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David Adams Papers, 1828-1869

2 boxes

Processed by Christine Vanover, April 1998 (revised July 1999).

Revised by Jaime Bourassa, March 2013.

REPOSITORY

Missouri History Museum Archives

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DONOR INFORMATION

Collection was purchased from Mrs. Lamiza B. Lambert in 1956.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David Adams was born in 1799, possibly in Alabama, and arrived in St. Louis in the late 1820s where he opened a “tipling house,” or saloon, with his brother James. In 1827, David married Elizabeth Vachard (born 1809), daughter of Mary and Charles Vachard. Always active in the fur trade, David joined Capt. Bonneville’s expedition west in 1832. He continued to be active in the plains fur trade, eventually opening a trading post from Fort Platte with his partner John Sibille around 1843. In 1848, David agreed to lead a party west to the California gold mines. In 1851, he became the executor for the estate of Charles Vachard, the father of his wife, Elizabeth. All business ventures were financially unsuccessful and he returned home penniless and in debt. In 1853, David became the toll gate keeper for Gate #1 on Natural Bridge Road and in 1857 he opened a blacksmith shop with Joseph Hughes. The “Duncan’s Island Trial” began in 1857, as David Adams tried to reclaim land from the city of St. Louis that he believed belonged to him, but a quit claim deed in 1858 shows that he sold his rights to that land for \$5. Although he became a successful guide and trapper, he ended up spending his later years in St. Louis impoverished, and died in 1874.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection includes personal letters to David's wife, Elizabeth, business correspondence, receipts, lists, and diaries. A man of limited education, David wrote poorly, spelled phonetically, and rarely used punctuation. David Adams' diary, diary fragments, and accounts relating to his fur trade expeditions in the early 1840s have been transcribed and published in: *The David Adams Journals*, Charles E. Hanson, Jr., ed., 1994. A copy of the book is available at the Archives Reference Desk. The original diary, diary fragments, and accounts are filed in Box 2 of this collection.

Box 1**Folder 1**

1828 June 2 Tax receipt for selling wine and liquor in St. Louis County, signed Henry Chouteau.

1828 June 2 Tax receipt for operating "tipling house," signed William Carr Lane.

1828 July 21 Three receipts for wine and liquor, signed A&W Skinner.

1828 Aug 14-Sept 11 Account with Fish and Logan.

Folder 2

1829 Oct 29 Receipt of payment from Charles Vachard.

1829 Nov 28 Receipt for payment of household goods, signed A&W Skinner.

Folder 3

1830 July 24-1831 July 2 Seven receipts for groceries, two itemized lists of groceries, and one receipt for goods. The receipts for groceries appear to be household purchases, and the receipt for goods appears to be business purchases.

Folder 4

1832 Feb 22 Agreement to join the Bonneville trapping expedition for 18 months, signed David Adams.

1832 Mar 26 Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth (his wife). Writes that he is well, and directs her to address correspondence to Capt. Bonneville.

Folder 5

1834 Feb 4 Letter from James Adams to his wife and his brother, David. States he is well, and he wants David to deliver his gun to Glasgow & Co. for Col. March.

1834 Sept 1 Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. States that if she is to remain on the island (probably Duncan's Island) next spring, she is not to put in a crop.

Folder 6

1835 Jan 11 Letter from Linus Leonard of Bonneville & Co. to Mr. Montaro. Mentions the status of the local beaver pelt trade and supplies for their men.

1835 Jan 20 Letter from Linus Leonard of Bonneville & Co. to Mr. Montaro. Mentions the status of the local beaver pelt trade and supplies for their men.

Folder 7

1836 June 22 Invoice for supplies sent to Powder River, signed A. Chouteau. The document, including Chouteau's signature, is in Adams' hand and appears to be a translation of the original.

1836 Nov 12 Receipt for supplies, signed Cummings & Ware.

Folder 8

1837 Feb-May Itemized account with the Fulton Brewery.

1837 Feb-May Account of John Sutton with tipling house.

1837 Mar 25 Tax receipt for operating a "tipling house," signed John Darby.

1837 May 20 Contract for sale of Marion House located on Market St., signed David Adams.

1837 May 24 Account of housewares purchased from Savage & Austin, signed R. R. Hopkins.

1837 June 23 Letter from Bonneville to David Adams. Concerns Adams' journal of his expedition with Bonneville and its publication.

1837 Dec 30 Account of John Rice with Adams & Martin.

Folder 9

1838 Jan 22 Itemized grocery account of David Adams, signed Lucien Dumaine.

1838 June 23 Letter from Stephen Adams to his son, David. Concerns Stephen's health and the health of David's other siblings.

1838 Aug 5 Letter from Antonio Montaro to David Adams. States that he will not be able to visit this year. Includes notations inside and on the back in David's hand, about grocery purchases and the board of Charles Vachard at "\$2.75 per weak."

Folder 10

1839 Apr 8

Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. Refers to his troubles with snow at Fort Platte.

1839 Nov 20

Letter from Henry Kayser, street commissioner. Regarding removing an obstacle on Sycamore Street.

1839 Nov 26

Notice from the city of St. Louis registrar to remove an obstruction on Sycamore Street, signed Joseph H. Wherry.

Folder 11

1840 Oct 8

Itemized medical receipt, signed E. Y. Watson.

Folder 12

1841 Jan 7

Two property tax receipts for 1840, signed Augustin Kennerly.

1841 Mar 13

Letter from Augustus Blumenthal to Captain Haas. Concerns baggage. (letterpress copy)

1841 Aug 14

Agreement to work for David Adams and John Sibille on an expedition for Sibille & Adams Co. to the Rocky Mountains as "a common hand," signed Daniel Simons.

1841 Aug 23

Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. Sends greetings to Sibille's wife and children.

Folder 13

1842 Apr 25

Letter from John Prisham to David Adams. Regarding Sibille & Adams' trading post at Fort Platte.

1842 Apr 26

Letter from John Prisham to David Adams. Regarding trading horses with the Indians and the Spaniards.

1842 June 21

Letter from J. Bordeaux to John Richard, Fort Platte. Regarding trading post of Sibille & Adams. In French.

1842 July 4

Letter from John Richard (per D. M. McKlosky) to David Adams. Regarding trading and supplies at Fort Platte.

1842 July 16

Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. States that he is traveling with his brother James.

1842 Aug 3

Promissory note to Sibille & Adams, signed F. Leonard.

- 1842 Aug 15 Letter from John Sibille to David Adams. Regarding Sibille's journey to Fort Platte, wagon problems, and an inquiry about a lost coat.
- 1842 Aug 16 Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. Concerns his trip to Fort Platte.
- 1842 Aug 27 Letter from David Adams, Independence, to Elizabeth. Contains news of his trip.
- 1842 Aug 27 Letter from John Sibille to David Adams. Regarding Sibille's journey to Fort Platte.
- 1842 Aug 29 Note signed F. Leonard regarding supplies.
- 1842 Oct 15 Letter from John Sibille to David Adams. States that he has made it to Fort Platte.
- 1842 Nov 6 Letter from Papin to Jacques Bordeau. Regarding Sibille & Adams trading post at Fort Platte. In French.
- Folder 14**
circa 1843 Note of credit from Sibille & Adams Co.
- 1843 Mar 21 Letter from Bosquet to Sibille & Adams. Explains that he lost some personal items while employed for Sibille & Adams, and includes a list of the items he would like to have replaced. In French.
- 1843 May 4 Indenture of a Spanish boy to G. Noland for the employment, signed Jean Didroit.
- 1843 May 8 Letter from Charles Beaubieu to Sibille & Adams. Regarding a small debt owed to him. In French.
- 1843 June 30 Letter from Lamoureux & Blanchard to Sibille & Adams. States that they know a capable young man whom they would recommend for Sibille & Adams' next expedition.
- 1843 July-Nov Itemized account of seven men with Sibille & Adams Co.
- 1843 July 3 Receipt for belt and scabbard, signed J. A. Knight.
- 1843 July 25 Letter from Joseph Bissonette to Sibille & Adams. Regarding the state and preparedness of the trading post.

- 1843 July 31 Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. States that he will be gone eight more days, and instructs her to pay Dr. Watson.
- 1843 Aug 3 Bill of lading to Seim & Adams for goods shipped on the *Edna*, signed John S. Pim.
- 1843 Aug 4 Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. Writes that he will be leaving with the wagons tomorrow for Fort Platte.
- 1843 Aug 19 Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. States that he is well, and that James left a few days ago.
- 1843 Aug 25 Letter from Elizabeth Adams to David. States that their youngest son, Harrison, is sick but she thinks he will recover. Neither the letter nor her signature are in her hand.
- 1843 Sept 13 Letter from Joseph Bissonette to Sibille & Adams. Regarding their impending visit.
- 1843 Sept 27 Agreement for the delivery of 50 head of cattle in return for blankets, shells, and mules, signed Sibille & Adams, W. D. Hodgekiss, and Lucien Maxwell. Contemporary copy.
- 1843 Oct 1 Itemized list of goods for Sibille, Adams & Co.
- 1843 Oct 31 Note from St. Vrain to Sibille & Adams to replace sugar and coffee once his wagons arrive.
- 1843 Nov 17 Letter from Joseph Bissonette to David Adams. Regarding the trade of horses, blankets, and shells.
- 1843 Nov 25 Letter from G. P. Beauvais, Horse Creek, to David Adams. Warns him about sending horses or mules to Fort Platte as “those gentlemen are very found [fond] of horse flesh.”
- 1843 Dec 19 Letter from Sibille, Adams & Co. to David Adams. Regarding the trading post at Fort Platte.
- Folder 15**
- 1844 Jan 20 Letter from W. D. Hodgkiss to David Adams. States that he needs wood for boats, the cart back, and Spanish flour.
- 1844 Jan 20 Letter from Finch to David Adams. Requests cigars, and warns him about the behavior of an employee named Johnson.

Folder 16

circa 1845

Map, probably by David Adams, of camp signs near Fort Platte.

1845 Mar 9

Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. Writes that he will be gone four months longer.

1845 Mar 9

Letter from David Adams to David and Jane Burton. States that he won't be able to see them this spring.

1845 July 4

Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. States that he is returning home soon with no money.

1845 Sept 1

Itemized bill for medical services from 1841 to 1845, signed E. Y. Watson.

Folder 17

1847 May 8

Letter from Elizabeth Adams to Louis and Charles Vachard (her brothers). Regarding the death of their father on Nov. 22, 1846. Elizabeth's letter is in David's hand.

Folder 18

1848 Jan 4

Memorandum of agreement for Adams to guide a party from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Fort Sutter, California, signed Horace Baffum, D. Hutton, and David Adams. A list of plea cases, 1847-1852 in David Adams' hand is found on the second sheet of this document, but appears to have no connection to it.

Folder 19

1849 July 22

Letter from Charles Lardoise (or Charles Vachard) to Elizabeth Adams. States that his health is good and he hopes to see her in the spring.

1849 Oct 28

Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. States that he has heard about the cholera epidemic in St. Louis, and he is working in the gold mines near San Francisco.

Folder 20

circa 1850

Receipt for payment of \$2.75 to Mr. Lynch, signed Henry Grotfend.

1850 Mar 31

Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. Regarding his situation in the gold mines of California.

- 1850 Apr 20 Letter from Henry Grotefend to David Adams (his father-in-law). Mentions the 1849 cholera epidemic which took the life of his son Henry, and the 1849 St. Louis fire which burned down his house.
- 1850 June 26 Letter from David Adams to Elizabeth. Mentions a nugget of gold he sent to his family in his last to show them “the richness of this country.”
- Folder 21**
- 1851 May-July Two lists of payments received (probably for tolls), signed David Adams.
- 1851 June 7 Letter from Elizabeth Adams to Louis Vachard. Concerns the death of their brother Charles and other family members during the cholera epidemic, and David’s return from California. This letter and her signature are in David’s hand; includes a note from him.
- 1851 July 19 Note from Henry Chatillion to David Adams. Concerns Conrad Rehn and Herman Brandeau.
- 1851 Aug 7 Letter from Elizabeth Adams to her brother Louis Vachard. Asks for more information on how their brother Charles died. This letter and her signature are in David’s hand; includes a note from him.
- 1851 Aug 21 Note from David Adams regarding the estate of Charles Vachard of which he is executor.
- 1851 Dec-1852 June List of toll money given to Mr. Brotherton, signed David Adams.
- Folder 22**
- 1852 June-1856 Oct Receipts for tolls collected by David Adams as keeper of the 1st Toll Gate on Natural Bridge Road, signed A. Harper, M. Brotherton, or Francis Jones. These receipts constituted the lower portion of a printed form that the keeper used to report his collections. Includes four blank pages of the complete form; the upper part is the statement that would have been kept by the superintendent of toll gate keepers.
- Folder 23**
- 1852 Feb 2 Note from C. Semph to David Adams for money owed Adams for toll fees.

Folder 24

- 1853 Feb 6 Letter from James Adams to David Adams. States that he has returned from the mountains, and waits to hear about the situation regarding his property.
- 1853 Feb 12 Receipt for tolls collected by David Adams, signed Francis Jones.
- 1853 Nov 5 Receipt for tolls collected by David Adams, signed A. Harper.
- 1853 Dec 7 Notice to David and Elizabeth Adams, signed John Ackli (by Krum & Harding). Requests money owed him for work and improvement done totaling \$64.95.
- 1853 Dec 10 Receipt for tolls collected by David Adams, signed A. Harper.
- 1853 Dec 24 Two summons for John Evans, David Adams, and Elizabeth Adams to appear the third Monday of April to answer the complaint of John Ackli, signed Michael S. Cerre.

Folder 25

- circa 1854 Two printed applications by David Adams to homestead 80 acres of land.
- 1854 Jan 17-July 25 Twelve receipts for tolls collected by David Adams at Gate #1 on Natural Bridge Road, signed John Hartness or M. Brotherton.
- 1854 June 7 Letter from James Adams to David Adams. States that he was in the hospital with rheumatism, and wants David to help him with his claim to "volunteer land."
- 1854 Aug 11 Letter from James Adams to David Adams. Inquires further on his claim on the volunteer land, and states that he will be working through the winter with Bissonette.
- 1854 Oct 13 Letter from James Adams to David. Mentions the Gratton massacre and his charge at Fort Labonte.

Folder 26

- 1856 Aug 8 Receipt for toll gate fees collected at Gate #1, Natural Bridge Road, signed M. Brotherton.

- 1856 Dec
Itemized account from Dr. E. C. Carrington.
- Folder 27**
circa 1857
Twelve lists of names, notes, or maps (most in David Adams' hand) pertaining to Adams' claim to property on Duncan's Island.
- 1857 Apr 3
Agreement between David Adams and Joseph Hughes for a blacksmith business.
- Folder 28**
circa 1858
Three newspaper articles pertaining to the Duncan's Island trial.
- 1858 Mar 6
Receipt for notice of meeting in the *Missouri Republican*, signed John A. Price.
- 1858 Apr 17
Receipt for notice of meeting in the *Missouri Republican*, signed John A. Price.
- 1858 Apr 19
Receipt for notice of meeting in the *Missouri Democrat*, signed D. M. Houser.
- 1858 Apr 22
Quit claim deed releasing David Adams' claim on Duncan's Island for \$5.
- Folder 29**
1859 Feb 28
Letter from Catherine McFarland, Pittsburg, to David Adams. Asks about the "Island Trial," and how her friends in St. Louis are doing.
- 1859 Aug 16
Document to lease property on Duncan's Island for \$360 annually for 5 years, signed David Adams (by his attorney J. W. Skinner) and Henry Grotefend.
- Folder 30**
1861 Jan 28
Notice ordering David Adams to leave the steamer *Dana Tatum* and return to the office, signed John Andrews and Theodore LaBeauvre.
- 1861 Mar 25
Letter from mother to Mary Vachard. States that she is well and her new husband, Jean-Baptiste Racine, is treating Mary's sister as if she were his own. Requests that a number of goods be sent to them at Fort Benton, including 2 or 3 gallons of whiskey for Jean-Baptiste.

Folder 31

1867 Apr 22

List in David Adams' hand of household goods purchased.

Folder 32

1869 Feb 26

List in David Adams' hand of goods and supplies.

1869 Apr 23

Receipt totaling \$5.80 for store goods.

1869 Sept 25

Receipt for 71 cents from David Adams, signed J. H. Beckman.

Folder 33

no date

Fragment giving birth date of Elizabeth Vachard as March 15, 1809.

Box 2

1841-1842

Journal fragments and accounts. Published in *The David Adams Journals*, pgs. 3-47.

1844-1845

Journal. Published in *The David Adams Journals*, pgs. 57-96.

1845

Journal fragment. Published in *The David Adams Journals*, pgs. 97-102.