

Russell & Co., Guangzhou, China, Records

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Library of Congress

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Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: Russell & Co., Guangzhou, China, Records

Span Dates: 1812-1894

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1819-1840)

ID No.: MSS38562

Creator: Russell & Co.

Extent: 3,900 items; 12 containers plus 4 oversize; 5 linear feet; 10 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Trading house founded in 1819 by Samuel Russell in Guangzhou (Canton), China. Correspondence, financial and legal records, and miscellany relating to the company and its founder, Samuel Russell (1789-circa 1862), and members of his family.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Alsop, J. W. (Joseph Wright), 1804-ca. 1878--Correspondence.

Alsop, Richard, 1761-1815--Correspondence.

Ammidon, Philip--Correspondence.

Astor, John Jacob, 1763-1848--Correspondence.

Butler, Cyrus, 1767-1849--Correspondence.

Forbes, John Murray, 1771-1831--Correspondence.

Forbes, R. B. (Robert Bennet), 1804-1889--Correspondence.

Heard, Augustine, 1785-1868--Correspondence.

Hubbard, Gurdon Saltonstall, 1802-1886--Correspondence.

Hubbard, S. D. (Samuel Dickinson), 1799-1855--Correspondence.

Low, William Henry, 1816-1845--Correspondence.

Newberry, W. L. (Walter Loomis), 1804-1868--Correspondence.

Russell family.

Russell, Edward Augustus, b. 1797--Correspondence.

Russell, George O.--Correspondence.

Russell, John A., fl. 1838-1846--Correspondence.

Russell, Samuel, 1789-ca. 1862. Samuel Russell papers.

Town, Ithiel, 1784-1844--Correspondence.

Town, Ithiel, 1784-1844.

Wetmore, Samuel, ca. 1813-1885--Correspondence.

Wetmore, William, b. 1776--Correspondence.

Organizations

American Colonization Society.

Baring Brothers & Co.--Correspondence.

Benjamin & Thomas C. Hoppins (Firm)--Correspondence.

Clarke & Company--Correspondence.

Claude Daniel Crommelin & Sons--Correspondence.

Edward Carrington & Company--Correspondence.

George Douglas & Company--Correspondence.

Houqua (Trading company)

Hull & Griswold--Correspondence.

John P. Cushing, William Perkins & Company

Russell & Co.

Russell Manufacturing Company.
Ward & Bartholomew--Correspondence.
William Perkins & Company.

Subjects

Architecture--Connecticut--Middletown.
Banks and banking--United States.
Cotton manufacture--Connecticut--Middletown.
Epilepsy.
Land speculation--Illinois.
Land speculation--Kentucky.
Land speculation--Michigan.
Land speculation--New Jersey.
Land speculation--Ohio.
Land speculation--Wisconsin.
Medicine--History--19th century.
Monetary policy--United States.
Monetary policy.
Opium trade--Turkey.

Places

China--Commerce--United States.
Guangzhou (China)--Commerce.
United States--Commerce--China.
United States--Commerce--History--19th century.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The records of Russell & Company, an international trading company based in Guangzhou (Canton), China, were given to the Library of Congress by Thomas Macdonough Russell in 1931.

Processing History

The records of Russell & Company were processed in 1980 and prepared for microfilming in 1985. When a portion of the collection was rehoused in 2006 the organization of the oversize material was changed. Although the finding aid and container list were revised to indicate the current housing, the container numbers noted in the microfilm edition reflect the original housing.

Related Material

The records of Russell & Company are related to other collections in the Manuscript Division, including the papers of John Richardson Latimer, the [Low-Mills families](#), Nicholas Low, the [Palmer-Loper families](#), and the Riggs family. Additional Russell & Company business records can be found in the records of William Perkins & Company, located in the Baker Library of the Harvard Business School.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Russell & Company is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Russell & Company are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of these records is available on ten reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Russell & Company Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The records of Russell & Company consist of family and general correspondence and business records. They cover the period 1812-1894, but are chiefly dated from 1819 to 1840, during which time Samuel Russell (1789-circa 1862) of Middletown, Connecticut, established and for a time operated the trading house of Russell & Company in Canton, China.

The [Family Correspondence](#) consists chiefly of letters to Samuel Russell from his two sons, George O. Russell and John A. Russell, and from his brother, Edward Augustus Russell (born 1797), a New York businessman involved in real estate investments and the East India trade.

The [General Correspondence](#) series covers matters related to Samuel Russell's personal activities. Significant in the correspondence is a group of letters concerning the construction of his Greek Revival mansion in Middletown during the years 1827-1830 and letters from the renowned architect Ithiel Town. Another group of letters concerns the health problems of his son, John Russell, and illustrates nineteenth-century medical practices for the control of epilepsy.

The [Business Records](#) series is subdivided into correspondence, financial records, legal records, and miscellaneous notes. The correspondence begins in 1812 with Samuel Russell's early business ventures that led to the establishment in 1819 of Russell & Company in Canton. Several partnership reorganizations followed, and in 1831 the China trading operations of John P. Cushing, William Perkins & Company of Boston, and Houqua, of Canton, China, merged with Russell & Company. After Samuel Russell's return to Middletown in 1831, he founded the Russell Manufacturing Company for the manufacture of elastic webbing. As his interests in the China trading company diminished, he became increasingly active in real estate speculation in Chicago and Milwaukee as well as in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and New Jersey.

The early business correspondence provides insights into a merchandise distribution network involving Philadelphia, New York, New England, and the South and reflects monetary and banking problems in the United States during the period 1812-1816. Correspondence after 1818 contains much information on the daily operation of the Canton trading company, the Turkish opium trade, the Amsterdam commodities exchanges, and international monetary matters. Letters sent from Russell's partners in China after his return to the United States in 1831 provide detailed accounts of commercial and political activity in Chinese trading ports from 1830 to 1840. Some letters for 1838-1839 concern Samuel Russell's financial support of the American Colonization Society. The financial records consist of account books, invoices, price trade lists, and other materials; a few items relate to Russell's extensive real estate investments. The legal records are chiefly a miscellany of contracts, agreements, bonds, and wills, and include the original partnership agreement of the founding of Russell & Company in China.

Correspondents in these records include J. W. Alsop, Richard Alsop, Philip Ammidon, John Jacob Astor, Cyrus Butler, John M. Forbes, Robert Bennett Forbes, Augustine Heard, Gurdon S. Hubbard, Samuel Dickinson Hubbard, William H. Low, W. L. Newberry, and Samuel and William Wetmore. Firms represented by correspondence include Baring Brothers & Company, Benjamin & Thomas

C. Hoppins, Clarke & Company, of Smyrna, Turkey, Claude Daniel Crommelin & Sons, Edward Carrington & Company, George Douglas & Company, Hull & Griswold, and Ward & Bartholomew.

Arrangement of the Records

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Family Correspondence, 1816-1848](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1827-1881](#)
- [Business Records, 1812-1894](#)
- [Oversize, 1819-1827](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1 REEL 1	<u>Family Correspondence, 1816-1848</u> Letters sent and received by family members. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically.
BOX 1 REEL 1	<u>General Correspondence, 1827-1881</u> Letters sent and received, with miscellaneous enclosures, on matters not related to business activities. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 2-16 REEL 1-10	<u>Business Records, 1812-1894</u> Correspondence and letterbooks, account books, bills and receipts, commodity price and sales lists, records of real estate investments, legal records, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically. Two letterbooks and two invoice books formerly numbered as Containers 9-10 and Containers 15-16 were moved to Oversize after being filmed as part of this series.
BOX OV 1-OV 4 REEL 6-7, 10	<u>Oversize, 1819-1827</u> Letterbooks and invoice books. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed after filming.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 19,140

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1 REEL 1	Family Correspondence, 1816-1848 Letters sent and received by family members. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically.
BOX 1 REEL 1	Bowers, Henry G., 1837-1845
BOX 1 REEL 1	Canfield, Frances A., 1845
BOX 1 REEL 1	Johnson, Lemuel and Lucy, 1832-1845
BOX 1 REEL 1	Johnson, William, 1816, 1823
BOX 1 REEL 1	Russell, Edward Augustus, 1817-1848, undated (2 folders)
BOX 1 REEL 1	Russell, Frances A., 1828
BOX 1 REEL 1	Russell, George O., 1837-1845, undated
BOX 1 REEL 1	Russell, John A., 1838-1846
BOX 1 REEL 1	General Correspondence, 1827-1881 Letters sent and received, with miscellaneous enclosures, on matters not related to business activities. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1 REEL 1	1827-1881, undated (4 folders)
BOX 2-16 REEL 1-10	Business Records, 1812-1894 Correspondence and letterbooks, account books, bills and receipts, commodity price and sales lists, records of real estate investments, legal records, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically. Two letterbooks and two invoice books formerly numbered as Containers 9-10 and Containers 15-16 were moved to Oversize after being filmed as part of this series.
BOX 2	Correspondence

Business Records, 1812-1894

Container

Contents

REEL 1-2	
BOX 2	General
REEL 1-2	
	1812-1819
	(9 folders)
BOX 3	1820-1822
REEL 2	
	(8 folders)
BOX 4	1823-1832
REEL 3	
	(8 folders)
BOX 5	1833-1835
REEL 3-4	
	(6 folders)
BOX 6	1836-1837
REEL 4-5	
	(6 folders)
BOX 7	1838-1840
REEL 5	
	(7 folders)
BOX 8	1841-1894, undated
REEL 6	
	(8 folders)
BOX 8	1841-1894, undated
REEL 6	
	(8 folders)
BOX 8	Letterbooks
REEL 6	
BOX 8	1863 (also ship disbursement account book, 1819-1823)
REEL 6	
BOX 8	"Index to the Letter Book No. 2," 1857-1872
REEL 6	
	"Canton, China" <u><i>See Oversize</i></u>
BOX 8	1819-1821
REEL 6	
BOX 8	1821-1824
REEL 6	
BOX 9	Financial records
REEL 7	
BOX 9	Account books
REEL 7	
BOX 9	1816-1829, opium imports: "Notes on the Chinese Method of Preparing Opium for Smoking"
REEL 7	
BOX 9	undated 1819, expenses for ships' provisions and miscellaneous notes
REEL 7	
BOX 9	1819-1822, "Ledger"
REEL 7	
BOX 9	1819-1824, "Day Book"
REEL 7	
BOX 9	1819-1824, "Accounts current"

Business Records, 1812-1894

Container

Contents

REEL 7	
BOX 9	1836-1857, "Ledger" and profit and loss summaries
REEL 7	
BOX 10	Account sales, 1812-1844
REEL 7-8	
BOX 10	Accounts current, 1812-1846
REEL 7-8	
	(3 folders)
BOX 10	Account summaries and trial balances, 1831-1835
REEL 7-8	
BOX 10	Bills of exchange, 1835-1836
REEL 7-8	
BOX 10	Bills of lading, 1812-1845
REEL 7-8	
BOX 10	Bills, receipt, notes, and bank drafts
REEL 7-8	
BOX 10	1812-1813
REEL 7-8	
	(2 folders)
BOX 11	1814-1849, undated
REEL 8-9	
	(4 folders)
BOX 11	Cargo insurance policies, 1835, 1841
REEL 8-9	
BOX 11	Cargo, tonnage, and shipping lists, 1818-1839, undated
REEL 8-9	
	(4 folders)
BOX 12	Commodity price lists, 1812-1823, undated
REEL 9-10	
	(4 folders)
BOX 12	Commodity sales lists, 1812-1846
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Invoice books of shipments, 1819-1827 <i><u>See Oversize</u></i>
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Invoices, 1812-1843
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Real estate investments, 1836-1867, undated
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Legal records
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Commerce and tariff laws, 1818-1836
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Partnership agreements, bonds, contracts, powers of attorney, 1813-1843, 1874
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Wills and last testaments of business associates, 1832-1840
REEL 9-10	
BOX 12	Miscellany, including notes and formulas, 1820-1835, undated
REEL 9-10	
BOX OV 1-OV 4	Oversize, 1819-1827

Oversize, 1819-1827

Container *Contents*

REEL 6-7, 10	Letterbooks and invoice books. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed after filming.
BOX OV 1 REEL 6	Business records
BOX OV 1 REEL 6	Business records
BOX OV 1 REEL 6	Letterbooks
BOX OV 1 REEL 6	"Canton, China" (Container 8)
BOX OV 1 REEL 6	1819-1821
BOX OV 2 REEL 7	1821-1824
BOX OV 3 REEL 10	Financial records
BOX OV 3 REEL 10	Invoice books of shipments (Container 12)
BOX OV 3 REEL 10	1819-1824
BOX OV 4 REEL 10	1820-1827