

Collection: DAVIE, WILLIAM RICHARDSON, PAPERS (1756-1820) P.C. 18.1 - 18.4
Halifax, North Carolina

1776--1817

Physical Description: Letters, 2 journals, rough drafts and notes for treaty, commissions, miscellaneous items. 2 volumes, c. 110 items.

1908-1910: copies of 4 letters Wis. Hist. Soc, 4 letters Mass. Hist. Soc, 1 letter Princeton Univ; May 31, 1915: Certificate to Davie from Masons, gift Hon. Walter Clark; Nov 30, 1915: mss. letter[s?] of Davie purchased from Anderson Auction Galleries, N.Y.; Dec 7, 1917: Letter Davie to Gov. Thos. Burke, 1781, purchased from Stan V. Henkels; Oct 31, 1919: Letter Davie to H. Potter, 1798, purchased from Stan V. Henkels; Mar 16, 1927: Photocopy commission of Davie as Brig. Gen, 1798, by John Adams, gift Library U.N.C.; Sept 2, 1927: Commission of Davie as Envoy to France, 1799, by John Adams, and to hold treaty with Tuscaroras, 1801, by Jefferson, from Col. Fred Olds; Feb 7, 1931: letter Davie to William Gaston, 1814, gift C. W. Worth, Wilmington; Apr 2, 1963: letter Davie to W. V. Murray, 1801, print from mf, purchased from N. Y. Hist. Soc.

Description:

William Richardson Davie
1756, June 20 Born in Egremont parish, Cumberland County, England
1763 Came to Waxhaw settlement, South Carolina
1776 Was graduated from Princeton
1779-1781 Served successively lieutenant, captain, major, commissary-general in Revolution
1780 Licensed to practice law
1782 Married Sarah Jones and settled in Halifax
1786-1798 Represented Halifax in Legislature
1787 Delegate to Constitutional Convention
1789 Sponsored bill to establish University of North Carolina
1798 Commissioned brigadier-general in Provisional Army
1798 Inaugurated Governor of North Carolina
1799 Commissioned Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to France
1802 Negotiated Treaty with Tuscaroras

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- 1803 Served on commission to extend North Carolina-South Carolina boundary
- 1805 Retired to plantation, Lancaster County, South Carolina
- 1811 Received first honorary ^{law} degree given by University of North Carolina
- 1820, Nov 29 Died

For further reference see: Ashe, Samuel, Biographical History of North Carolina, VI, 188-196; James Sprunt Historical Monograph, No. 7, "William Richardson Davie: A Memoir," by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, and "Letters," edited by Kemp P. Battle; Robinson, Blackwell, William R. Davie.

Letters include several written by Davie while an officer in the Revolutionary War, dated 1780, from Camp Waxhaws, to General William Smallwood, reporting on his activities in western North Carolina. There are also others written while he was commissary-general, including a report to Governor Thomas Burke.

One letter written during the Constitutional Convention of 1787 to the Governor [Caswell] reports on the progress of the Convention, as a "work of great delicacy and difficult, impeded at every step by jealousies and jarring interests."

A letter of 1789 deals with the publication of Federalist debates supporting ratification of the Constitution in North Carolina. Davie also writes President James Madison commenting on the political situation in North Carolina, particularly opposition to the Constitution, fear of the power of Congress as set forth there, attachment to paper money, etc.

A letter (1798) from Judge Howell Tatum, to Davie as a trustee of the University of North Carolina, concerns lands of an estate in Tennessee left to the University by Major Charles Gerrard.

In 1798 James McHenry, Secretary of War, wrote Davie informing him of his appointment as a brigadier-general in the Provisional Army, realizing this put Davie in the position of having to choose between this appointment and his position in the State militia. Davie's reply states his acceptance on the basis that it become effective only if the situation warrants action. There is also correspondence with the Secretary of War, with General Washington, and with various officers in the State, regarding recommendations of men in North Carolina to serve as officers in the Provisional Army.

Other correspondence deals with Davie's mission to France as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary: Oliver Ellsworth to Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State, recommending Davie if Patrick Henry declines the appointment; extract from a letter (May, 1799) of Pickering to John Adams suggesting that Governor Davie be appointed but that Patrick Henry's refusal not be published at once, so that Davie may continue as governor as long as possible; letter from Pickering informing Davie of his appointment.

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under these conditions and Davie's reply (June, 1799) accepting these terms; Pickering to Davie (August, 1799) requesting Davie to proceed with mission as soon as possible; copy of letter Adams to Pickering asking that he write Davie and Oliver Ellsworth, expressing his best wishes for their health and happiness and for an honorable termination of their mission, commenting that it should be "entertaining and instructive." In preparation for their mission, there are letters of instructions relative to banking, names of U. S. consuls abroad, details of sailing, and letters of credence to the French government. Davie reported to Pickering (November, 1799) his sailing immediately and wrote later from Lisbon asking Pickering for new letters of credence because of a change of government in France. There are letters to and from the French ministers concerning negotiations and one dated February, 1801, from Davie to William Vans Murray at the Hague, reporting his safe arrival home and presentation of the treaty and journal to the President and Senate, mentioning the disapproval of the mission and treaty by the Federalists, support of Republicans and approval of the public when the news was published.

A letter from Davie in 1803 states his willingness to serve as candidate in the approaching election for a representative in Congress, with the understanding that he will serve only according to his best judgment, bound to no one man's opinion.

For the years after Davie's retirement from active participation in politics and move to South Carolina, there is some personal correspondence. He writes John Steele, Comptroller of the U. S. Treasury. There are letters to William Gaston, member of Congress, discussing the national political situation (Davie being upset over the "Tyranny of Virginia") the War of 1812, the Battle of New Orleans, Monroe's possible caucus nomination and the effect on North Carolina, as "implicit obedience to the will of the administration is a leading article in the political creed of the Democrats of this state." Writing Auguste Cabarrus, Edenton, Davie discusses herring, cotton prices, epidemic in area, etc.

Other correspondents are: James Iredell, Spruce Macay, James Read, Brigadier-General Jethro Sumner, Judge Grimke, H. Potter, Col. William Polk, A. Henderson, Alex. Martin, G. C. Mountflorencence, Timothy Bloodworth, Francis Child, Hugh Patton, Oliver Ellsworth.

Two volumes, journals of "Proceedings of Envoys Extraordinary Oliver Ellsworth, W. R. Davie, and W. V. Murray to the French Republic, 1799-1800," contain copies of letters and notes dealing with the mission to France. These begin with preparations for the voyage in October, 1799, report progress of journey, announce arrival of envoys in Paris on March 2, 1800, and reflect the course of the negotiations with the French ministers, most of which were conducted by letter because of the language difficulty. Letters from the American envoys are in English, those of the French ministers in French. The journals reflect months of negotiations--the inability to agree on settlement of indemnities or on a treaty, the Americans wanting a new treaty and the French wanting to renew the old one--and formation of a temporary plan to avoid further abuses on the seas, making continued commerce possible, with definitive points to be adjusted later. The negotiations of

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the convention were signed in October, 1800. The journals conclude with a letter to Secretary of State John Marshall summarizing the mission.

Miscellaneous items include Davie's commissions: as colonel and commander of cavalry in the western district of North Carolina (1780) signed by Abner Nash, governor; as "major general of the 3rd Division of Militia" in North Carolina (1794) signed by Richard Dobbs Spaight, governor; photocopy of commission as brigadier general of the provisional army (1798) signed by John Adams, President, James McHenry, Secretary of War; commission to serve as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to the French Republic (1799) giving power to meet and confer and settle by treaty the differences with France, signed by John Adams, President and Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State; as "sole commissioner to hold a treaty with the Tuscarora nation of Indians," (1801) to enable agents of North Carolina "to negotiate and conclude with them a cession of their lands within the said state," signed by Thomas Jefferson, President, and James Madison, Secretary of State; as member of commission to extend the boundary line of North Carolina and South Carolina (1803) signed by James Turner, governor.

Other items include: certificate dated October 28, 1776, signed by Jno. Witherspoon, stating that Davie attended the College of New Jersey [Princeton] for two years, earning the Bachelor's Degree "of which an authentick parchment will be delivered at the first meeting of the Board of Trustees"; memo (1788) from a ledger kept by John Steele, merchant of Salisbury, to the account of Dr. William R. Davie, Esq.; lists (1798) of North Carolina and Tennessee men applying for commissions in the provisional army; a circular of 1798 to officers of the 5th and 6th Brigade of North Carolina Militia, signed by Davie, appealing for unity during the crisis with France and giving orders for a better prepared militia; Davie's original copy of "Instructions to Oliver Ellsworth, William Richardson Davie, and William vans Murray, Esquires, Envoys Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the French Republic," (1799) on points to be settled and methods of settlement; various drafts (1800) of the proposed treaty with France with marginal notes and additions, comments and observations of envoys concerning negotiations, and French passport (1800) for Davie; an agreement signed by Davie (1805) to sell land in Tyrrell County to Allen Jones; and a certificate (1807) from "Grand Lodge of North Carolina and Tennessee," to Davie containing a testimony of thanks and recognition to him "as a man and a Mason," after serving as Grand Master of Masons for eight years.

The collection contains copies from: Emmet Collection, New York Historical Society; Draper Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Payne-Henry Collection, Princeton University; George C. Thomas Collection, Philadelphia; North Carolina Collection, Chapel Hill; Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; North Carolina Historical Society's Collection, Chapel Hill; William Gaston Papers in the possession of Judge H. G. Connor, Wilson.

Public Library

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS WORK SHEET

NUMBER: PC.18.2

NAME OF COLLECTION: William Richardson DAVIE Papers

DATES: 1799

ACQUISITION INFORMATION: Gift of Mrs. Harry Givens
Sebastian, Florida
12 August 1993

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Printed volume, octavo, 3 folding plates, 180 pages. Front board separate from the spine. Bound in calf.

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION:

Copy of Instructions to be Observed for the Formation and Movements of the Cavlary, Published agreeably to a Resolution of the Legislature of State of North-Carolina. Printed at Halifax by Abraham Hodge, 1799.