

Guide to the Pelletreau family papers. ARC.142

Finding aid prepared by Rachel M. Oleaga

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Brooklyn Historical Society
Creator	Pelletreau family
Creator	Pelletreau, Elias, 1726-1810
Creator	Pelletreau, Elias, 1757-1831
Title	Pelletreau family papers
Date [inclusive]	1662-1921
Extent	1.0 Linear feet in one manuscript box, one oversize flat box, and one box of index cards.
Language	English
Language of Materials	The bulk of the material in this collection is in English; some documents are in French.
Abstract	<p>The Pelletreau family papers relate to multiple members of the Pelletreau family of Southampton, NY. A large portion of materials relate specifically to Elias Pelletreau and William S. Pelletreau as well as other members of the Southampton community. The collection includes a set of index cards providing access by individual name to the bulk of the documents. This collection is rich with legal and financial documentation that provide insight into the economic and political life of Southampton in Suffolk County, Long Island from the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. Document types include wills, deeds, indentures, indentures for apprenticeship, account books, maps and certificates. This collection also contains correspondence, some of which is in French, of the personal and family matters of the Pelletreau family. References to the</p>

American Revolution, land deals with the Shinnecock Native American Tribe, sea merchants and whaling as well as African-Americans appear in the collection in various genres of material.

Preferred Citation

Identification of item, date (if known); Pelletreau family papers, ARC.142, Box and Folder number; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Biographical note

The Pelletreau family originated from France and arrived in Massachusetts with twelve other Huguenot families in 1686. Francis Pelletreau (b. 1697) moved to Southampton in 1728. Francis married Jane Osburne in 1721 and had two children: Elias (b. 1726) and Mary (b. 1723). Francis was involved in the whaling industry as well as a merchant; it has been cited that he was a business partner of Hugh Gelston. Francis died in London, where he was undergoing a surgical operation in 1737.

Francis and Jane's son Elias (b. 1726) was ten years old when Francis perished. Soon after, Elias was sent to the boarding school of John Proctor in New York City, and after completion he apprenticed with silversmith Simeon Soumain for almost eight years. He then returned to Southampton and married Sarah Gelston in 1748. They had five children: Jane, Francis (b. 1752), John (b. 1755), Elias (b. 1757) and Hugh (b. 1762). In Southampton, Elias turned a portion of his home into a shop where he crafted various silver and gold objects for sale. His work became very popular, attracting customers from New York City and other distant areas, many of which were repeat customers with large accounts. Elias was also a farmer, owning a great deal of property in the surrounding area. His son John (b. 1755) was greatly involved in his silversmith work, and aided as a salesman for the work he crafted.

Upon the early stages of the American Revolution, Elias Pelletreau (b. 1726) was commissioned as a captain in the Suffolk County militia in 1761 and in 1775 he was one of the first individuals to sign the Articles of Association. He gave financial support to the revolutionary government and was active in community efforts to guard against British invasion. With the British occupation as a result of the battle of Long Island (1776), Captain Pelletreau and his family, along with many other prominent families, fled to Connecticut. He eventually returned to his home after the war and continued to work in his shop as a silversmith until his death in 1810.

The son of Elias, John Pelletreau (b. 1755) continued the silversmith business established by his father in the town of Southampton. John's work also drew great attention and popularity. John occupied the position as silversmith until his death in 1822 when his son William Smith Pelletreau (b. 1786) continued the legacy. John Pelletreau married Mary Smith, daughter of William Smith in 1785 and had five children; William Smith (b. 1786), Nathaniel (b. 1787), Charles (b. 1791), Edwin (b. 1795) and John Smith (b. 1804).

Like himself, John Pelletreau's son William Smith was actively involved in the family business and studied to become a silversmith. He maintained the shop upon the death of John and continued to prosper as a talented and respected silversmith in the community and greater New York area. He resided and owned property in Southampton. William married Nancy Mackie and had nine children. Upon the passing of his first wife, he married Elizabeth Wells and had three children: Helen Elizabeth, William Smith (b. 1840) and George Wells.

William Smith Pelletreau (b. 1786) is the father of William Smith Pelletreau, Jr. (b. 1840), an author and family historian, whose specific focus was genealogical history and the history of Southampton. He was an active member of the Long Island Historical Society and New-York Historical Society in his lifetime.

The papers in this collection were part of the estate of William Smith Pelletreau, Jr. and were believed to have been used for research of his publications concerning Southampton and the Pelletreau family.

Scope and Contents

The Pelletreau family collection characterizes the legal and personal lives of multiple members of the Pelletreau family of Southampton, Long Island, New York. The majority of documents, specifically deeds, pertain to Elias Pelletreau (b. 1726) and his craft of silversmith, as well as William S. Pelletreau (b. 1786). Other materials and references include Edwin, Francis, Nathaniel, John, Samuel, Elizabeth, Malty, Paul, Ellen, and Alexander Pelletreau. These references are generally found in wills and deeds of Pelletreau family members as well as in correspondence.

The deeds in this collection document the sale of properties located in the Town of Southampton, Long Island, from 1663-1868. Members of the community involved in land deals include members of the Pelletreau, Howell, Bishop, Foster, Jaggar, Scott, Woodruff, Rodgers, Smith, White, and Topping families. These deeds characterize many of the legal transactions in the Southampton area over a large span of time. The deed for the purchase of Elias Pelletreau's silversmith shop, located on Main Street in Southampton, is among the materials. Specific deeds involve multiple land agreements between settlers and Native Americans including the Shinnecocks from 1662 until 1703. Deeds that concern land matters in Connecticut, California and New Jersey appear in the collection as well as a small number of property lease agreements. Wills and estate matters of members of the Pelletreau and Smith family are present in the collection. These include the last will and testaments of John Smith, Elias, William, and Charles Pelletreau. Inventoried lists of their estate holdings and materials documenting the will's execution also accompany some of the wills.

The account book of Elias Pelletreau (b. 1726) which covers from 1766 to 1783 provides a list of customers, prices and projects Elias worked on as a silversmith. This account book coupled with his indenture of apprenticeship, provide a glimpse at the trade of silversmith in early America. The account book and receipts also contain information concerning the material needs and wants of the early settlers on Long Island and greater New York. Other indentures of apprenticeship in the collection include training as a silversmith and hat maker.

References to slavery and African-Americans are present in this collection, specifically seen in legal documentation concerning their sale, purchase and inheritance through wills. The collection contains one slave bill of sale dated 1764. Slaves are also referenced in the account book of Elias Pelletreau.

Various local governmental documents in the collection characterize community matters and decisions occurring in Southampton. Document types include decisions of local organizations, including the Committee of Southampton and the Committee of Suffolk County, as well as verdicts, appeals and requests. Official appointments include the appointment of John Pelletreau (b. 1755) as Quarter Master No. 1 of the Suffolk County Militia Regiment in 1769 and as Coroner of Suffolk County in 1798.

The materials in the collection concerning the American Revolutionary War include the involvement of Elias Pelletreau (b. 1726) in local militia efforts and the naming of him as Captain. Also included are the official documents which allowed for the Pelletreau families relocation to Connecticut as an attempt to avoid persecution upon the Loyalist surge in power. The collection also contains a list of Captain Rogers Company dated August 22, 1776, listing ranks, deaths and state of health of members of the militia.

Correspondence contained in the collection relates principally to communication between members of the Pelletreau family. These include letters in French addressed to Francois (Francis) Pelletreau, as well as letters to and from Elizabeth, Paul and Charles Pelletreau. Subject matter varies and is dated from 1722 to 1917. Also present are the communications between William S. Pelletreau and members of the community concerning historical and genealogical research. Some of the genealogical research and graphs are also included in the collection.

Mentions of seamen and trade by sea are also present in this collection from varying points in time. There are two certificates of citizenship provided under the acts for the relief and protection of American seamen, which include reference to physical descriptions. A list of goods of Francis Pelletreau shipped by sea in 1731 includes a list of the taxes paid to the King. Travel by sea and work as a seaman is also discussed in correspondence along with references to whaling and the whaling industry.

Miscellaneous materials include two certificates recognizing William S. Pelletreau (b. 1840) as an honorary member of local historical societies, a photograph of the tombstones of Elizabeth Wells Pelletreau and George Wells Pelletreau, and hand-drawn maps of Haverstraw, New York and properties belonging to Pelletreaus in Southampton, New York.

The collection also contains a variety of miscellaneous materials that may relate to the Pelletreau family, although their relationship is not immediately apparent. Materials include newspaper clippings dated 1921 from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, the abstracts of ancient papers found at Saggaponic, as well as a few materials in French.

Arrangement note

The Pelletreau family papers were found to be organized one document per folder at the beginning of processing in 2010. There was no indication that the material was in its original order. The material was then rearranged and a folder level description was imposed by the processing archivist. The materials are organized at the folder level by genre, and further organized by applicable individual, date range and/or subject.

Users of the collection should be aware that deeds are foldered by the purchaser of land and then separated by date range. Users of the collection should also keep in mind that there are multiple Elias and William Pelletreaus represented in the collection. Correspondence materials are foldered by recipient, materials with unknown recipients are foldered separately and categorized by date.

Oversize materials were removed from their original folders and placed in an oversize folders. Notes appear in each folder where oversize materials were found and they are also found on the container list. The oversize material can be found in one oversize folder, separated by notations.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Brooklyn Historical Society November 11, 2010

Conditions Governing Access

Open to researchers without restrictions.

Conditions Governing Use note

Material in this collection is in the public domain.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

The Pelletreau family papers were received in two different accessions. The family papers were received from Mrs. John Biddle Clark in March of 1922, and the account book was also received in 1922 from Mrs. John A. Clark, niece and estate executor for the estate of William S. Pelletreau.

Processing Information note

The Pelletreau family papers were processed by Rachel M. Oleaga in November of 2010.

The collection combines two accessions: 1974.045 and 1974.060.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- New York (State). Militia.

Family Name(s)

- Pelletreau family

Genre(s)

- Account books
- articles of apprenticeship
- Cadastral maps
- card indexes
- Certificates
- Correspondence
- Deeds
- Estate inventories.
- Estate records
- genealogical tables
- Indentures
- Manuscript maps
- Wills

Geographic Name(s)

- Haverstraw (N.Y.)
- Long Island (N.Y.)
- Long Island (N.Y.) |x History |y Revolution, 1775-1783
- Orange County (N.Y.)
- Smithtown (N.Y. : Town)
- Southampton (N.Y.)
- Southampton (N.Y.) |x History |y 17th century
- Southampton (N.Y.) |x History |y 18th century
- Southampton (N.Y.) |x History |y 19th century
- Suffolk County (N.Y.)
- Suffolk County (N.Y.) |x History |y American Revolution 1775-1783

Occupation(s)

- Silversmiths |z New York (State) |z Suffolk County

Personal Name(s)

- Pelletreau, Elias, 1726-1810
- Pelletreau, Elias, 1757-1831

Subject(s)

- African Americans |z New York (State) |z Suffolk County
- County courts |z New York (State) |z Suffolk County
- Genealogy
- Indians of North America |z New York State |z Suffolk County
- militia
- Real property |z New York (State) |z Haverstraw |v Maps
- sailors
- Shinnecock Indians |z New York State |z Suffolk County

Other Finding Aids note

The collection includes a set of index cards, likely prepared by a Brooklyn Historical Society librarian, that indicates names of individuals to be found in the Pelletreau manuscripts. Although the cards refer to a page number order that no longer exists, the indexed names can still be found in the collection based on the document type and date indicated on the index cards. These cards are in box 3.

Biographical References

Information on Pelletreau family genealogy and references to Elias Pelletreau as a prominent silversmith can be found at Brooklyn Historical Society in:

Trupin, Bennett W. *Elias Pelletreau, 1726-1810: Goldsmith of Southampton, Long Island*. 1984. Call Number: CS71.P43554 1984

Weaks, Mabel C. Captain *Elias Pelletreau, Long Island Silversmith: An Account of His Life and Times, His Office and His Craft.* Southampton, N.Y., Yankee Peddler Book Company, 1966. Call Number: CT275.P45 W43 1966

Collection Inventory

	Dates	Box	Folder
Deeds- Francis Pelletreau.	1728-1736	1	1

General note

Moved to oversize: two deeds of land dated 1728 and 1736.

Deeds- Elias Pelletreau.	1747-1776	1	2
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General note

Moved to oversize: eight deeds of land, dates ranging from 1747-1767.

Deeds- Elias Pelletreau.	1791-1821	1	3
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General note

Moved to oversize: two deeds of land dating 1811 and 1815.

Deeds- John Pelletreau.	1806-1812	1	4
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Deeds- William S. Pelletreau.	1816-1833	1	5
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General note

Moved to oversize: two deeds of land dating 1829 and 1830.

Deeds- William S. Pelletreau.	1866-1881	1	6
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General note

Moved to oversize: five deeds of land, dates ranging from 1866-1881.

Deeds- Nathaniel and William Smith.	1694-1773	1	7
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General note

Moved to oversize: three deeds of land, dates ranging from 1754-1768.

Deeds- Southampton.	1663-1688	1	8
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General note

Moved to oversize: two deeds of land dating 1663 and 1688.

Deeds- Southampton.	1705-1742	1	9
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General note

Moved to oversize: four deeds of land, dates ranging 1727-1742.

Deeds- Southampton.	1771-1802	1	10
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General note

Moved to oversize: four deeds of land, dates ranging from 1785-1794, two are undated.

Deeds- Native Americans.	1650-1703	1	11
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General note

Moved to oversize: four deeds of land, dates ranging from 1650-1703.

Lease Agreements.	1838-1859	1	12
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Slave Bill of Sale.	1767	1	13
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Indentures of Apprenticeship.	1741-1813	1	14
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Account Book- Elias Pelletreau.	1766-1783	1	15
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Accounts.	circa 1732-1762	1	16
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Bills and Receipts.	1731-1830	1	17
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Correspondence- Francis Pelletreau.	1731-1737	1	18
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Correspondence- Elias Pelletreau.	1760-1794	1	19
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Correspondence- John Pelletreau.	1804-1818	1	20
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Correspondence- William S. Pelletreau.	1837-1840	1	21
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Correspondence- William S. Pelletreau.	1865-1888	1	22
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Correspondence- Pelletreau family.	1732-1814	1	23
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Correspondence- Miscellaneous.	1722-1917, undated	1	24
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Estate Matters- Elias Pelletreau.	1728-1832	1	25
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Estate Matters- John Pelletreau.	1813-1823	1	26
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Estate Matters- John Smith and Sarah Pelletreau.	1828-1839	1	27
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Estate Matters- William S. Pelletreau.	circa 1820-1842	1	28
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Estate Matters- Charles Pelletreau.	1840-1863	1	29
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Estate Materials- Miscellaneous.	1724-1756	1	30
Court Decisions and Appeals- Suffolk County.	1741-1790	1	31
Certificates of Appointment- John Pelletreau.	1706-1798	1	32
Certificates- William S. Pelletreau.	1863-1894	1	33
American Seamen Citizenship Certifications.	1809-1820	1	34
Revolutionary War Materials.	1756-1780	1	35
Genealogies.	undated	1	36
Miscellaneous.	1696-1921, undated	1	37

Miscellaneous- French.	1571-1637	1	38
Maps.	1761-1904	1	39
General note			
Moved to oversize: one map, dating 1761.			
Oversize materials.	1728-1881	2	1
Oversize materials.	1650-1794, undated	2	2
Card index to collection	undated	3	1