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Collection Summary

Repository:	Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries
Creator:	Parrish, Jasper, 1767-1836
Title:	Jasper Parrish Papers
Inclusive Dates:	1757-1954
Bulk Dates:	1757-1869
Quantity:	0.8 cubic feet (2 boxes)
Abstract:	Material relating to Jasper Parrish and his involvement with the Iroquois peoples, particularly in New York State.

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Biographical Note

Jasper Parrish (1767-1836) was born in Windham, Connecticut, but as a child moved with his family to the head of the Delaware River in the Southern Tier of New York State, a region still territorially controlled by the Iroquois Confederacy of Six Nations (Haudenosaunee). Parrish was eight years old when the Revolutionary War broke out. In 1778, at the age of eleven, Parrish and his father, while tending their corn fields, were captured by a group of Munsee, a band of the Delaware (Lenape) tribe. Soon thereafter, the senior Parrish was separated from his son, turned over to the British, and later exchanged as a prisoner of war and returned to his family. His son, however, remained with the Indians for nearly seven years. The last five years were with the family of a Mohawk chief, David Hill. Hill welcomed Parrish into his family and in 1780, during a council meeting among the Chiefs of the Six Nations, Hill formally adopted him in a traditional ceremony.

In 1784, when Parrish was seventeen, he was surrendered along with other captives according to the peace terms of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix between the United States and the Six Nations in present-day Rome, New York. Although his adoptive family wanted him to stay, Parrish opted to leave what had become his home to find his birth parents and rejoin the culture in which he was born. Re-entering that world was difficult for Parrish. Although he was then fluent in the Delaware and Mohawk languages, he had lost most of his English. He spent less than one year in school relearning the language and continued his education on his own, catching up with the world he had become a stranger to.

In 1790, Parrish was asked to serve as an interpreter for the United States government, and in 1792, he moved to Canandaigua and worked under General Israel Chapin, U.S. Superintendent of the Six Nations. Parrish spoke several Indian languages and interpreted for a number of important treaty negotiations, including the [Pickering Treaty](#) at Canandaigua in 1794 which gave the Six Nations sovereignty and full title to their lands, and established peace between the confederacy and the United States. This treaty is still cited today in New York State Native American land claims. Parrish continued his government service for nearly forty years, working not only as an interpreter but also as a sub-agent to the Six Nations. His duties included handling various kinds of business transactions and negotiations between the confederacy and the federal government as well as the New York State government.

Parrish left his position in 1829. He spent the rest of his life in Canandaigua, where he had become an important figure in local business and civic affairs. Little is known about Parrish's personal life except that he married Roxcelana Paine (daughter of General Edward Paine) in 1800 and they had three sons and three daughters. Parrish died July 12, 1836 and is buried in Canandaigua's Pioneer Cemetery.

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Chronology

1767	Born in Windham, Connecticut
1778 July 5	Captured by the Munsee
1780	Sold to Mohawk chief David Hill
1784 November 29	Surrendered at Fort Stanwix (now Rome, NY)
1790	Asked to serve as an interpreter for the U.S. government
1792	Appointed standing interpreter and moved to Canandaigua
1794	Served as chief interpreter for the negotiations and signing of the Pickering Treaty
1800	Married the Roxcelana Paine
1803	Appointed sub-agent to the Six Nations
1815	Given the gift of Squaw Island by the Seneca for his good work on their behalf
1829	Left government service
1836 July 12	Died in Canandaigua at the age of 69

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Scope and Content Note

The collection includes correspondence of Jasper Parrish, 1790-1829, and others, 1757-1869, relating to the Painted Post treaty, payments to Indians, supplies to the Seneca mission, conduct of the St. Regis Indians, and work of the Quakers among the Indians. There are addresses and messages, 1803-1823, of Timothy Pickering, Thomas Jefferson, and John C. Calhoun to Iroquois chiefs including Red Jacket, Cornplanter, Farmer's Brother, Little Billy, Young King, and others. There are also legal papers, agreements and deeds, 1791-1824, including a deed of conveyance pertaining to the property of Mary Jemison. Records of Jasper Parrish's business transactions include receipts, invoices, notes, and accounts, 1793-1837. There are military and government records relating to the War of 1812 and the New York State Indians, including annuity payment agreements to the Indians and petitions for payments not received, a census of the Six Nations, 1792-1828, and other miscellaneous items, 1799-1860. There is also a set of transcripts along with an introduction prepared by Dorothy May Fairbank, Vassar Class of 1940, another set of transcripts created in 1954, and two biographical narratives of Jasper Parrish contributed by Caroline Townsend Monks, who was Vassar Class of 1940 and a direct descendant of Jasper Parrish.

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Access and Use

This collection is open for research according to the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#), without any additional restrictions.

Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).

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Related Material

- [Lucy Maynard Salmon Historical Materials Collection](#)

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Subject Headings

Names:

- Calhoun, John C. (John Caldwell), 1782-1850
- Chapin, Israel, Sr., 1740-1795
- Cornplanter, Seneca chief, 1732?-1836
- Graham, George, 1770-1830
- Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826
- Jemison, Mary, 1743-1833
- Newton, Dorothy Fairbank, 1919-2012
- Pickering, Timothy, 1745-1829
- Red Jacket, Seneca chief, approximately 1756-1830

Subjects:

- Indian agents
- Indians of North America--New York (State)
- Iroquois Indians--Census
- Iroquois Indians--Treaties
- Quakers--New York (State)
- Seneca Indians--Missions
- St. Regis Indians

Places:

- New York (State)--Politics and government--18th century
- New York (State)--Politics and government--19th century
- United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783
- United States--History--War of 1812

VCL Categories:

- Local History
- Native Americans

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Encoding Information

Encoded by Elizabeth Clarke, April 2007. Updated by Emma Gronbeck, March 2023.

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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Jasper Parrish Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Processing Information

Original processing date unknown. Biographical note added March 2007. General description updated and detailed item list added by Mary Ahenakew, October 2012. Rehoused from 3 boxes to 2 boxes by Emma Gronbeck, March 2023.

Acquisition Information

Donated to the Lucy Maynard Salmon Collection of Historical Materials, Vassar College Library, in 1939 by Caroline Monks, Vassar Class of 1940 and direct descendant of Jasper Parrish.

Other Formats

Most items in this collection are available online via the [Vassar College Libraries' Digital Library](#).

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- 1.2 [Thomas L. McKenney](#), 1828 January 1 (1 leaf)
- 1.3 [Chiefs and Warriors of the St. Regis Indians](#), 1828 January 3 (1 leaf)
- 1.4 [Edward P. Parrish](#), 1828 January 3 (1 leaf)
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- 1.19 [John H. Frisbee](#), 1805 December 7 (1 leaf)
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- 1.74 [\[Brief description of the Calhoun speech to Seneca Chiefs\]](#), (1 leaf)

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- 2.108 [Commission letter of Jasper Parrish as U.S. Sub-agent to the Six Nations](#), 1803 February 15 (2 leaves)

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- 2.119- ["Letters and Documents Relating to the Government Service of Jasper Parrish among the Indians of New York State, 1790 – 1831," edited by Dorothy May Fairbanks, 1940 \(typescript - 247 leaves\)](#)
- 2.121 [p. 1-60 - p. 61-120 - p. 121-180 - p. 181-241](#)
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