



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Records, 1792, 1808-1842 and undated

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Records
Identifier:	Record Unit 7054
Date:	1792, 1808-1842 and undated
Extent:	0.27 cu. ft. (1 half document box) (1 microfilm reel)
Creator::	Philadelphia Museum Company
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7054, Records

Access Restriction

Fragile items require careful handling.

Historical Note

The Philadelphia Museum Company had its genesis in the collections of Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827), which he placed on view in his Philadelphia home as early as 1786. In 1792, seeking to turn his enterprise into a national museum, Peale formed a Society of Inspectors, including Thomas Jefferson and Edmund Randolph, in an unsuccessful effort to attract private and government support. In 1794, he obtained a ten-year lease to lodge his collections in the American Philosophical Society building on State House Square, and in 1802 the Pennsylvania legislature authorized the Museum to occupy quarters in the State House itself.

Peale's son, Rembrandt, attempted a museum in Baltimore that failed, and attempts by Rubens Peale and Linnaeus Peale to set up museums in New York also failed. The Philadelphia Museum was incorporated in 1821 as the Philadelphia Museum Company. Charles Willson Peale died in 1827, and his sons, chiefly Rubens and Franklin, continued the enterprise in the Philadelphia Arcade, where it remained until the construction of a new building in 1836. Caught in hard economic times and a growing schism between scientific natural history on the one hand and showmanship represented by P. T. Barnum on the other, the Museum went out of existence through sale of its collections in the 1850s.

Descriptive Entry

This record unit contains minutes of meetings of Peale's Society of Inspectors for the period March-July 1792, and a second minute book has a good run of entries from June 1827, just after the elder Peale's death, to the end of 1840. The remainder of this surviving remnant of records of the Philadelphia Museum Company is less than three dozen items of correspondence and oddments related to the Philadelphia Museum and the Philadelphia Museum Company. Items are scattered through the period 1808-1842. Correspondents include Charles Willson Peale, Rubens Peale, Rembrandt Peale, and Titian Ramsay Peale.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Natural history
- Natural history museums

Types of Materials:

- Manuscripts

Names:

- American Philosophical Society
- Barnum, P. T. (Phineas Taylor), 1810-1891
- Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826
- Peale's Museum (Philadelphia, Pa.)
- Peale, Charles Willson, 1741-1827
- Peale, Franklin, 1795-1870
- Peale, Linnaeus
- Peale, Rembrandt, 1778-1860
- Peale, Rubens, 1784-1865
- Peale, Titian Ramsay, 1799-1885
- Philadelphia Museum of Art
- Randolph, Edmund, 1753-1813
- Society of Inspectors

Container Listing

Box 1

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 1 Two handwritten minute books |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 2 Dupresne Notes from Museum of Natural History, Paris, July 1808. To M. Peale. |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 3 Bruce, A. to Rembrandt Peale, July 12, 1810 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 4 Pierce, William Leigh to Charles Peale, June 4, 1812 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 5 Partridge, William to Peale, April 23, 1816 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 6 Willamil, Joseph to Philadelphia Museum, March 3, 1817 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 7 Talbot, Hamilton to R. Peale, April 5, 1817 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 8 Peale, Rubens to Franklin Peale, June 7, 1817 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 9 Hanville to Rubens Peale, March 28, 1818 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 10 Fall, Philip Slater to Rubens Peale, June 5, 1818 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 11 Fall, Philip Slater to R. Peale, July 10, 1818 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 12 Plass, Harry (Leipzig) to Rubens Peale, November 24, 1820 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 13 Museum Expenditures Ledger, 1821-1822 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 14 Ricord, Alex to Rubens Peale, February 10, 1822 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 15 Receipt for Coal, November 23, 1823 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 16 Receipt for Reflecting Lamp, January 7, 1826 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 17 Ord, G. to Trustees of the Philadelphia Museum, October 6, 1828 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 18 Bute, G. H. to Titian Peale, September 8, 1829. Received December 14. |
| Box 1 of 1 | Folder 19 Philadelphia Museum Company Charter and By-Laws, 1834 |

- Box 1 of 1 Folder 20 Waring, S. B. to Peale, January 10, 1835
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 21 Peale, Rubens to Echol Sellers and Alf Harrold, August 22, 1835
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 22 Hattinger, J. B. to Franklin Peale, September 24, 1835
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 23 Waring, Henry to T. R. Peale, October 24, 1835. Receipt for Rhinoceros.
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 24 Shipping Bill, August 26, 1836
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 25 Dreen, Frederick to Franklin Peale, August 25, 1838
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 26 Rathbone, Jared S. to Trustees of the Philadelphia Museum, July 15, 1839
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 27 Philadelphia Museum Company Charter and By-Laws, 1840
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 28 Curator's Report, June-August 1842
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 29 Stockholder Tickets, 1842
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 30 Roedings Museum Catalogue (Hamburgh), undated
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 31 Unsigned, Undated Letter to Editor of the National Gazette re: Articles by Audubon
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 32 Wilson, Alexander to Rubens Peale, undated. List of Birds.
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 33 Specimen List, undated
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 34 Blank Scrap
- Box 1 of 1 Folder 35 Annotated Sketch of "Tooth," undated