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JOHN BISLAND AND FAMILY PAPERS
Mss. 29
Inventory

By
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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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Updated 2021

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SUMMARY

Size.	1,161 items, 12 volumes
Geographic locations.	New Orleans, La., Mississippi, Scotland
Inclusive dates.	1762-1884
Bulk dates.	1800-1859
Language.	English
Summary.	Personal and business papers include correspondence, financial papers, legal records, diaries and record books reflecting plantation operations and mercantile enterprises.
Organization.	Arranged chronologically.
Restrictions on access.	None.
Use restrictions	Photocopies must be made from microfilm when available.
Copyright.	Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
Citation.	John Bisland and Family Papers, Mss. 29, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Note.	Erroneously identified as Mss. 4, 6 in UPA microfilm
Stack location.	H:17; OS:B; U:241-242
Also available on.	UPA Microfilm 5322, Series I, part 4, reels 6-8

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

John Bisland (1742-1821), a native of Scotland, was a merchant and planter of Scotland, North Carolina and Mississippi. As a young man in Glasgow, Scotland, he was a dry goods merchant in partnership with John Muir. In 1774, he immigrated to Cross Creek, North Carolina where he operated a general store. At the onset of the Revolutionary War, Bisland left North Carolina for Jamaica, and later settled the Natchez, Mississippi vicinity. John Bisland obtained five land grants amounting to approximately 3,770 acres between 1782 and 1795. He later bought additional acreage. Bisland family homes included Vendue, Mount Repose and Mount Airwell Plantations near Natchez, Mississippi, New Providence Plantation, Concordia Parish, Louisiana, and Hope Farm and Richland Plantation in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. John married Susannah Rucker, daughter of a British officer, Colonel Peter Rucker. Together they had nine children: Alexander, Peter, William, James, Katherine, Susanna, Sarah, Elizabeth and Jane. Several of Bisland children were educated in Scotland. William was also among the first class enrolled at Jefferson College, Washington, Mississippi.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Collection is comprised of papers and manuscript volumes related to the business and personal affairs of the John Bisland family and Samuel Hopkins Lambdin. Bisland business papers consist of financial and legal records reflecting financial activities of a cotton planter and slaveholder. They include correspondence, accounts, agreements with overseers and tradesmen, property assessments, freight charges, bills, tax bills, invoices, receipts, contracts and numerous slave bills of sale. Business papers record business transactions in Scotland and North Carolina, as well as Mississippi. They relate to the slave, cotton and tobacco trades, and the conveyance and leasing of land. Bisland discusses cotton shipments while traveling to Scotland In his letters (1803-1804) and plantation diary (1814-1818), Bisland discusses the cotton trade, and William Gardner in Glasgow, reports on the cotton market in Europe [photocopy] (February 24, 1806). Bills, invoices and receipts also reflect expenses for education, personal and household items. They detail cost of food, supplies and services performed at the plantations. Also included are portions of Frederick Calvert's will (March 5, 1805).

Personal correspondence comprises a large part of the personal papers and pertains primarily to family matters, health, social events and activities. Other topics relate to the education of the Bisland children and immigration of friends and relatives to United States. In a letter to William Steele (v. 11-August 30, 1817) John Bisland reports on the progress in establishing Jefferson College, Washington, Mississippi.

Papers of Samuel H. Lambdin begin with the mid-1840s. His papers contain several letters to John Rucker Bisland, of Richland Plantation, concerning family matters and business affairs. They include a court document showing the emancipation of Thomas S. Bisland (May 16, 1854), conveyance for Fairfax Plantation, St. Mary Parish, Louisiana (1857) and bills for the ferriage of African Americans at Natchez and Vidalia, Louisiana (January 1, 1855). Correspondence also refers to cholera (undated, New York, William Bisland to Samuel Lambdin; undated, unsigned to Samuel Lambdin) and yellow fever (undated, William H. Holcombe to Samuel H. Lambdin).

Cotton record book, v. 1 (1800-1820) contains entries for cotton production and trade 1802-1820. It includes notations regarding the loss of cotton shipped on the *Neptune*, sale of mahogany, cotton produced at Mount Airwell Plantation (1806-1806, 1815), and an account of the cotton crop of 1819 sold to G. Ralston (March 26, 1820). This volume contains daybook entries for sales and purchase of carpentry services, food, household and personal items (1800-1809). It also contains copies of correspondence, bills and legal documents concerning the cotton trade (1802-1807, 1816), the shipment of mahogany on ship *Neptune* (1803) and small pox inoculation (1802, page 34). William Bisland is amazed at the abundance of vegetables and fish in New Orleans markets (May 9, 1816) and the activity at the Port of New Orleans (May 3, 1816). He comments on the extensive amount of gambling and dancing, even on Sundays, taking place in New Orleans (May 9, 1816). Manuscript volume also contains miscellaneous notations concerning taxable property (September 12, 1805), clothing given to slaves at Mount Airwell Plantation (1808), stores for the ships *Neptune* and "*Lady Nelson* (1802-1803) and a list of personal and household items needed at Natchez (1801). One entry (May 3, 1803-page 11)

states that John Bisland left North Carolina August 7, 1775, for Jamaica at the onset of the Revolutionary War

Daybooks, v. 2-5, (1770-1820) kept by John Bisland record business activities at his merchandise store in jointly owned with John Muir in Glasgow Scotland, and his store in Natchez, Mississippi. Additional notations in volume two relate to the construction of a mill, educational expenses for Susan Bisland (1817), death of Margret Kemp in Natchez (1818), money sent to relatives in Scotland by William (1812), and corn, cotton and tobacco trades. Personal entries note the marriage of daughter, Jean to John Ross, (v. 3, March 7, 1816), death of Jean Bisland Ross (v. 3, July 30, 1816), marriage of son, James, to the daughter of Colonel Ross (v. 3, March 14, 1817), and the marriage of son, William, to (Louise) Witherspoon (v. 3, October 19, 1820). Entries also reflect John Bisland's religious activities (v. 3, 1818, 1820). Other notations include the will of Frederick Calvert (v. 4, undated) a thunder and lightning storm in Glasgow (v. 4, 1804), the cost of leaving Cross Creek, North Carolina (v. 4, undated) and a list of letters he left at the Washington post office (1817).

Diaries, v. 6 (1802-1804) and v. 7 (1804, 1808, 1814-1818), discuss travel and plantation operations. Entries relate to a trip to Scotland on board the *Neptune* (v. 6, 1804), and Alexander Bisland comments on his education in Scotland. A copy of a letter (v. 6, 1804), probably written by Alexander Bisland, mentions his stay in Scotland and his plans to return home on the *Howard*. Alexander gives a detailed account of weather conditions on his passage homeward from Grenoch on the *Howard* (v. 7, 1804). Diary also contains notes (v. 6, 1802-1803) relating to laundry, books and miscellaneous items and a copy of an arrest warrant (v.7, 1808), signed by Alexander Bisland, Adams County, for the arrest of James Martin for failure to pay his debts. Personal notes include the deaths of Stephen Minor (November 29, 1815), James Fitzgerald (May 17, 1816) and General Claiborne (March 22, 1815). Other personal notes include Susan Bisland attending school (October 31, 1814), the burial of John Bisland, Jr. on November 2, 1814 and the marriage of daughter, Jean (March 7, 1816). Additional notes made by William Bisland while in Scotland concern British troops leaving and treaty ratification (v. 7, March 11, 1815). Plantation entries (v. 7, 1814-1818) record statistics kept on crop production, sheep shorn and hogs killed.

Frederick Calvert estate inventory book (v. 8, 1790-1800) records legal fees and the value of slaves and horses. Journals, v. 9 (1767-1773), v. 10 (1774-[1778], 1810-1811) concern the operations of Bisland store in Glasgow, Scotland (v. 9) and his stores (v. 10, 1774-1775) at Cross Creek, Cumberland County, North Carolina and the Natchez region (v. 10, 1776-1778). The volume also contains a few memoranda, 1810-1811, concerning clothing given to slaves, crops and Bisland's residence in Mississippi.

Letter copy book, v. 11 (1817), contains letters by John Bisland, Mount Airwell Plantation, to his son, William, in Scotland, offering paternal advice and reporting on the severity of yellow fever in New Orleans and Natchez. He attributes the lack of cotton sales to the epidemic, and he states that cotton rot will destroy half of his crop (October 9, 1817). Other correspondents include Peter Duncan, James Ure, William Steele and the Dennistown, Hill and Co. In a letter to Peter Duncan, Bisland comments on the severity of yellow fever in Natchez and remarks that great numbers of the people remaining in Natchez continue to die each day. He mentions the court's

relocation to Washington, Mississippi, and his lack of business is due to everyone seeking safety (October 11, 1817). Letter to James Ure mentions his purchase of 100 acres of land adjoining the plantation, and his expectation of earning \$500 from 17 acres planted in cotton. He expresses a need for all classes of tradesmen and laborers in the area, stating that carpenters earn 9 to 18 shillings daily plus room, board and washing (October 25, 1817). Bisland writes to William Steele about William Montgomery's refusal of \$1500 for teaching and \$500 preaching in Louisiana. He also tells of the \$800 salary offered to teachers at the teaching academy and mentions that the establishment of Jefferson College, Washington, Mississippi, was proceeding well; they obtained teachers and administrators for the school (August 30, 1817). Letters to Dennistown, Hill and Co., New Orleans merchant, request the sale of a runaway slave (October 28, 1817, undated). Additionally, a letter written by William McAulay (nephew to John Bisland) to John Bain discusses terms offered by Bisland to tradesmen, mentioning the demand for millwrights, carpenters and laborers (October 28, 1817).

Account book, v. 12 (1812-1820) records loans to his children, building repairs made to the mill, wages paid, and the purchase of a gold watch, cotton, hides and bagging.

CROSS REFERENCES

Subject	Description of relevant documents
Calvert, Frederick.	Last will and testament, v. 4 (undated); inventory estate book, v. 8 (1817)
Cargo ships.	Diaries, v. 6 (1802); v. 7 (1804).
Cholera.	Letter (undated: William Bisland to Samuel Lambdin); unsigned letter (undated: to Samuel Lambdin).
Claiborne, Ferdinand Leigh, - 1814.	Diary, v. 7 (March 22, 1814), death of General Claiborne.
Cross Creek (N.C.)--History.	v. 4 (undated); v. 10 (1776-1778).
Education--History--19 th century.	1804-1818.
Fairfax Plantation (La.)	Land conveyance (1857).
Harbors--Louisiana--New Orleans.	Cotton record book, v. 1 (May 3, 1816).
Inheritance and succession.	Last will and testament, v. 4 (undated) and inventory estate book, v. 8 (1817) of Frederick Calvert.
Jefferson College (Washington, Miss.)	Letter copy book, v.11 (August 30, 1817).
Mahogany.	Cotton record book, v. 1 (1803).
Markets--Louisiana--New Orleans.	Cotton record book, v. 1, letter (May 3, 1816).
Minor, Stephen.	Letter (November 29, 1815). Death of Stephen Minor.
Mississippi--Adams County-- Social life and customs.	Papers and manuscript volumes concerning household furnishings, education, family matters and religious activities (circa 1800-1821).
Montgomery, William.	Letter copy book, v. 11 (August 30, 1817).

Subject	Description of relevant documents
Mount Airwell Plantation (Miss.)	Papers and manuscript volumes concern slave sales, purchase of cottonseed, crop production, livestock, plantation operations taxes and property assessments, household furnishings (circa 1800-1821).
New Orleans (La.)--Social life and customs--19 th century.	Cotton record book, v. 1 (May 9, 1816).
Plantation life--Mississippi--Adams County.	Papers and manuscript volumes concern slave sales, purchase of seed cotton, crop production, livestock, plantation operations, taxes, property assessments, household furnishings, health of family members and slaves (circa 1800-1821). Will of Frederick Calvert, v. 4; Frederick Calvert estate inventory book, v. 8, (1790-1800).
Scotland--Description and travel.	Diaries, v. 6 (1802); v. 7 (1804).
Skilled labor--Mississippi--Adams County.	Letter copybook, v. 11 (October 25, 28, 1817).
Slave bills of sale.	Papers and manuscript volumes concerning slave sales, and slaves (circa 1800-1821).
Slavery--Mississippi.	Papers and manuscript volumes concerning slave sales, and slaves (circa 1800-1821).
Smallpox--Vaccination--Mississippi.	Cotton record book v. 1, page 34 (1804).
War of 1812.	Diary, v 7 (March 11, 1815).
Yellow fever.	Letter (undated: William H. Holcombe to Samuel H. Lambdin); letter copy book, v. 11 (October 9, 11, 1817).

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
U:241	1	1-15	Papers (1773-1811).
	2	16-30	Papers (1813-1817).
U:242	3	31-48	Papers (1818- 1877, 1884, undated).
	4	49-60	Manuscript volumes (1767-1820): v. 1 Cotton record book (1800-1820) v. 2 Daybook (1770-1787, 1808-1819). v. 3 Daybook (1774, 1787-1820). v. 4 Daybook (1776-1790, 1804, 1817, undated). v. 5 Daybook (1802-1803). v. 6 Daybook (1802-1804). v. 7 Diary (1804-1818), plantation diary (1814-1814). v. 8 Frederick Calvert estate inventory book (1790-1800). v. 10 Journal (1774-1778, 1810-1811). v. 11 Letter copybook (1817).
H:17	--	--	v. 9 Journal (1767-1773) unbound pages.
	--	--	v. 12 Account book (1812-1820).
OS:B	--	1	Cotton account (May 25, 1802; shipping account with Wilson Hunt (1802-1803); account sheets (February 12, 1947; January 3, 1857)