup>

From the outset, the Cercle was greeted warmly. It received official recognition and financial support from the crown as early as 1786, and on May 17, 1789, they were issued royal letters patent, the last group to receive this recognition prior to the Revolution. The Cercle also quickly forged official ties with Académie Royale des Sciences in Paris, with the American Philosophical Society, and with other provincial societies, academies, and museums, exchanging publications with the APS, for example, from at least 1788.

Lead by Baudry de Lozières, an attorney, by the physician Charles Arthaud, and the writer M. F. E. Moreau de Saint Mé, the membership of the Cercle reached a peak of 160 in the late 1780s, drawing from a broad spectrum of the upper (white) classes in Saint Domingue. Physicians, judges and lawyers, planters and merchants, and public officials were all well represented, and the Cercle added a judiciously chosen slate of foreign members, including Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush. It did not, however, long survive. Set back by the Revolution in France, the Cercle finally succumbed to the revolutionary violence in Saint Domingue in 1792.

## Scope & content

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The Cercle des Philadelphes Collection is a slender survival of one of the most prestigious colonial learned societies during the Ancien Regime, situated in Cap François, Saint Domingue (now Haiti). Each of the documents is associated with Louis Narcisse Baudry de Lozières, the first president of the Cercle, including three certificates appointing him to office, and two important addresses. The first of these addresses appears to be his opening remarks to the Cercle at its first public meeting on August 15, 1784. The second is an early, but undated document outlining the organization of the Cercle and its aims.

## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 2004

## Provenance

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### Acquisition Information

Acquired from Wormser, 1953.

### Processing Information

Recatalogued by rsc, 2004.

## Related Materials

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### Related Material

Arthaud, Charles, *Précis historique sur Monsieur le Chevalier Lefebvre-Deshayes, lu dans la séance publique du Cercle des Philadelphes, du Cap-François, le 20 juin 1786* (Cap François, 1786). **Call no.** Pam. 1101, 12. Cercle des Philadelphes, *Notice sur la séance publique du Cercle des Philadelphes, tenue le août, 1788* (Port au Prince, 1788). **Call no.** Pam. 1101, 15. Cercle des Philadelphes, *Statuts du Cercle des Philadelphes* (Cap François, 1785). **Call no.** Pam. 1101, 14. Cercle des Philadelphes, *Mémoires* (Port au Prince: Mozard, 1788). **Call no.** Pam. 1101, 15. Cercle des Philadelphes, *Prospectus du Cercle des Philadelphes, tenue le août, 1788* (Cap-François, 1786). **Call no.** Pam. 1101, 15.

## Indexing Terms

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### Genre(s)

- Certificates.
- Miscellaneous

## Geographic Name(s)

- France--Colonies--America
- Haiti
- Saint Domingue

## Personal Name(s)

- Arthaud, Charles
- Baudry de Lozières, Louis Narcisse, 1761-1841

## Subject(s)

- Beyond Early America
- Learned institutions and societies--Saint Domingue
- Natural History
- Science and Technology

## Other Descriptive Information

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- 1 Morel, p.236. Translated.
- 2 Baudry de Lozières, Discours, Aug. 22, 1784.

## Other Descriptive Information

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This collection contains records of the Haitian science society called the Cercle des Philadelphes. The collection is small, containing only seven documents, and most of these are certificates. There are two addresses made by Louis Narcisse Baudry de Lozières, the president of the society, that might be of interest to historians of science. MOLE contains a detailed description and inventory of the collection.

## Bibliography

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Maurel, Blanche, "Une société de pensée à Saint-Domingue, le 'Cercle des Philadelphes' au Cap François" *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 48 (1962): 234-266. **Call no.** 500 Pam. no.167.



McClellan, James E., "L'historiographie d'une académie coloniale: le Cercle des Philadelphes (1784-1793)," *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française* 3 (2000): 77-88.

McClellan, James E., *Colonialism and Science, Saint-Domingue in the Old Regime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992). **Call no.** 509.7294 M13c.

## Collection Inventory

Cercle des Philadelphes du Cap François Collection	1784-1787		Box 1
<b>Baudry de Lozières, Louis Narcisse, 1761-1841</b> Certificate authorizing Baudry as President	1784 Aug. 15	1p.	Oversize
<b>Baudry de Lozières, Louis Narcisse, 1761-1841</b> Discours prononcée dans la Societé des Philadelphes  Introductory address to the new society. Also signed by Charles Arthaud.	1784 Aug. 22	3p.	
<b>Baudry de Lozières, Louis Narcisse, 1761-1841</b> Certificate authorizing Baudry as President	1785 Apr. 4	1p.	Oversize
<b>Baudry de Lozières, Louis Narcisse, 1761-1841</b> Certificate authorizing Baudry as Vice President	1787 Feb. 26	3 lin. feet	Oversize
<b>Baudry de Lozières, Louis Narcisse, 1761-1841</b> Extrais des registre du Cercle des Philadelphes	1787 July 30	1p.	
<b>Baudry de Lozières, Louis Narcisse, 1761-1841</b> Address  Prospects for the Society:	n.d.	5p.	

## Cercle des Philadelphes du Cap François Collectio...

formons une société de physique & de Littérature et que notre secret ne soit que celui du Génie ou de la science...

nos formules, au Lieu de ces minaudries enfantines qui elles memes ont renversé en grande partie le temple des maçons, doivent consister dans beaucoup de politesses, d'Egards et de bienséance parmi nous. Donnons le moins que nous pouvons à la matière. mettons de l'ordre dans tout ce que nous faisons: mais Evitons tout ce qui peut nous donner du Ridicule.

Que notre assemblée porte le nom de Museum Physico-Liéraire de St. Domingue ou de Muéum Américan...

le Museum pourra aussi proposer des questions publiques que tous les colons pourront résoudre [sic]..."

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Wrappers for documents

n.d.

2 items

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