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## Luke Drury Papers

1746-1831

4 boxes (3.0 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 258



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Soldier in Revolutionary War and Shays Rebellion, later a state legislator and local politician from Grafton and Marlboro, Massachusetts. Drury's papers contain family and business (farm and mill) correspondence, notes of hand, bills, receipts, and

legal papers as well as records pertaining to the town of Grafton. Collection also includes papers of Timothy Darling and the Goulding, Place, and Sherman families.

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## Family

Massachusetts (Central)

Politics and governance

## Background on Luke Drury

The Grafton, Massachusetts Drurys traced their family back to Hugh Drury, born in England in 1616. By 1659 Hugh had emigrated to Boston, where he established himself in business. His great-grandson Thomas (b.1690) moved from Framingham to Grafton sometime in the 1720s. Thomas was not one of the original proprietors of Grafton, but he acquired land and began farming. He and his wife Sarah had ten children by 1743, including Thomas Jr. (b.1721) and Luke (b.1734). When Sarah died in 1745, Thomas married again. He and his second wife Mary produced three children, including Manoah (b.1746).

From an early date Thomas Sr. was active in Grafton affairs, an example his sons would follow. He served in the militia, as a selectman, and as a member of at least three church committees.

His third son Luke, who farmed in addition to operating a grist mill, took an even more active role in Grafton. In 1757 he joined the militia in protecting Grafton during the French and Indian Wars. In the tense years before the Revolutionary War, Luke moderated at least one grievance meeting of concerned citizens in Grafton. When the alarm of British invasion spread on April 18, 1775, he was serving as a captain of militia. He marched his company to Concord and Lexington to repulse the British. Nine days later he raised a company and joined Colonel Artemus Ward's regiment to fight at Bunker Hill. Luke served in different areas during the war, from West Point to Grafton, where his company guarded military stores. In addition, Luke also supported the Continentals financially, at one point giving fifty pounds to enlist soldiers in Grafton (see Folder 8).

In the years after the Revolution, Luke was deeply involved in the growing conflict between agrarian and commercial interests which came to a head in Shays' Rebellion. As a farmer and a miller, he shared the resentment of other western Massachusetts farmers who felt taxes were too heavy. They also objected to merchants squeezing debtors for hard money payments with which to pay their own debts to British merchants. Farmers demanded paper money and laws allowing payment in kind to ease the economic situation.

The farmers' first response was to organize town and county conventions, and to appeal to the state legislature for relief. Grafton voters chose Luke Drury to represent them at the Worcester County convention on August 17, 1786. A committee notified him of specific issues to address, such as the reduction of taxes and amnesty for all "rebels." The convention petition clearly stated the grievances most farmers felt (see Folder 44).

In Massachusetts, the governor and legislature opposed any concessions to the farmers, unwilling to upset the market status quo. When peaceful means failed, the farmers, led by Daniel Shays, turned to action. Their major tactic was to close down debtor courts, which had prosecuted so many debt-ridden farmers. By this the "Shaysites" hoped to prod the government to economic reforms. On September 5 and November 21, Shaysites closed county courts in Worcester. Given Luke Drury's militia and Continental Army service, he probably took part. This experience also explains his position on the Worcester "committee of the people," one of the groups set up to organize and govern each county. Luke may also have joined the Worcester rebels in a failed attempt to seize the state arsenal at Springfield on January 25, 1787.

The military defeat at Springfield and a similar one at Petersham on February 2 ended the Massachusetts Shaysites' concerted action. Some fled the state, while others scattered to continue hit-and-run actions. But the feelings behind the rebellion remained strong on both sides. Luke was imprisoned as "a person dangerous to the state." In March he petitioned the governor for release on bond of good behavior, and he was eventually released (see Folder 1). In state elections in June three Shaysites, including Luke Drury, were elected to the House. The General Court refused to seat the "rebels," however.

Economic improvements over the next few months helped ease tensions in the state, and Luke returned to his farm and family. He had married Lydia Sherman in 1759, and the couple had nine children. Besides farming, he continued to take an active role in state and local politics. He served terms in the state House of Representatives and the General Court. In Grafton over the years he was chosen constable, deputy sheriff, tax collector, assessor, and selectman. He also acted as legal guardian to at least four minors, who apparently were allowed to choose him as their guardian.

Lydia Drury died in 1793. Two years later Luke married Mary Howland. He continued farming in Grafton until 1803, when he and Mary moved to Marlboro. His sons Ephraim and Alden remained in Grafton to farm the Drury lands. Luke died in Marlboro in 1811, leaving his widow Mary and seven children.

## Scope of collection

The Luke Drury papers (1746-1831) comprise the personal and business papers of Colonel Luke Drury of Grafton and Marlboro. They represent three generations of his family, which settled in Grafton in the 1720s. The collection also includes the papers of four families related to the Drurys by business or marriage. These are the Darling, Goulding, Place and Sherman families. In addition, the collection contains documents from Grafton's town government, with an extensive series of tax records. Correspondence and business papers involving various Grafton citizens are included.

Most of the documents in the collection are from the years between the Revolution and the War of 1812. They consist primarily of business papers, including correspondence, notes of hand, bills and receipts. There are also many legal papers, such as leases, deeds, and court papers. These documents provide important information about the Grafton area and Massachusetts for these years. Specifically, the documents demonstrate the problems that led to Shays' Rebellion in 1786, in which Luke Drury took a prominent role. The documents also illustrate the fluid economic situation that persisted into the 1800s. This can especially be seen in the sheer volume of the notes of hand. Many people were in debt, for various amounts to various people. Yet these same people were loaning out money. Luke Drury is a good example. Folders 15-17 in the collection contain notes of money he borrowed and lent. In addition, in Folder 19 there is an account book dated 1802 which lists notes he had acquired, perhaps as partial payments for still other notes. The economic situation was complicated, to say the least.

Grafton itself was originally one of John Eliot's "praying villages," reservations to Christianize and civilize local Indians. The Grafton Indians sold small parcels of land over the years, and by 1727 several English families had settled in what would become Grafton. That year both the Indians and the English petitioned the legislature to allow large-scale land purchases. This permission was granted in March 1728, and the English proprietors began dividing the lands. From the time of settlement, agriculture was a crucial factor in the town's economic life. In the 19th century manufacturing interests developed, producing finished cloth and shoes. Tanneries also played an important role, both in their own right and as part of the shoe industry.

The Luke Drury papers have been organized into the following series, including Drury papers, (1750-1829), Related families (1757-1831), Grafton materials (1741-1823), and Miscellaneous materials (n.d.).

## Arrangement

This collection is organized into four series:

Series 1. Drury papers, 1750-1829

Series 2. Related families, 1757-1831

Series 3. Grafton materials, 1741-1823

Series 4. Miscellaneous materials, n.d.

## Series descriptions

### Series 1. Drury Papers

1750-1829

This series contains four subseries. The first is Correspondence, which includes family correspondence among various branches of the Drury and related families, generally centered around Luke. It also contains business correspondence, again mainly Luke's, dealing with his farm and mill, and especially with loans to and from local people. Those appearing frequently include the Adams, Bachelor, Prentice and Rice families in Grafton, as well as the Brooks, Chase and Turner families, related to the Drurys by marriage. There is also a series of letters dealing with the estate of Timothy Darling, of which Luke was executor.

The second subseries comprises Financial Papers. These are mainly Luke's bills and receipts, and his notes on personal loans. A batch of small account books deals with milling, while another contains notations of fur trapping. A third, dated 1802, is a list of Luke's notes of hand. There are also papers from estate valuations and sales. One details the estate of "PerryGreen" [Peregrine] Howland, who was probably a relative of Luke's second wife Mary Howland Drury. The other papers are not clearly identified, but they seem to be from the estates of Timothy Darling, Luke Jr. (d.1790), and Luke Sr. (d.1811).

A third subseries, Legal Papers, contains various documents. Besides deeds and conveyances, it includes powers of attorney, papers establishing guardianship, and warrants to Luke Drury as deputy sheriff. There are also papers from specific legal actions. These include one case (Perkins v. Thompson, 1820-26) which does not seem to be related to the Drurys.

Subseries 4, Miscellaneous Papers, includes military documents for both Luke and his son Ephraim. There are also medical lectures which were probably noted by either Luke Jr. or his brother John, both of whom became doctors. The series also contains prescriptions and recipes, including one for "strong bear" (beer).

### Series 2. Related Families

1757-1831

Subseries 1 contains the papers of Timothy Darling, who was not actually related to the Drurys. He and Luke were both prominent in Grafton affairs, and the two shared business connections. In addition, Luke executed Darling's will, a lengthy process involving at least one lawsuit. The documents in this subseries deal with business; the majority are notes of hand. The

Goulding papers, Subseries 2, also concentrate on business, though they include military papers as well. Israel Goulding married Luke's daughter Lucy. His brothers Jonah, John, Joshua and Ephraim also appear. The Place papers, Subseries 3, deal mainly with financial matters. It has so far been impossible to trace this family, but there was at least a business connection with the Drurys. The Shermans, Subseries 4, were connected with the Drurys by marriage as well as business. Their papers include leases as well as notes of hand, bills, and receipts. They represent Thankful Temple Sherman (Luke's mother-in-law), her sons Moses, David, and Aaron, and her nephew Timothy.

### Series 3. Grafton Materials

1741-1823

This large series has been divided into three subseries. The first, Town Papers, includes correspondence to and from the selectmen, appointments and warrants for town positions (especially the highway survey and repair committees). It also includes documents relating to the 1786 county convention where Luke Drury, as one of Grafton's representatives, clearly supported the demands and concerns of the Shaysite rebels. Subseries 2 deals with taxes. It contains tax documents, mainly warrants to Luke Drury and other tax collectors. The tax records show collections for highway, town, state, minister, and county taxes. In addition, there are valuations of real estate and personal property. There are individual assessments for taxation. Also included is a complete tax list for 1794, presumably listing every taxpayer in Grafton. The third subseries contains the papers of Grafton families, again including the Adams, Bachelor, Brooks, Chase, Prentice and Rice families. Like the Drury papers, these range from business to legal, containing few personal papers. The people represented here had some connection, business or otherwise, with the Drurys.

### Series 4. Miscellaneous

Undated

This series consists of fragments and scratch papers, some of which can be identified, but none of which can be reconstructed.

## Inventory

### Series 1. Drury Papers

1750-1829

#### Subseries A. Correspondence

##### Family correspondence

1782-1799

Box 1: 1

##### Family correspondence

1800-1810, n.d.

Box 1: 2

##### Business correspondence

1761-1785

Box 1: 3

##### Business correspondence

1786-1796

Box 1: 4

##### Business correspondence

1797-1802

Box 1: 5

##### Business correspondence

1803-1805

Box 1: 6

##### Business correspondence

1806-1812, n.d.

Box 1: 7

#### Subseries B. Financial Records

##### Bills and receipts

1757-1777

Box 1: 8  
Bills and receipts  
1780-1789  
Box 1: 9  
Bills and receipts  
1790-1799  
Box 1: 10  
Bills and receipts  
1800-1802  
Box 1: 11  
Bills and receipts  
1803-1809  
Box 1: 12  
Bills and receipts  
1810-1817  
Box 1: 13  
Bills and receipts  
1819-1829, n.d.  
Box 1: 14  
Notes of hand  
1771-1789  
Box 1: 15  
Notes of hand  
1790-1800  
Box 1: 16  
Notes of hand  
1802-1822, n.d.  
Box 1: 17  
Account books  
1758-1794  
Box 1: 18  
Account books  
1767-1802, n.d.  
Box 1: 19  
Estate valuations and sales  
1796, n.d.  
Box 1: 20  
Subseries C. Legal Records

Deeds and conveyances  
1763-1800, n.d.  
Box 2: 21  
Powers of attorney and miscellaneous  
1764-1799, n.d.  
Box 2: 22  
Action against Matthias Rice  
1786-1795, n.d.  
Box 2: 23  
Drury v. Wheeler  
1798-1800, n.d.  
Box 2: 24  
Drury v. Greenwood  
1800  
Box 2: 25  
Perkins v. Thompson  
1820-1826, n.d.  
Box 2: 26  
Subseries 4. Miscellaneous

Military papers  
1786-1795, n.d.  
Box 2: 27  
Maps and surveys  
1750-1779, n.d.  
Box 2: 28  
Recipes and prescriptions  
n.d.  
Box 2: 29  
Medical lectures  
n.d.  
Box 2: 30  
Writing fragments  
n.d.  
Box 2: 31  
Series 2. Related Families  
1757-1831  
Subseries A. Darling

Financial papers  
1760-1782  
Box 2: 32  
Settlement of estate  
1777, n.d.  
Box 2: 33  
Subseries B. Goulding

Correspondence  
1787-1821  
Box 2: 34  
Financial papers  
1757-1809  
Box 2: 35  
Military papers  
1801-1802  
Box 2: 36  
Subseries C. Place

Financial papers  
1773-1821, n.d.  
Box 2: 37  
Subseries D. Sherman

Correspondence, notes of hand  
1781-1831, n.d.  
Box 2: 38  
Bills and receipts  
1770-92, n.d.  
Box 2: 39  
Leases  
1771-1790  
Box 2: 40  
Series 3. Grafton Materials

1741-1823

Subseries A. Town Records

Town correspondence

1762-1801, n.d.

Box 3: 41

Town meeting minutes, appointments

1781-1799, n.d.

Box 3: 42

Town bills and receipts

1784-1800, n.d.

Box 3: 43

Delegates to the Worcester county convention (Luke Drury)

1786-1787, n.d.

Box 3: 44

Highway surveys and repairs

1763-1820

Box 3: 45

Subseries B. Tax Records

Tax correspondence

1796

Box 3: 46

Tax documents -- highway tax

1774-1797

Box 3: 47

Tax records -- highway tax

1794-1797, n.d.

Box 3: 48

Tax documents -- town tax

1773-1796, n.d.

Box 3: 49

Tax records -- town tax

1793, 1795

Box 3: 50

Tax documents -- state tax

n.d.

Box 3: 51

Tax records -- state tax

1793

Box 3: 52

Tax documents -- minister tax

1794-1796

Box 3: 53

Tax records -- minister tax

1795

Box 3: 54

Tax documents -- county tax

1795

Box 3: 55

Tax list

1794

Box 3: 56

Valuations

1790-1795, n.d.

Box 3: 57

Assessments

1786, n.d.  
Box 3: 58  
Unidentified tax records  
1782, 1793 n.d.  
Box 3: 59  
Subseries C. Grafton Citizens' Records

#### Business correspondence

1767-1821, n.d.

Box 3: 60

Bills and receipts

1770-1790

Box 3: 61

Bills and receipts

1791-1823, n.d.

Box 3: 62

Notes of hand

1772-1820

Box 3: 63

Deeds and conveyances

1762-1786

Box 3: 64

Military papers

1794-1795, n.d.

Box 3: 65

Legal papers

1763-1789, n.d.

Box 3: 66

Maps

1741-1804, n.d.

Box 3: 67

Series 4. Miscellaneous

Undated

Scratch paper -- math

n.d.

Box 3: 68

Scratch paper -- writing

n.d.

Box 3: 69

Correspondence fragments

n.d.

Box 3: 70

Financial papers fragments

n.d.

Box 3: 71

Unidentified fragments

n.d.

Box 3: 72

Oversize materials - encapsulated

Box 4

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## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Acquired from Cedric Robinson, 1989.



## Processing Information

Processed by Lisa May, November 1989.

## Related Material

A related series of Drury papers is located at the Essex Institute in Salem. This collection consists of the personal and business papers of Luke's sons Luke Jr. and John, who practiced medicine in Marblehead. With their brother Thomas, they were also involved in trade, locally and with the West Indies. The documents in this collection cover roughly the same years as the Luke Drury papers, and the two collections overlap.

## Language:

English

## Acknowledgments

Encoding funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

## Copyright and Use (More information )

*Cite as:* Luke Drury Papers (MS 258). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

## Search terms

### Subjects

Darling, Timothy -- Archives.

Drury, Luke, 1737-1811 -- Archives.

Goulding, Israel -- Archives.

Grafton (Mass.) -- History -- Sources.

Massachusetts -- History -- Sources.

Shays' Rebellion, 1786-1787 -- Sources.

Sherman, Thankful Temple -- Archives.

### Contributors

Drury, Luke, 1737-1811 [main entry]

### Genres and formats

Deeds.

### Link to similar SCUA collections

Family

Massachusetts (Central)

Politics and governance



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