

Samuel Miles Papers, 1776-1802
1776-1802
Mss.B.M589

American Philosophical Society
1993
105 South Fifth Street
Philadelphia, PA, 19106
215-440-3400
manuscripts@amphilsoc.org

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Background note	4
Scope & content	5
Administrative Information	6
Indexing Terms	6
Other Descriptive Information	7
Bibliography	7
Collection Inventory	8
Correspondence.....	8

Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Title	Samuel Miles Papers, 1776-1802
Date [inclusive]	1776-1802
Call number	Mss.B.M589
Extent	16.0 Item(s)
Location	LH-MV-C-14
Language	English
Abstract	Correspondence and an autobiographical sketch of the French and Indian War and Revolutionary War service of Samuel Miles. A native Pennsylvanian, Miles raised and commanded a regiment of riflemen, but was captured near Flatbush in August 1776, during the battle of Long Island. He was held as a prisoner of war in New York until his exchange in April 1778. Miles subsequently served as Mayor of Philadelphia and was a presidential elector in 1796.
Preferred Citation	Cite as: Samuel Miles Papers, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

A native Pennsylvanian of Welsh Quaker stock, Samuel Miles served as a young man in the militia during the French and Indian War. Despite his youth, not yet being 20, Miles rose to the command of a company in 1759 and was appointed Captain in 1760.

By 1761, Miles left the army, married, and settled in Philadelphia to sell dry goods, rum and wines. He held various elective offices, including the General Assembly (1772-1774), but took an early and active part in the movement for independence. Once again elected to the General Assembly in 1775, Miles continued to serve there and on the Committee of Safety until helping to raise and command a regiment of riflemen in the Spring, 1776. Dispatched to Long Island, however, Miles and 159 members of his regiment were taken prisoner near Flatbush on August 27, 1776, having been cut off from American lines by British forces. He was held in New York until his exchange in April 1778. During his imprisonment, he was promoted to Brigadier General for services rendered.

After being released from prison, Miles served as Deputy Quartermaster for Pennsylvania until 1782, was appointed Judge of the High Court of Errors and Appeals in 1783, to the Council of Census at Philadelphia (1787), the City Council (1788), and Alderman and a member of the Council of Property (1789). In 1790 he became Mayor of Philadelphia, and continued taking an active role in politics until becoming a Federalist Presidential elector in 1796. In that year, Miles chose to support Jefferson for the Presidency over John Adams, reasoning that Jefferson's attitudes toward France would more likely prevent America from entering war. His stand, however, was not viewed well by his Federalist peers. In 1792, Miles retired to Cheltenham, Pa., where he died at the age of 67 on December 29, 1805. He is buried in the First Baptist Church, Philadelphia.

Scope & content

The Miles Papers consist of fifteen miscellaneous drafts of letters relating to the capture and imprisonment of Brigadier General Samuel Miles during the American Revolution, along with an autobiography describing his exploits in the French and Indian War, the Revolution, and in Philadelphia politics during the last two decades of the eighteenth century.

Almost all of Miles' letters were written when he was held as a prisoner of war in New York, and are addressed primarily to British and American authorities, including William Howe and George Washington, pleading for parole or exchange. The interesting autobiographical account was written in 1802, and provides a nice summary of his French and Indian War service in central and western Pennsylvania following Braddock's defeat, and a particularly valuable description of the chaos experienced by the American forces during the disastrous Battle of Long Island in 1776. Although he provides a detailed account of his capture, Miles unfortunately sheds little light on his imprisonment per se. Finally, this account touches on aspects of Miles' tumultuous political career in early Republic Pennsylvania, capped by his election as Mayor of Philadelphia and as presidential elector.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 1993

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Acquired, 1961.

Processing Information

Catalogued by rsc, 2001.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Autobiographies.
- Autobiography
- Military Records

Geographic Name(s)

- Pennsylvania--Politics and government

Personal Name(s)

- Howe, William Howe, 5th Viscount, 1729-1814
- Loring, Joseph
- Nicholson, John
- Reed, Joseph, 1741-1785

- Rittenhouse, David, 1732-1796
- Washington, George, 1732-1799

Subject(s)

- American Revolution
- Early National Politics
- Long Island (N.Y.), Battle of, 1776
- Military History
- Seven Years' War
- United States--History--French and Indian War, 1755-1763--Personal narratives
- United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Personal narratives
- United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Prisoners and prisons

Other Descriptive Information

The Samuel Miles Collection contains three sets of documents. One includes correspondence. The other contains autobiographical information that covers Miles life from his time in the Seven Years' War to the American Revolution, and a third contains financial information pertaining to the family. Miles served in the Pennsylvania militia during the Seven Years' War. During the Revolution, he was an officer and a POW. Later, he was a Federalist official. These experiences are well-documented in the collection. An account book from his time as a POW provides insight on the daily activity of many prisoners of war. Entries include donations for funerals, coffins, and other items related to the prisoner of war experience. There are additional pieces of correspondence from the American Revolution. A letter from Catherine Miles, Samuel's wife, is included in the correspondence and discusses property in Philadelphia that she worried would be used by the Army. There are also a couple of letters from Joshua Loring, the British officer in charge of prisoners, reprimanding Miles and other American officers for their behavior.

Aside from the details on his service during the Revolutionary War, the autobiographical account provides a fascinating first person narrative of an officer in the Seven Years' War who saw action in Northampton and western Pennsylvania, a politically active Pennsylvanian during the imperial crisis, and an officer holder in the early republic. As one of the electors in the election of 1796, Miles recounts his decision to vote for Jefferson even though he was nominated by Federalists, claiming he did so only with an eye towards which of the two candidates was more likely to keep the United State out of war.

Bibliography

The autobiographical sketch, 1802 was published in *American Historical Record* 2 (1873), 49.

Correspondence

Collection Inventory

Correspondence	1776-1802	16.0 items	Box 1
Rieger, Jacob Receipt to Samuel Miles D. 1p. and end.: "Letters written while in Captivity with the British". (see Miles papers.)	1776 June 10-July 5	1p.	
Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805 ALS to Joseph Reed, Flatbush "flatt Bush" A.L.S. 2p. Draft. (see Miles papers.) He and officers are prisoners and want baggage sent them. Reports on their "genteel" treatment.	1776 September 1	2p.	
Miles, Catherine ALS to David Rittenhouse, Springmill Spring Mill, L.S. 1p.and add. (see Miles papers.) Asks if he can protect her new house in Philadelphia from soldiers.	1776 December 15	1p.	
Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805 Account book, while in the Revolutionary War Army; A.D. 22p. Incomplete.	1776-1783		
Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805 ALS to unidentified recipient, Flatbush Flatt Bush, L[ong] Island, A.L. 2p. Draft. (see Miles papers.) Concerning life as a prisoner. Need of money. Business.	1777 April 6	2p.	
Loring, Joseph Letter to Samuel Miles and Maj. West	1777 April 26	1p.	
Loring, Joseph	1777 May 13	1p.	

Correspondence

ALS to Clayton & King, New York

New York, L. 1p.and add.,end. Copy. (see Miles papers.) States they must pay for their room and board and not complain of their treatment.

Loring, Joseph

1777 May 14

1p.

ALS to Samuel Miles et al., New York

New York, L. 1p.and end. Copy. (see Miles papers.) Requests they observe limits placed on their parole.

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805

[1777?] May 25

2p.

ADfS to Elias Boudinot

A.L. 2p. Drafts. (see Miles papers.) Need of money for prisoners.

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805

[1777?]

1p.

ADfS to William Howe

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805

[ca.1777-1778?]

5p.

ADfS to George Washington

ca. L. 4p. Drafts. Various sizes. (see Miles papers.) Need of prisoners.

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805

[ca.1777?]

2p.

ADfS to unidentified recipient

[ca.] L. 2p. Draft. (see Miles papers.) Concerning the exchange of prisoners.

Other Descriptive Information

Not found 5/2011

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805

[1778?]

2p.

ADfS to William Howe

A.L.by Samuel Miles for self and other officers. 2p., end. Draft. (see Miles papers.) Asks help for prisoners in hospitals.

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805

[ca.1778?]

2p.

ADfS to George Washington

Correspondence

L.2p. Draft. (see Miles papers.) Concerning the possible exchange of prisoners.

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805	[ca.1784?]	2p.
ALS to John Nicholson		

[Miles, Samuel, 1737-1805.]	1779?	13-3/4x8
Letter to J[oh]n Nicholson;		

Other Descriptive Information

Not found 5/2011

[ca.]. L. 2p. Draft. (see Miles papers.) Report on Pennsylvania finances.

Miles, Samuel, 1740-1805	1802 February 4	14p.
AMsS, Autobiographical sketch		

A.D. 7 leaves and marbled covers. Incomplete. (see Mills papers.) Printed (according to Appleton):
American Historical Record; 1873.

[Miles, Samuel, 1739-1805.]	Undated	12-1/4x8
Letter to Sir William Howe;		

[ca.1777?]. L.by Officers who are prisoners. 1p.and end. Draft. (see Miles papers.) Asks that the non-commissioned officers and enlisted men who are prisoners be given aid.
