

James Townson letters

James Townson letters
1833-1846

Title Statement

James Townson letters Guide to the James Townson letters SC 01621

Author: Christina R. Luers, CA

Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections Research Center

William & Mary Special Collections Research Center
Earl Gregg Swem Library
400 Landrum Dr
Williamsburg, Virginia
Business Number: 757-221-3090
spcoll@wm.edu
URL: <https://libraries.wm.edu/libraries-spaces/special-collections>

2019-03-21

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-07-16 07:02:12 -0400.

Language Usage: English

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

SC 01621

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/8436

Unit Date

1833-1846

Language

English

Creator

Townson, James

source

Michael Brown Rare Books, LLC

Extent

0.05 Linear Feet

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open to all researchers. Manuscript collections and archival records may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations, such as the Virginia Public Records Act (Code of Virginia. § 42.1-76-91); and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Code of Virginia § 2.2-3705.5). Confidential material may include, but is not limited to, educational, medical, and personnel records. If sensitive material is found in this collection, please contact a staff member immediately. The disclosure of personally identifiable information pertaining to a living individual may have legal consequences for which the College of William and Mary assumes no responsibility.

Conditions Governing Use

Before publishing quotations or excerpts from any materials, permission must be obtained from the Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books, and the holder of the copyright, if not Swem Library.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Michael Brown Rare Books with funds from the Frances Howard Endowment and Clarice M. Garrison Rare Books Fund, 2019.

Preferred Citation

James Townson letters, 1833-1846, Special Collections Research Center, William & Mary Libraries.

Scope and Contents

Collection of 33 letters which detail the economic issues concerning the effective production on a sugar plantation in Kingston, Jamaica immediately after the abolition of slavery in that country. Included in the correspondence is a period of time referred to as the "apprentice" system which was not a successful endeavor.

The letters span a period of 13 years and follow the progress of the plantation that Townson managed for absentee owners. They detail his disillusionment with the English government, the failed efforts of the apprentice program, to the final failure of the plantation as a whole. Townson ultimately brokered the sale of the plantation as a failed enterprise and received no personal reimbursement from the absentee owners despite his lien on the property. He ultimately blamed the absentee owners for the failure of the business stating: "Our misfortune is that the Land is owned by absentees who cannot bring their mind's eye to view the changes going on and... Are always willing to be flattered by the hope of changes for the better than could only be carried through some magical power."

Townson was also disillusioned slightly by Emancipation as a whole because the new wages they were required to pay their laborers could not sustain the new expenses hence the newly freed individuals found themselves now with no wages to support themselves since the plantation had failed.

Keywords

Sugar plantations
Slaves -- Emancipation
Jamaica--History--19th century
Michael Brown Rare Books, LLC

Description of Subordinate Components

Letters, 1833-1839

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/300781

Mixed Materials SC Box 113 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English

Letters, 1840-1842, March

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/647659

Mixed Materials SC Box 113 (Box)

Container 2 (Folder)

Language English

Letters, 1842, May-1844, June

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/647660

Mixed Materials SC Box 113 (Box)

Container 3 (Folder)

Language English

Letters, 1844, July - 1846

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/647661

Mixed Materials SC Box 113 (Box)

Container 4 (Folder)

Language English