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MF 5322, Series I, Part 3, Reels 12-13

WILLIAM KENNER PAPERS

Mss. 1477, 1491

Inventory

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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SUMMARY

Size	0.9 linear ft., 1 OS folder
Geographic Locations	New Orleans, La.; Natchez, Miss.; Bay St. Louis, Miss.; Lafourche Parish, La.; Concordia Parish, La.
Inclusive Dates	1802-1832, undated
Languages	English
Summary	The papers of businessman, sugar planter, slaveholder, and cotton broker William Kenner of New Orleans and Natchez. Papers include correspondence, financial records, and legal documents that reflect the social and economic conditions in antebellum New Orleans. Many records cover the time period surrounding the War of 1812.
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Reproduction Note	May be reproduced.
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Related Collections	Duncan Farar Kenner Papers, Mss. 1477 Kenner Family Papers, Mss. 775 Minor Family Papers, Mss. 859, 947 Joseph L. Brent Papers, Mss. 1477 Benjamin Farar Papers, Mss. 1364
Citation	William Kenner Papers, Mss. 1477, 1491, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries Special Collections, Baton Rouge, La.
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BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

William Kenner (1774-1824), a businessman, sugar planter, slaveholder, and cotton broker, was born in Virginia but settled in Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi, in the 1790s, where he owned a significant amount of land. In the early 1800s, he moved to New Orleans and formed Kenner & Henderson, a cotton and slave brokerage, with Stephen Henderson. After the dissolution of the partnership, Kenner established William Kenner & Company, a mercantile and commission business, with John Oldham and Richard Clague.

In addition to his mercantile and brokerage businesses, Kenner also owned two sugar plantations, Oakland in Jefferson Parish and Linwood in Ascension Parish. He was a member of the Legislative Council of Louisiana (1804) and a member of the board of directors of the United States Bank of Philadelphia (1805). He was elected to a vestry for the first Protestant congregation in New Orleans, which became Christ Church Episcopal Church.

William Kenner married Mary Minor (1778-1814), daughter of Stephen and Martha Ellis Minor of the Concord Plantation in Natchez, Mississippi. Stephen Minor owned nine cotton and sugar plantations in Mississippi and Louisiana and served as the last governor of the Spanish District of Natchez. William and Mary Kenner had several children, including Stephen Minor Kenner (1808-1862), who was the founder of the town of Kenner, Louisiana.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of William Kenner cover topics such as territorial and antebellum economic and social life in New Orleans, slavery and plantation life in Louisiana and Mississippi, conditions before the War of 1812, the effects of the embargo on prices of cotton and plantation supplies, details of the Napoleonic Wars, the industrial riots in England after these wars, the Battle of New Orleans and Andrew Jackson's defense of the city, information about captains, steamboats, and sailing vessels hired by Kenner's firm, and investments in the Bank of Mississippi and Planters' Bank of New Orleans.

Financial papers include correspondence, bills, receipts, invoices, and accounts that document Kenner's personal and plantation debts, credits, and expenses, as well as cotton sales and the activities of William Kenner and Company. Expenses documented include the education of Kenner's children and the purchase of home furnishings and plantation supplies, including clothing for the enslaved people at his plantations.

Land patents reflect property holdings in Louisiana and Mississippi. Papers also document Kenner's trade of cotton to England (1812-1832), the effects of the blockade of the Atlantic coast, and the use of Russian and Swedish vessels (1813). Testamentary documents relate to the settlement of the estate of Kenner's father-in-law, Stephen Minor (1822).

Letters, many from Kenner to Stephen and John Minor, discuss prices of cotton, enslaved people, plantation production and supplies, the return of a runaway enslaved person (1819), property improvements including the construction of cotton gins (1820), Kenner's apprehensions of a British invasion and speculation on Andrew Jackson's activities (1814), and the defeat of Napoleon as it impacted the European cotton market (1815).

Content Warning: Items in this collection contain historical terms, phrases, or images that are offensive, outdated, and/or harmful. These include demeaning and dehumanizing references to race, ethnicity, and nationality; enslaved or free status; physical and mental ability; and gender and sexual orientation.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The Kenner Papers largely consist of business papers and financial documents with a smaller amount of family correspondence mixed in. All records are arranged chronologically. Descriptions of selected items are listed below.

(1802-1813)

Some of the earliest records in the collection consist of a mercantile statement for Stephen Minor with William Kenner and Co. (November 22, 1802); a certificate of title to 764 arpents of land in Adams County, Mississippi Territory, issued to William Kenner (June 18, 1805); and an itemized statement of account of Stephen Minor with William Kenner and Co. (1802-1810).

Early correspondence includes letters between Stephen Minor and William Kenner and Co. concerning sales of Minor's cotton; the purchase of plantation supplies, household goods, sundries, and enslaved people by Kenner's company for shipment to Minor's plantation at Natchez (1807); the decline in cotton prices at New York and New England ports as result of the dismissal of the British minister by President Madison (1809); and the hostility with Britain leading to the outbreak of the War of 1812 (December 1812).

Additional correspondence includes a letter from Kenner's company to Stephen Minor relating to the course of the War of 1812, and the rejection by the legislature of the "Confederacy of the Mississippi" of a bill for an armistice between debtors and creditors during the war (December 28, 1812).

Letters during 1813 involve those from William Kenner and Co. to Stephen Minor relative to: the embargo and its effect upon the price of cotton and the enslaved, and the risks involved in exporting cotton on Spanish ships (Jan 25, 1813); an account of the defeat of the French army by the Russians, the capture of Memel and Konigsberg by the Russians, and the expectation of exporting cotton from New Orleans via Russian and Swedish vessels (Apr. 12, 1813); and the treaty between Prussia and Russia and the supposition that all continental powers would join in the league against France (May 31, 1813)

Other letters discuss the defeat in Europe of General Michel Ney by General Baptiste Jules Bernadotte and "his brave Swedes," the arrival of a British force at Pensacola, the capture of nine vessels bound from New Orleans to Pensacola with cargoes of cotton, flour, etc., by the British, the blockade of the Balise by order of the governor [W.C.C. Claiborne], the assistance of General Flournoy in maintaining the embargo at New Orleans, and the hostility of the French that landed 3,000 to 4,000 troops at Pensacola towards cooperating with the Creek Indians (Dec. 6, 1813).

(1814-1815)

Letters from 1814 include those from William Kenner and Co. to Stephen Minor relating the apprehension of invasion by the British (Oct. 21, 1814), and the price of enslaved people (Oct. 28, 1814).

Several letters cover the seizure of the schooner *Don Hermanos*, destined from Jamaica to Pensacola, at Bay St. Louis, by the U. S. officials on charges of trading with the enemy (Oct. 29, 1814); the opinion of Mr. Livingston that the property aboard the schooner *Don Hermanos*, which was seized by U. S. Officials, belonged to Stephen Minor and should be restored, (Nov. 11, 1814); and plans for appeal to U. S. Supreme Court for restoration of property seized on the *Don Hermanos*. One of these also details rumors relative to [Andrew] Jackson's marching on Pensacola, his intention to send forces to reinforce New Orleans, the news that all British forces had left the Chesapeake region and were destined for New Orleans, and speculation as to the outcome of a contest between British and Americans at New Orleans (Nov. 18, 1814).

Other letters regarding the war relate the arrival of General Andrew Jackson at New Orleans, his preparations for its defense, and stating Jackson's confidence that he will be able to "foil Johnny Bull in any attempt he may make at invasion" (Dec. 2, 1814); relating the arrival of a large British force at the coast, the reported capture of five gunboats which were guarding the Lakes, more about General Jackson's confidence in his ability to repel a British invasion, and the desire of New Orleans citizens that Jackson's army be reinforced by an arrival of troops from Tennessee and Kentucky (Dec. 17, 1814).

Two letters from R. Clague, New Orleans, to Stephen Minor, Natchez, relating incidents in European relations, received at New Orleans, recounting the defeat of Joachim Murat (King of Naples and brother-in-law of Napoleon Bonaparte) by the Austrians and the significance of this event in contributing to the defeat of Napoleon, the scarcity of cotton on the New Orleans market, and family news (Aug. 10 and Sept. 25, 1815).

Letters from William Kenner and Co. to Stephen Minor in 1815 relate settlement of Minor's claim for merchandise seized by U. S. Officials during the war (Jan. 13, 1815); news of the end of the War of 1812 which had just been received at New Orleans (Mar. 10, 1815); and the rise in cotton prices on the New Orleans market; letters also relate to purchase of plantation supplies by William Kenner and Co. for shipment to Stephen Minor, and sale of enslaved people from Minor's plantation at New Orleans by Kenner's company (March 24-May 12, 1815).

Additional 1815 letters to Minor relate to enclosure of payment for two enslaved individuals purchased by Joseph Saul of New Orleans, the floods inundating portions of Minor's plantation in Concordia and Pointe Coupee, and causing crevasses along the gulf coast and threatening the city of New Orleans (May 19, 1815); relating news from France via Portsmouth, England, of Napoleon Bonaparte's entering France with an army of 1,000 men, all the military joining him, and his arrival at Paris about the middle of March (May 22, 1815); letter relating the news brought by a vessel from Jamaica that war had been declared between France

and England and the fear at New Orleans that this would result in a depreciation of cotton and other exports (July 14, 1815);

A letter relates the scarcity of sugar at New Orleans and states that a sugar refinery had recently been opened, which promised to furnish New Orleans markets with sugar equal in quality to that from Philadelphia (Aug. 11, 1815); a letter mentions "accounts from the North of France," Battle of Waterloo, and anticipated effects upon New Orleans markets (Sept. 1, 1815); a letter relates Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat, his surrender to Captain Maitland of the Bellerophon, and the restoration of Louis XVIII to the French throne (Sept. 12, 1815).

(1816-1820)

Letters from Kenner and Co. to John Minor in 1816 include those relating the prices of cotton and enslaved people, and the education of Kenner's children [the boys to be enrolled in Mrs. Dunbar's school at Natchez and the girls at Philadelphia] (May 11, 1816); relating the action of Judge Thomas Butler in the redemption of lands in Concordia region, and the proposed law for titles to land claims by Kenner and others (May 11, 1816); a letter also relays the death of ex-Governor W. C. C. Claiborne (Nov. 27, 1817)

A letter from Sam Steer to John Minor relays that the new road to Port Gibson [from Natchez] was to run through the best part of the Minor plantation, the making of 120,000 brick by the two brick makers on Minor plantation, the order for building materials ordered by Minor for use on the plantation, the construction of a gin-house on Minor's plantation, and the report of an epidemic of disease at New Orleans (Aug. 25, 1816); a letter from William Kenner and Co. to Mrs. Katharine Minor, Concord Plantation, Natchez, relates to the sale of an undesirable coachman belonging to Mrs. Minor by William Kenner and Co. and the inconvenience of the sale during the current epidemic prevailing at New Orleans and the absence from the city of the likely purchasers of coachmen (Sept. 29, 1817).

Letters from 1819 relate the disastrous effects of a hurricane, periodic epidemics of fevers and freight rates along the Gulf of Mexico and coastal areas, mentioning the injury sustained by the planters on account of the gale, the dreadful devastation at Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, and the Lakes, and the loss of the U. S. schooner "Firebrand" and its crew, the destruction of numerous small crafts and other property (Aug. 11, 1819); letter describes the attempt of enslaved people belonging to Captain McCutcheon [to rebel?] and the capture of those involved (Aug. 23, 1819); letter relating to the disappearance of L. B. Blanchard, cashier of the Planters' Bank of New Orleans, and stating the affairs of the bank "appear to be perfectly solvent" (Oct. 18, 1819)

Three letters refer to the so-called "Peterloo Massacre" at Manchester, England, and other manufacturing towns, as follows: "The commotions in the manufacturing towns in England are of a more serious nature than we have known them for many years. How far they will affect the Trade cannot well be foreseen" (Oct. 30, Nov. 27, and Dec. 20, 1819); ten letters relate to the construction of houses for John Minor on his New Orleans property, the purchase of building materials at Boston and elsewhere, the delays in construction occasioned by rains in inclement weather (Jan. 4-June 19, 1819); two letters relating to the flight and capture of an enslaved man,

“Old Joe” (May 1, July 7, 1819); Two letters concern the death of Richard Butler and his wife during an epidemic of fever at Bay St. Louis, Miss. (Oct. 21, 24, 1820).

Land patents [at Amite] for 120,000 acres in the name of D. Clark and for 60,000 acres in the name of Thomas Power held by the House of Chew and Relf as collateral for sums due to them, and inquiry as to patent issued to Major S. Minor for 59,000 acres of land (June 10, 1820)

(1821-1823)

Letters from 1821 include those to Major John Minor of Natchez, Mississippi, outlining the financial arrangements made by William Kenner and Co. for the purchase of Somerset Plantation for John Minor (Mar. 14 and 16, 1821); a letter relating entertainment at New Orleans by “Caldwell and his Company” [James H. Caldwell, proprietor of American theatre on Campbell Street, “Armory Hall,” and builder of St. Charles Cathedral in 1835], who were “exhibiting four nights in the week to crowded houses” and emphasizing the talents of one of the singers, a Mrs. Burke (Feb. 19, 1821); and a letter from William Kenner to Mrs. Catherine Minor relative to plans for overland journey from Philadelphia to Natchez and New Orleans to bring his daughters home from Philadelphia (Sept. 16, 1821)

Letters relate to the placing for sale with Dubourg and Baron agency of Dorado Bringier’s estate called “Maison Blanche” and its purchase by John Minor on condition that the “hands” [enslaved persons] living on the estate should be retained until more could be procured from Virginia, (Feb. 26, 1821); letter relative to John Minor’s declining to purchase Bringier’s estate, “Maison Blanche” (Mar. 14, 1821); and a letter relative to the painting of Minor’s portrait by an artist named Jarvis (Feb. 24, 1821);

Letters relay information on deaths from a fever epidemic in New Orleans (Nov. 15, 1822); letters from William Kenner and Company to John Minor, complaining of the poor quality of cotton produced on Waterloo Plantation (Feb 26, 1823); regarding the shipment of 773 yards of “grey Linsey” woolen cloth to Concord Plantation for use in making clothing for the enslaved (Nov. 5, 1823); and a letter from Duncan and Sons [Liverpool merchants], to John Minor relating the amount of cotton imported into Liverpool during the first quarter of the year 1823, the amount sold to cotton speculators in England, and the prices and amount of sales of Virginia and Kentucky tobacco at the Liverpool market (Apr. 3, 1823).

Itemized amount of money advanced by Kenner’s company to Minor’s account “for Long’s Expedition.” [expedition of Stephen Harriman Long to Northern Minnesota and British Columbia, 1823]

(1824-1832, undated)

Later documents in the Kenner Papers include a copy of letter from John Minor, Concord Plantation, to William Kenner and Co. relative to draft on Kenner’s company for \$2,000 and containing an inquiry as to the disposition of Captain Vidal’s note [Michael Vidal, Captain of barge “Three Stars” which plied between New Orleans and Natchez] (Jan. 25, 1825); an account

of sales and imports of cotton from George Green and Son, Liverpool, to John Minor, Natchez, with an added note relaying the unconfirmed report of the death of Louis XVIII of France (Sept. 18, 1824); and a letter from Philip Minor to James Dismore discussing the state of crops at Waterloo Plantation and relaying the news of destruction to the cane crop from storms in the area (July 25, 1825).

Undated items include a list of the names of 19 enslaved people purchased from the heirs of Kenner and listing of the price paid for each (undated); and a fragment of a letter from George Currie Duncan to Mrs. Minor, Concord Plantation, regretting Mrs. Minor's disappointment regarding an enslaved woman named Sylvia and relating a proposed trip to London and Paris before his return "to the winds of America" (undated).

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Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found throughout the collection.

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Great Britain. Treaties, etc. United States, 1814 Dec. 24.
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Joachim Murat, King of Naples, 1767-1815.
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CONTAINER LIST

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		9	John Minor correspondence to William Kenner & Co., and others; financial papers and legal documents; list of enslaved people, 1826-1832, undated
			<u>Oversized Documents:</u>
OS:K	--	OS 1	Mississippi Territory Land Agreement, June 18, 1805
			Invoice for 1811 cotton crop, 1812
			Account of Stephen Minor, March 19, 1814
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