Tilghman family papers
1730-1903
(bulk dates 1776-1810)

Abstract: The Tilghman family papers, spanning the years 1730-1903 (bulk dates 1776-1810), comprises .3 linear ft. (102 items) of legal documents, legal correspondence, receipts, and financial records from this Maryland Eastern Shore family.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 524
Creator: Tilghman family.
Title: Tilghman family papers
Inclusive Dates: 1730-1903
Bulk Dates: 1776-1810
Extent: .3 linear feet (102 items)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 524, Tilghman family papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes
Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/
Source: Gift of Samuel Moyerman, 1970.
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Biographical Note

The Tilghman family has long been associated with the early settlement of Maryland's Eastern Shore region. The men represented in this collection, lawyers in Maryland and Pennsylvania, trace their lineage to Richard Tilghman, an English physician who emigrated from Kent County, England, to Queen Anne's County on the Chester River in Maryland in 1661 or 1662.

William Tilghman (1756-1827) was born in Talbot County, Maryland, on August 12, 1756. In 1763 he entered the College, Academy and Charitable School of Philadelphia, which became the University of Pennsylvania. Upon completion of law school in 1772 he worked in Philadelphia as a lawyer until 1776. During the Revolutionary War, he and his father, both believed to be loyalists by their peers, moved to the family estate in Maryland and shortly thereafter William began to practice law there. Living in Chester Town (now Chestertown) Maryland, William Tilghman entered the political scene in 1788 as a member of the Maryland Assembly, a position he held until 1790. In 1791 he became a Maryland senator, a seat he resigned in 1793 when he moved back to Philadelphia, where he was admitted to the bar in September of 1794. In Philadelphia, he began to rise in the ranks of the legal profession, and in 1801 President Adams elected William Tilghman the chief judge of the third circuit court. This court, however, was abolished in 1802, at which point William resumed his law practice in the city. In 1805, he was appointed to the office of the president of the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia and the surrounding counties, and he was a judge of the Pennsylvania High Court of Errors and Appeals. In 1806 William was commissioned Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, a position he held until his death in 1827. In addition to his legal career William Tilghman was also a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania from 1802 until his death, and president of the American Philosophical Society from 1824 until his death in 1827.

Details of William Tilghman's personal life are not as thoroughly documented as those pertaining to his professional career. He married Margaret Elizabeth Allen on July 1, 1794, and they had one daughter. Margaret died in 1797, and he never remarried.

James Tilghman, father of William Tilghman, was born in 1716 on the Tilghman family estate, the Hermitage, on the Chester River in Maryland. Upon completing law school, he practiced in Annapolis, and married Ann Francis, the daughter of his teacher and prominent lawyer Tench Francis, in 1743. Around the year 1760 James moved to Philadelphia where he continued to practice law. He became involved in political life there: in 1764 he was elected to the Philadelphia City Council, in 1765 he was named secretary of the Proprietary Land Office by John Penn, and in 1767 was elected to the Pennsylvania Provincial Council in 1767, a position he held until the outbreak of the American Revolution. He was also a trustee of the College of Philadelphia (now University of Pennsylvania) from 1775 to 1788. When the American Revolution began, James Tilghman was believed to be a Loyalist to the crown by his fellow Pennsylvanians. Consequently, Pennsylvania state authorities placed him under arrest until 1778.

James and Ann Tilghman had twelve children, six boys, and six girls. The Tilghman daughters all married prominent men of the Eastern Shore region. The Tilghman sons all became respected men in their fields. Tench Tilghman (1771-1786), the eldest son, was aid-de-camp to George Washington during the Revolution. Richard Tilghman studied law at the Temple in London, and then obtained employment at the East India Company, with recommendation for the position of attorney general of India. However, he died
at sea before he could take up this position. James Tilghman, the third son, became a justice in the Court of Talbot County, Maryland. Chief Justice William Tilghman, discussed above, was the fourth son. Philemon Tilghman, the fifth son, joined the British Navy, and married a woman from England. He fought against the colonial forces in the Revolutionary War. The sixth son, Thomas Ringgold Tilghman, was a well-known merchant in Baltimore who died at a young age.

Edward Tilghman, first cousin of William Tilghman, was born at Wye, Queen Anne County, Maryland, on February 11, 1750/51. Like his cousin and uncle, Edward Tilghman was also a lawyer. He graduated from the College, Academy, and Charitable School of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania) in 1767. In 1772 he was admitted to study at the prestigious Middle Temple in London. When he returned to America in 1774 he married his first cousin Elizabeth Chew, and they had four children. In 1774 he was also admitted to the Philadelphia Bar, where he practiced until his death in 1815. In 1806 he was offered the position of Chief Justice of Pennsylvania’s Supreme Court, but he declined the honor and recommended his cousin William, who accepted the position.

Benjamin Tilghman, born January 6, 1785, was the second son of Edward Tilghman. He practiced law in Philadelphia, although further details of his career or personal life are unknown. Richard Tilghman was the third son of Benjamin Tilghman, born in 1865 and died in 1906. Further details of his life are unclear.

Matthew Tilghman appears in this collection, yet there is no clear connection to the other Tilghman family represented in this collection.

Sources:


Scope and Content Note

The Tilghman family papers, spanning the years 1730-1903 (bulk dates 1776-1810), was a gift of the Moyerman family in 1970. The collection comprises .3 linear ft. (102 items) of legal documents, legal correspondence, receipts, and financial records. The collection has been divided into two series.

Series one contains documents, receipts, correspondence and financial records pertaining to the main figure in the collection, William Tilghman. The documents in this series pertain to his legal career in Maryland as well as his service as Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. There are also two brief biographies of William Tilghman, both excerpts from a longer eulogy by Horace Binner (F3). Major correspondents in this series include attorneys Henry Drinker, Andrew Allen, Jr., James Matthews, Thomas Wallace, Peter Wikoff, Jasper Yeates, and justices Philip Quinton and Joshua Townsend of Worchester (F1, F2). The legal issues reflected in this series pertain to property law, and the settlement of financial debts between two parties. Folder 3 contains various documents pertaining to both legal and financial business including a list of "Supreme Court Issues April 1776" (F3), a list of patents for lands in the North Carolina received by William Tilghman in 1795, printed jury lists of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, March 1799-March 1800, and a notebook recording the court cases tried by William Tilghman, 1793-1794.

Series two contains papers of five other Tilghman men: James, Edward, Matthew, Benjamin and Richard. This series is fragmentary and contains documents pertaining to legal issues attended to by these Tilghman men, all of whom were lawyers except Richard.

This small collection offers a fragmented account of the legal careers of some members of the prominent Eastern Shore Tilghman family. It is not a comprehensive family papers collection. The collection may be useful to those interested in early American law and the development of the legal profession. These papers also supplement larger groupings of Tilghman family materials held by other archives and libraries on the East Coast.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Tilghman, William, 1756-1827.
Tilghman, James, 1716-1793.
Tilghman, Edward, 1750-1815.
Tilghman, Benjamin, 1785-1850.
Tilghman, Matthew.
Tilghman, Richard.

Corporate Names

Pennsylvania. Supreme Court.

Topical Terms

Lawyers--United States--History--18th century--Sources.
Lawyers--United States--History--19th century--Sources.
Courts--United States--History--18th century--Sources.
Courts--United States--History--19th century--Sources.

Geographic Names

Eastern Shore (Md. and Va.)--History--18th century--Sources.
Eastern Shore (Md. and Va.)--History--19th century--Sources.
Philadelphia (Pa.)--History--18th century--Sources.
Philadelphia (Pa.)--History--19th century--Sources.

Form/Genre Terms

Legal documents.
Legal correspondence.
Financial records.
Occupation

Lawyers.

Justices.
Arrangement

I. William Tilghman, 1776-1849
II. Other Tilghman Family Members, 1756-1903
Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. William Tilghman, 1776-1849

Includes the correspondence, legal papers, biography, and financial records and receipts of William Tilghman reflecting his legal career in Maryland and Philadelphia.

Correspondence, 1783-1790 [Box 1 F1]
14 items
Letters from various clients of William Tilghman while practicing law in Chester Town, Maryland. Main correspondents include Henry Drinker, Thomas May, Peter Wikoff, and Jasper Moylan.

Correspondence, 1791-1833 [Box 1 F2]
40 items
Letters from various clients and associates of William Tilghman and copies of letters written by William Tilghman while he was practicing law, acting as a circuit judge in Philadelphia, and Supreme Court Justice of Pennsylvania. Main correspondents include James Matthews, James Scott, Samuel Hughes, and [?] Kinner.

Documents, 1776-1802 16 items
Various court cases tried or settled by William Tilghman.

   Short biography of William Tilghman, undated [Box 1 F3]
   Two leaves removed from a larger volume written after his death.

   Short biography of Chief Justice Tilghman (William), undated [Box 1 F3]
   Chapter XXXVI, an abridgement of a eulogy written by Horace Binney, removed from a larger volume and bound with a handwritten letter to Honorable Jasper Yeats from William Tilghman, April 4, 1806.

   Draft of "A further supplement to the Acts for Relief of Insolvent Debtors" probably written by William Tilghman, undated [Box 1 F3]

   Listing of "Supreme Court Issues", 1776 April [Box 1 F3]

   Supreme Court jury lists, 1799 March, 1799 June, 1800 March, and 1800 September [Box 1 F3]

   Map of Tilghman property, undated [Box 1 F3]

   Ledger of importances, 1793-1794 [Box 1 F3]

   "List of Patents for Lands in the State of North Carolina", 1795 [Box 1 F3]
Series I.

Recorded in a copybook, sold by Hogan & Thompson of Philadelphia, which depicts the "Defence of Fort McHenry" on the front cover and "Death of Abercrombie" on the back cover. The information was most likely copied from an older document into this copy book.

Receipts, 1802-1849 [Box 1 F4]

13 items

Financial records pertaining to William Tilghman’s commercial activities as well as his estate after his death.

Series II. Other Tilghman Family Members, 1756-1903

Includes papers of James Tilghman, Edward Tilghman, Matthew Tilghman, Benjamin Tilghman, and Richard Tilghman.

James Tilghman, 1756, 1790 [Box 1 F5]

2 items

Documents associated with legal matters.

Edward Tilghman, 1775-1899 [Box 1 F6]

8 items

Documents relating to legal cases in Queen Ann County, Maryland, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Ledger of "Accounts of Trust Estate of Edith S. Nalle under Will of Edward Tilghman", undated [Box 1 F6]

Matthew Tilghman, 1795, 1814 [Box 1 F7]

2 items

Legal settlement, 1795, and an order for blank forms to be used by a magistrate, 1814.

Benjamin Tilghman, 1798-1829 [Box 1 F8]

6 items

Letters to William Darlington, Esq., Prothonotary of Chester County (Pennsylvania) from Benjamin Tilghman.

Richard Tilghman, 1903 [Box 1 F9]

1 item

Bill addressed to Richard Tilghman from the Schuylkill Fishing Company.