McA MSS 006

BINNY & RONALDSON PAPERS

1805-1822

.42 linear feet, 1 box

Series I.  Correspondence (1805-1822)
Series II.  Documents (1807-1820)

April 2005
Descriptive Summary

Repository
Library Company of Philadelphia
1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5698

Call Number
McA MSS 006

Creator
Binny & Ronaldson.

Title
Binny & Ronaldson Papers

Inclusive Dates
1805-1822

Quantity
.42 linear feet (1 box)

Language of Materials
Materials are in English.

Abstract
The Binny & Ronaldson Papers contains correspondence and financial documents relating to their type-founding firm, with some material on their ceramics factory and their personal accounts.

Administrative Information

Restrictions to Access
The collection is open to researchers. It is on deposit at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and should be accessed through the Society’s reading room at 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA. Visit their website, http://www.hsp.org/, for reading room hours.

Acquisition Information
Gift of John A. McAllister; forms part of the McAllister Collection.

Processing Information
The Binny & Ronaldson Papers were formerly interfiled within the large and chronologically arranged McAllister Manuscript Collection. The papers were reunited, arranged, and described as a single collection in 2005, under grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the William Penn Foundation. The collection was processed by Sandra Markham. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this finding aid do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Preferred Citation
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1314 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA 19107-5698. Please include complete citation(s) when making a request. See the Library Company’s website, http://www.librarycompany.org/, for further information.

Online Catalog Headings

Subject Names
Binny, Archibald, 1762-1838
Ronaldson, James, 1768-1842
Binns, John, 1772-1860
Barlow, Joel, 1754-1812
Columbian Pottery (Firm)

Subject Topics
Binny & Ronaldson--Records and correspondence
Type and type-founding--United States
Type and type-founding--United States--Archives
Printing--United States--History
Inventors--United States
Type designers
Ceramic industries--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History
Potters--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History
Mourning customs--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia

Document Types
Bills of lading
Letters
Invoices
Receipts

Related Collections
The primary research collection of Binny & Ronaldson business records is in the American Typefounders Company’s Typographic Library manuscripts, now at the Rare Book and Manuscript Department of the Columbia University Library. The papers include volumes of the firm’s financial records (1817-1838) and correspondence (1819-1821, 1827-1828), as well as Binny’s citizenship papers, and the August 1815 dissolution of partnership documents for the Binny & Ronaldson firm. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania owns a one-volume scrapbook holding some Binny & Ronaldson specimen sheets and other related material (Coll. 2001). For a history of the firm, see: Jennifer B. Lee, “Our Infant Manufactures”: Early Typefounding in Philadelphia,” Printing History 11, no. 2 (1989) 28-40.
Archibald Binny (1762-1838), a type founder, was born Archbald Binnie on November 25, 1762, in Portobello (now part of Edinburgh), Scotland. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1796, and became a United States citizen in 1802. James Ronaldson (1768-1842), also born near Edinburgh, arrived in America in the spring of 1794, and opened a bakery on Landenberger’s Wharf in Philadelphia in 1795. After losing his business in a fire in 1796, he joined Binny in partnership as Binny & Ronaldson type founders, with Binny guiding the technical end of the business and Ronaldson the financial. Their first appearance in the Philadelphia directories was in 1801, where they were listed in James Robinson’s *Philadelphia Directory, City and County Register, for 1802* as “Binny & Ronaldson letter founders Cedar above 10th.” The earliest permanent type foundry established in America, the firm published its first specimen book, *A Specimen of Metal Ornaments Cast at the Letter Foundry of Binny & Ronaldson* in 1809, and their *Specimen of Printing Types from the Foundry of Binny & Ronaldson, Philadelphia* in 1812.

Binny and Ronaldson were also partners in second endeavor, the Columbian Pottery, which was located on Cedar (now South) Street near 13th Street, and operated from 1808 through about 1814. They advertised teapots, coffee pots, and sugar boxes made in queensware, also known as creamware, which was used extensively in the production of household china. Further information on Binny and Ronaldson’s relationship with the Columbian Pottery and their master potter Alexander Trotter, who was the son of Binny’s sister Elizabeth (Mrs. Alexander) Trotter, can be found in *Handcraft to Industry: Philadelphia Ceramics in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, by Susan H. Myers (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980).

Binny remained listed as a type founder in Philadelphia directories through 1814, the year he began to acquire property on Chesapeake Bay near Drayden, in southern Saint Marys County, MD. In August 1815 he retired there to an estate named Porto Bello, which by 1821 encompassed 5,000 acres. James Ronaldson continued on the type business with his brother Richard, and issued *Specimen of Printing Type, from the Letter Foundry of James Ronaldson, successor to Binny & Ronaldson* in 1816. The Ronaldson brothers were listed in the city directories as type founders through 1831 and appeared as gentlemen thereafter.

Archibald Binny’s name was occasionally spelled Binney in correspondence and invoices, and it was the spelling used by his second wife, Charlotte Prager (1790-1875), and their children when they returned to Philadelphia after his death. “Binny” appears on his tombstone in Saint Mary’s City, but “Binney” was used in an obituary printed in the May 11, 1838, issue of *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (which misstated his date of retirement):

DIED, at Porto Bello, his family’s residence, in St. Mary’s county, Maryland, on Wednesday, the 25th of April, ARCHIBALD BINNEY, Esq., in the 75th year of his age. Mr. Binney was a native of Scotland, but emigrated at an early age to this country, and was for many years in Philadelphia, successfully engaged in the business of type
founding, in partnership with James Ronaldson [sic] under the well-remembered firm of Binney & Ronaldson. He retired from business, and settled in St. Mary’s county, just before the breaking out of the war of 1812.

Collection Overview

The Binney & Ronaldson Papers spans the period from 1805 through 1822 and primarily contains correspondence and financial documents relating to their typefounding firm, with some material on their ceramics factory. The collection is divided into two series: Correspondence and Documents.

Series I, Correspondence (1805-1822) holds letters written to the firm, as well as some directed at James Ronaldson himself. Most of the correspondence is incoming to the partners, but there are two letters from Ronaldson to Binny while Binny was traveling in 1811, and two letters from Ronaldson written to his brother in 1820. The latter mention his visit to Archibald Binny at his home, Porto Bello, in Saint Marys County, MD. The remainder of the correspondence primarily covers topics such as type orders, shipments, and deficiencies, including several notes from the Irish-born newspaper publisher John Binns specifying exactly what he required, and special requests such as that from C.C. Adams of Poughkeepsie, who asked that his order be sent before Hudson River freezes for the season. Also appearing is a note of appreciation from the poet Joel Barlow, who thanked the firm “for your kindness & particular care in the elegant types you cut & cast for the Columbiad,” his nationalist epic poem.

Several folders hold documentation of the partners’ search for clay to be used by their pottery. In the fall of 1807, Binney & Ronaldson ran advertisements in the Philadelphia United States Gazette and other newspapers in New York and New England, searching for “clays or flints” with low iron content for the manufacture of ceramic ware, and requesting specimens accompanied by descriptions of the available quantity and “distance from water-carriage.” Jacob Cist, Ralph Isaacs, Peter Lacour (addressing Alexander Trotter), Henry Mead, William Montgomery, and Arthur O'Neill responded with advice on the quality of clay banks and pits in their areas. A letter from B. Allison discusses window sashes for the pottery building.

Series II, Documents (1807-1820) holds a number of receipts for materials used by the firm; while they by no means cover either the firm’s spans of time or business, the papers do give an indication of some of their transactions with printers and suppliers. The shortage of antimony was a constant concern; one file holds material documenting purchases from John Loullier in Philadelphia and Thomas Tenant in Baltimore, with a receipt for cooperage to ship the metal to Philadelphia. Used type was another commodity, and that folder contains receipts for purchases made from Jane and Robert Aitken, Michael Billmeyer, Thomas Bradford, John Crookes, Aaron Denman, James Humphreys, Neill & Hurley, and the Sellers family, among others.
The Miscellaneous receipts folder documents purchases of books, tea, gin, coal, wood, and oil, charged to the “house account,” as well as various repair services billed to the firm. Included in this file is a bill of lading for “One Box Merchandise on Account” from William Scott & Co., printers in Greenock, Scotland, and an invoice for freight paid to ship a bundle of Hebrew type to Philadelphia from New York in 1813. Also there is a paid invoice from Dr. Alexander Anderson of New York, for two engravings on brass made for the firm, and three invoices from Adam Ramage, listed in the 1813 city directory as “printer’s joiner and cabinetmaker,” for rules, composing sticks, and other equipment for the foundry and the pottery. Four paid invoices show that Binny & Ronaldson were patrons of Oliver Evans’s Mars Works in Philadelphia.

The Columbian Pottery is also documented in the Taxes and rents folder in Series II with a bill for taxes for 1812, and, in the Miscellaneous receipts file, an 1807 invoice from J Rose & Son for hooks and hinges for “potters shop building,” and an undated invoice from Benjamin Bradfield for “weighing clay.”

In addition, Binny and Ronaldson each have a file holding their personal and household receipts, for clothing, shoes, medical treatments, home repairs, etc.; Binny’s folder includes a paid invoice for black crape and mourning attire for the family and a servant the day after the death of his first wife Elizabeth, on July 7, 1812, and a bill from Adam Ramage for her mahogany coffin, hearse, and other expenses of her burial.

One document was removed from the collection and catalogued separately: an 1816 invoice addressed to Ronaldson from Scottish cartographer and publisher John Melish (1771-1822), for the purchase of maps, which was written on his printed and engraved “Prospectus of a six sheet map of the United States, and contiguous British and Spanish possessions…”
SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE 1805-1822

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Allison, B., B., Bordentown, NJ</td>
<td>1807 Nov 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Andrews, Ebenezer T. See: Thomas &amp; Andrews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Barlow, Joel, Washington, DC</td>
<td>1811 Jun 7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Beach, Samuel, Whiting, VT</td>
<td>1811</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Binns, John, Northumberland, PA</td>
<td>1805-1816</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Butler, G. P. W., Bellefonte, NJ</td>
<td>1816 Feb 12</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>C. C. Adams &amp; Co., Poughkeepsie</td>
<td>1810 Nov 10</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carey, Mathew, Philadelphia</td>
<td>1805-1815</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carleton, Henry, New Orleans</td>
<td>1820 Oct 21</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carter, John, Providence</td>
<td>1809 Feb 20</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Cist, Charles, Philadelphia</td>
<td>1805 Jun 25</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cist, Jacob, Wilkes-Barre</td>
<td>1807-1808</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conrad &amp; Holgate, Philadelphia</td>
<td>1811</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daggett, William, Martha’s Vineyard, MA</td>
<td>1809 Nov 21</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>David Allinson &amp; Co., Burlington, NJ</td>
<td>1811 Nov 2</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Desuvius, J., New York</td>
<td>1809 Dec 11</td>
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<td>Dickerson, Mahlon, Washington</td>
<td>1820 Jan 7</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dorsey, John, Lancaster</td>
<td>1808 Jan 27</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Driscoll, Dennis, Augusta, GA</td>
<td>1809</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Duane, William, Washington</td>
<td>1808 Feb 9</td>
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</table>
SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE, cont.

[1] 20  Duane, William John, Harrisburg  1820
21  Freneau, Peter, Charleston  1805
22  Fry, William, Philadelphia  1805 Jan 4
23  Fryer & Clark, Baltimore  1805 Dec 28
24  G. & R. Waite, New York  1811
25  Gales & Seaton, Washington  1820 Mar 13
26  George Goodwin & Sons, Hartford  1822 Aug 26
28  Greenough & Stebbins, Boston  1809
29  Hamilton, William, Lancaster  1809 Nov 28

Hastings, Etheridge & Bliss
See: Greenough & Stebbins

30  Isaacs, Ralph, New York  1807 Nov 3
31  Lacour, Peter, New York  1808
32  LeFaure, Louis, Jamaica [?]  1821

Levering, Benjamin
See: Conrad & Holgate

33  Lewis, Samuel, Philadelphia  1811 Apr 19
34  Maxwell, Hugh, Lancaster  1820 Aug 11
35  Mead, Henry, New Haven  1807
36  Miner, Charles, West Chester  1820 Nov 6
37  Montgomery, William, Philadelphia  1808 Nov 15
38  Nashee, George, Chillicothe  1820 Aug 10
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[1]</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Niles, Hezekiah and William Ogden, Baltimore</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Peacock, James, Harrisburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Pollard, Nathan, Richmond</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Poulson, John, Philadelphia</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>Priestley, Joseph, Northumberland, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Rakestraw, Joseph, Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Ritchie, Thomas, Richmond</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Robinson, Joseph, Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Ronaldson, James, Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Ronaldson, James, Portobello, MD, and Baltimore</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Rush, R., Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Russell, Benjamin, Boston</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Sanford, B. &amp; William Henry</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>Thomas &amp; Andrews, Boston</td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Thomas B. Wait &amp; Co., Portland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Thomas, Isaiah, Jr., Worcester</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Tiebout, John, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Tilghman, Benjamin, Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trotter, Alexander
See: Peter Lacour

| 58  | Willington, Aaron Smith, Charleston | 1820 Oct 18 |
SERIES II. DOCUMENTS 1807-1820

Arranged alphabetically.

Household accounts

[1] 59 Binny, Archibald 1812-1813
60 Ronaldson, James 1812-1816
61 Notes for protest 1820
62 Receipts for purchase of ink 1813-1815

Receipts for purchases of metal

63 Antimony 1815-1816
64 Bismuth, brass, and tin 1813, 1816
65 Lead 1813-1816
66 Type (used) 1809-1816
   See also: G. P. W. Butler in Series I
   See also: Mathew Carey in Series I

67 Subscriptions 1811-1816
68 Taxes and rent 1813-1814

Miscellaneous receipts

69 Anderson, Alexander 1810
70 Ramage, Adam, Philadelphia 1812, 1816
71 Funeral and burial expenses for Rebecca Grace 1815
72 Goods and services 1807-1816, undated