

Clements Library

Occasional Bulletins

THE PAPERS OF HENRY BURBECK

When Henry Burbeck fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775, he had just celebrated his twenty-first birthday. The son of a British colonial official who was second in command of Old Castle William in Boston Harbor, young Henry could not have foreseen that he would spend the next four decades in dedicated service to a new American nation. In those forty years, at half a dozen Revolutionary War battles, at West Point, at forts and outposts up and down the western frontier, at the court martial of James Wilkinson, and as Chief of the Artillery Corps from 1802 to his retirement

in 1815, Burbeck carved out an exemplary record. Far from the most famous of the first generation of this country's military leaders, he nonetheless stands tall among them for his many contributions to the early growth and security of the United States.

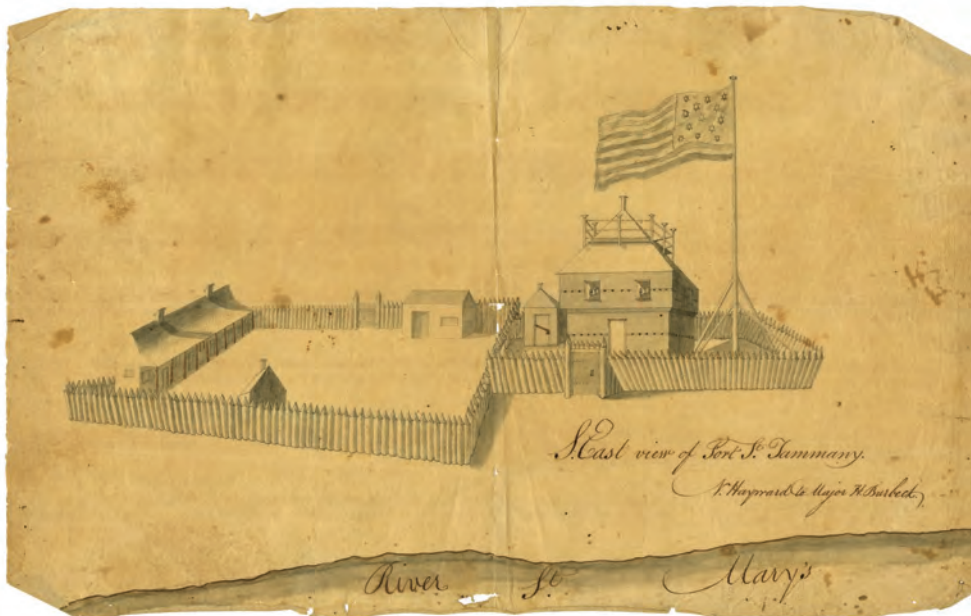
The recent purchase of a large collection of Henry Burbeck's papers is a major acquisition for the Clements Library. Burbeck manuscripts have been turning up for more than sixty years, as descendants and others have sold off small parts of his archive. The Library's first Burbeck material arrived in 1951, when we bought fifteen 1796-97 James Wilkinson letters to Burbeck from the famous western Americana specialist Edward Eberstadt. As Cheney

Schopieray details, other caches of Burbeck material went to the Fraunces Tavern Museum in New York, the New London County (Connecticut) Historical Society, the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library, the United States Military Academy, the New York Public Library, the Newberry Library, and to dealers and

collectors. But it wasn't until 2011 that the majority of Burbeck's manuscripts went up for sale at Heritage Auctions in Los Angeles. We learned about that a day before the auction, and our hurried run at the papers fell short. Three years later, with the new Norton Strange Townshend Fund providing much-needed support for building our

nineteenth-century collections, we went back to the dealer who outbid us in 2011 and bought nearly six cubic feet of Burbeck manuscripts.

As any Americana curator or collector can attest, six cubic feet is a remarkably large pre-1820 archive. William L. Clements and his contemporaries could acquire such collections in the 1910s and '20s, but today they are quite rare. When American research libraries proudly trumpet the acquisition of 100 Revolutionary War or War of 1812 documents, bringing more than 2,000 Henry Burbeck items to Ann Arbor represents a signal accomplishment for the Clements and the University of Michigan. The Burbeck collec-

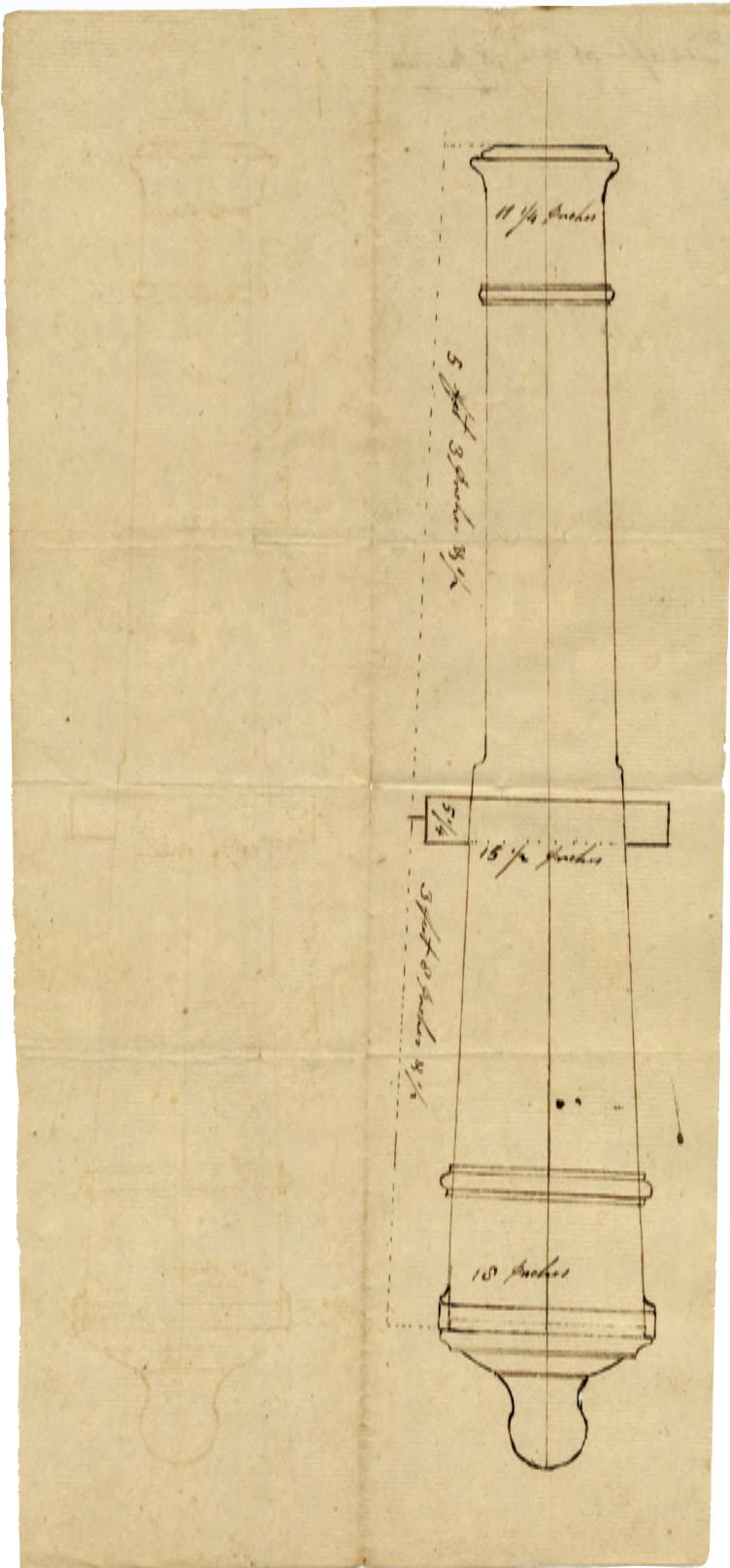


In 1790 Henry Burbeck established Fort St. Tammany on the St. Mary's River, the boundary between Georgia and Spanish Florida. He commanded there until 1792. Surgeon's Mate Nathan Hayward presented Burbeck with this view of the finished fort.



The Papers of Henry Burbeck

October 2014



tion will complement some of our best sources on the fledgling American republic. Our Anthony Wayne, Oliver Hazard Perry, Josiah Harmar, James McHenry, Nathanael Greene, and Northwest Territory papers are rich in information on our early national heritage, and the letters, maps, muster rolls, memoranda, and other documents in the Burbeck folders will offer students and scholars alike a wonderful array of similar material. Researchers interested in the early American frontier from Mackinac (where Burbeck commanded from 1796 to 1799) to Louisiana, land speculation, the westward spread of American settlement, the development of the U.S. Army, Native Americans, the growth of transportation and commerce in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys, and other aspects of 1783–1815 America will find ample ground to explore in the Burbeck papers.

Those familiar with the Clements know that great acquisitions have been a hallmark of the Library since we opened. Additions to the magnificent collection Mr. Clements donated in 1923 have built on existing strengths and created new ones in the resources on our shelves. Whether by gift (Albert H. Greenly's Lincoln collection in 1939; the Hubert S. Smith maritime library in 1955; Renville Wheat's maps of the Midwest in 1968; James Schoff's Civil War archive in the 1970s) or purchase (the Josiah Harmar Papers in 1936; Antonio Pigafetta's account of the Magellan expedition in 1966; the William Hack nautical atlas in 1979; the Henry Strachey Papers in 1981 and 2010; the John Fitch map of the Northwest Territory in 2006), acquiring great new material has energized the Library and its supporters, enhanced our reputation, and brought new researchers through our doors. The Burbeck Papers rank with these and our other significant collecting coups in the past nine decades, and we're excited about bringing them here. We hope to have them organized for use soon so that our readers can begin exploring the rich new insights they offer into our nation's formative decades.

— J. Kevin Graffagnino
Director

Much of Burbeck's correspondence addresses developments in the design of seacoast artillery, both cannon and their supporting carriages. This sketch depicts an eighteen-pounder, so-called for the weight of the solid, cast-iron ball that it fired.

you do not want any diversion in your favour I can therefore very well spare him 1500 men I shall try something certainly towards the shore they cannot hold it at any rate It may be of use to inform you that we are well

HENRY BURBECK

Henry Burbeck was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on June 8, 1754, to William and Jerusha Glover Burbeck. One of nine children, Henry spent his early years at Castle William in Boston Harbor, where his father was an official in the Ordnance Department of the Royal Artillery. Following the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington, Massachusetts, and the subsequent siege of Boston, William Burbeck resigned in favor of serving with the American forces as lieutenant colonel of the Provincial Regiment or Train of Artillery. Henry Burbeck joined Captain Amos Paddock's Provincial Artillery Company at age

20, and, like his father, he fled Boston to serve in the war. He joined Captain Jotham Horton's volunteer artillery company at Cambridge, Massachusetts, and received a commission as lieutenant on May 19, 1775. Henry was assigned to Edward Burbeck's company of the Massachusetts Artillery Regiment under the command of Richard Gridley, Chief Engineer and Commander of the Artillery.

Henry Burbeck served during the siege of Boston until the British evacuation of March 1776, earning a promotion to first lieutenant on January 1, 1776. When Richard Gridley's regiment transitioned to Henry Knox's Continental Artillery Regiment, Burbeck was one of the few retained officers. He proceeded to New York City, where he remained from April 1776 to September 15, 1776. Burbeck helped defend the Hudson Highlands while attached to Brigadier-General Samuel Holden Parsons's brigade. In 1777, he served with the Massachusetts Artillery under John Crane's command before joining the main Continental Army later that year. He participated in the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, and Red Bank and suffered through the difficult winter at Valley Forge. During these engagements, Burbeck's skills were duly noticed, and by the fall of 1777 he had advanced to the rank of captain and assumed command of the 3rd Continental Artillery Regiment.



Henry Burbeck (1754–1848). In 1799 a young British officer described him as “a little man, as stiff as his boots.” He appears somewhat more genial in this 1806 portrait engraving by Charles Balthazar Fevret de Saint-Mémin (1770–1852).

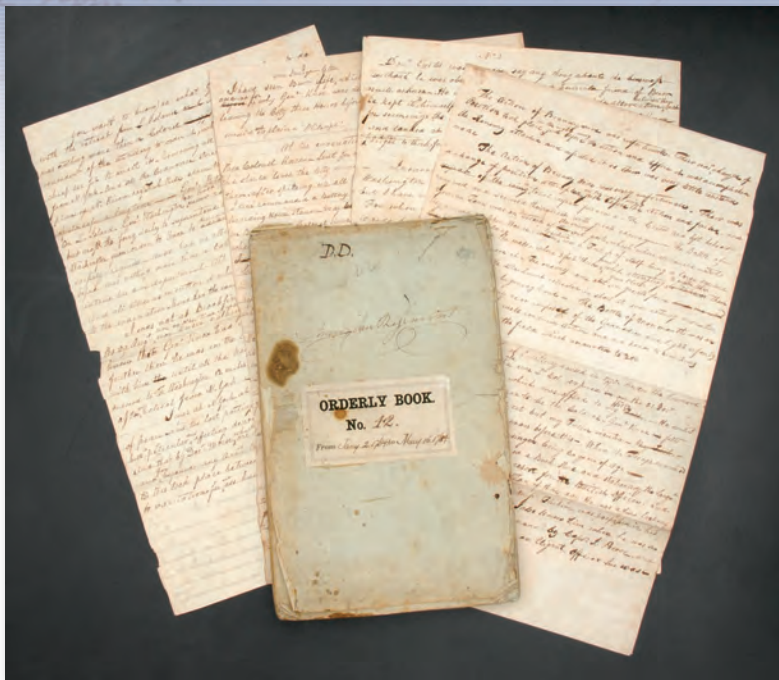
Following the British evacuation of Philadelphia in 1778, Henry Burbeck helped pursue General Sir Henry Clinton's army, fought in the Battle of Monmouth, served in the 1779 and 1780 campaigns in New York and New Jersey, and continued in the defense of the Hudson Highlands from 1781 to 1783. He was brevetted major on September 30, 1783. Burbeck was present when the Americans regained New York City in 1783, after which he was stationed at West Point until his honorable discharge on January 1, 1784.

In October 1786, Burbeck was re-commissioned as captain of artillery in a battalion “raised for the defence of the Frontiers,” under the command of Major John

Doughty. Following Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts, Burbeck commanded a company of artillery guarding the Springfield, Massachusetts, arsenal. He served as commandant of West Point from August 1787 until August 1789, when he was sent to guard Lieutenant Colonel David Humphries and Cyrus Griffin as they attempted to treat with the Creek nation in Georgia. Burbeck returned to Georgia and built Fort St. Tammany in the spring of 1790, retaining command of the post until June 1792. By that time he had received an appointment as major commandant of the Battalion of U.S. Artillery.

From 1792 to 1794, Henry Burbeck commanded the artillery of Anthony Wayne's Legion of the United States in the Northwest Territory, subsequently working under Brigadier General James Wilkinson. In late 1793 General Wayne ordered Burbeck to build Fort Recovery in Ohio at the site of St. Clair's Defeat, and, in August of 1794, the major participated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers. In September 1796, Burbeck traveled to Fort Mackinac to receive it from the British under the terms of Jay's Treaty. Royal Engineer Second Lieutenant George Landmann visited the garrison in the late spring of 1799 and noted in his memoir that the recently promoted “Lieutenant-Colonel Birkbank” of the First Regiment of Artillerists and Engineers was “a little man, as stiff as his boots,

*you do not want any discussion in your favour I can therefore very well
have him 1500 men I shall try something certainly towards the close
of the year may be done before you start*



Burbeck's personal account of his Revolutionary War service with an orderly book of the First American Regiment while at West Point in 1784.

awkwardly consequential, and passed for a martinet.” Burbeck remained at Mackinac until assuming command at Detroit on November 17, 1799, a post he held until February 1800. He began service as chief of artillerists and engineers on his return to Washington in July. That fall, he played a key role in pressing for the establishment of a military school at West Point, an issue he would raise again until its formal establishment in 1802. In late 1800, Burbeck assumed command of the Eastern Division of the army and helped establish the separate Regiment of Artillerists following a drastic reduction and reorganization of the U.S. Army in March of 1802. He was promoted to full colonel of the Regiment of Artillerists on April 1, 1802, and he served as chief of the artillery from 1802 until 1815.

As a high-ranking and respected officer, Henry Burbeck frequently travelled to widely separated military posts. He returned to Detroit in June 1803 before going east in 1804 to serve at Fort McHenry. By the spring of 1805, Burbeck was the army's senior colonel, second in command to James Wilkinson and had moved with the army headquarters to St. Louis, where he was given command of the “troops and garrisons east of the mountains, of those on the lakes and their waters, of South West Point and Fort Wilkinson.” Burbeck returned to Detroit in late 1808, perhaps a little unwillingly. He wrote to General Wilkinson in August of 1808, “I did flatter myself, as one half of my Regiment was on the sea board, and the duties of

commanding officer of artillery, which included the duties of inspector of Ordnance . . . that my services would be as necessary hear [sic] as in any other place.” Burbeck nonetheless went, but he was happy to leave the “frozen regions of the north” in the spring of 1809.

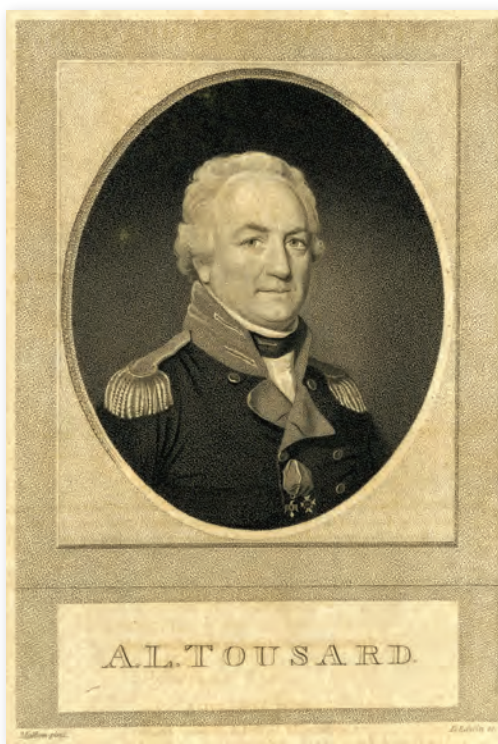
Colonel Burbeck later established the New York Arsenal at Governor's Island and was brevetted brigadier general on July 10, 1812. He commanded military districts at New York, Newport, New London, and Greenbush, New York, prior to the army's reorganization following the end of the War of 1812. While acting as commander of the Second Military District in 1813, Burbeck clashed with the Rhode Island militia when they refused to acknowledge federal authority over state forces. By dismissing all federal support from the local militia, Burbeck swiftly resolved the problem by demonstrating the fiscal and security challenges attendant upon state military independence.

Henry Burbeck's high rank and sterling reputation earned him positions on many courts martial and official investigations, including the position of president on the 1808 court of inquiry into accusations against General James Wilkinson for being a Spanish pensioner while under commission with the United States Army. Burbeck also served on the 1810 review of Captain Winfield Scott's request for a major's vacancy in the Regiment of Light Artillery and the 1814 court martial of General William Hull for the surrender of Detroit in 1812.

Henry Burbeck was honorably discharged on June 15, 1815, ending nearly 38 years of military service. He retired to New London, Connecticut, with his family. He applied for a pension in April 1818, proclaiming he “left the service with an impaired constitution and not

sufficient means to support a growing young family.” Henry Burbeck married twice. He first wed Abigail Webb in 1790, but she died later that year. He later married Lucy E. Rudd Caldwell and fathered six children, Susan Henrietta, Charlotte Augusta, Henry William, Mary Elizabeth, William Henry, and John Cathcart. Burbeck remained in New London with his family until his death on October 2, 1848.

— Jayne Ptolemy
Curatorial Assistant



Anne-Louis de Tousard (1749-1817) was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and one of a number of French or Swiss artillery officers in the pre-1802 U.S. Army. He was discharged that year and in 1809 published his influential American Artillerist's Companion. Tousard was a correspondent of Burbeck's, and the Clements Library holds a collection of his papers.

you do not want any diversion in your favour I can therefore very well spare him 1500 men I shall try something certainly towards the close of the year but then at any rate It may be done before you that

THE HENRY BURBECK PAPERS



- Albany
- Annapolis
- Belle Fontaine
- Carlisle Barracks
- Fort Adams
- Fort Claiborne
- Fort Columbus
- Fort Constitution
- Fort Detroit
- Fort Dearborn
- Fort Fayette
- Fort Independence
- Fort McHenry
- Fort Michilimackinac
- Fort Mifflin/Philadelphia
- Fort Niagara
- Fort Wolcott
- Hiwassee Garrison
- New Orleans
- Newport Barracks
- Ocmulgee Old Fields
- Savannah, Georgia
- US Arsenal, New York
- Washington, D.C.

Red dots superimposed on Abraham Bradley's 1804 (updated to 1812) map of the United States mark cities and military posts with which Henry Burbeck had regular correspondence.

The most heavily utilized manuscripts of the Clements Library continue to be our great military collections, especially those dating from the Seven Years' War to the American Civil War. Chief among them are the Thomas Gage Papers, Henry Clinton Papers, Nathanael Greene Papers, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, and James S. Schoff Civil War Collection. Holdings pertinent to the early decades of the Federal Army are particularly strong from the later 1780s to 1800, notably the papers of First American Regiment commander Josiah Harmar, Major General Anthony Wayne, and Secretary of War James McHenry. The Library cares for significant early 1800s U.S. Navy holdings related to the Barbary Wars and Mediterranean but did not have a large collection representing the U.S. Army for the period between the peace establishment of 1802 and the outbreak of the War of 1812 until the acquisition of the Henry Burbeck Papers early in 2014.

The Henry Burbeck Papers include approximately 1,350 incoming letters to Burbeck, 400 drafts of his outgoing letters, 150 military returns, 40 muster rolls, and 350 additional reports, documents, receipts, accounts, imprints, and miscellanea. While this voluminous collection includes content on the American Revolution, the Northwest Indian Wars, and the War of 1812, the bulk consists of the headquarters papers of the newly formed Regiment of Artillerists from the beginning of Burbeck's command in the spring of 1802 to the early months of 1812. Colonel Burbeck's regiment initially comprised 20 companies organized into five battalions (just

over 1,600 officers and soldiers). The majority of Burbeck's papers are reports from the captains of these companies located at garrisons from the east coast to the frontier. The correspondence reflects close oversight of a widely distributed regiment. Garrison "returns," comprised of numerical personnel data, information on changes since the previous return, and other explanatory text, were expected monthly from each company. An officer could be court martialed for neglect of duty should he fail to provide his returns. Cover letters and other documentation frequently contained important details about the activities of the companies, financial and logistical details about supplies, local and national news, and personal content. A September 13, 1810, letter from Captain James W. House at Fort Wolcott in Newport Harbor, Rhode Island, for example, includes a lengthy request for a supply of small drums and sticks for a half-dozen seven and eight-year-old boys to form "a most delightful little fairy band." That House made his request to his superior personally, not to be covered by U.S. funds, suggests the high quality of Burbeck's relationships with his company officers.

The survival of many drafts of Henry Burbeck's outgoing letters allows us to view nearly complete conversations between regimental commander and post commandant. A small sampling of officers represented include George Armistead at Fort McHenry (over 40 items), Samuel Dyson at Fort Detroit (over 40 items), Nehemiah Freeman at Fort Independence (over 70 items), William MacRea at New Orleans (over 20 items), Amos Stoddard and

up to the 30 Nov 6 January

I received your letter with the return of — ~~James~~ James in Boston, and did not reach this place until the 1st Inst. — My having no commands I thought it improper to give Lieutenant Luedel a Furlough — I spoke to the Secretary about the removal of you to Mackinac or Niagara. He asked me by asking a question, since the service be benefited by it, of course I could not say that it would, then I will make no alterations. He replied — Captain Leonard J. D. West had been tried and acquitted. Captain Howe is in Fort Tomes on furlough, but whether he will return is uncertain. Col Freeman and Holston, of the 1st Regt, has both been tried, and reprimanded, the Colonel, Capt and Newman, are all in custody, thus appears the greatest misfortune attending among them, — Major Morse appears to have his commands taken from him at N. Orleans, and given to Major Pike, and he placed with one company at the mouth of the river, ~~all appears~~ ~~company~~. All the infantry are crowded up the river to near N. Orleans. I suppose you may calculate on near 500 men, ~~with~~ ~~six~~ ~~hundred~~ — Major Stone commands at N. York. Major Pike is here in Boston. — If you send your enclosed letter a possible to some authorities — The dismission of Mr. Jackson and the resolution of Mr. Pike has a squally appearance, and these appear, I think, their chance appearance of War than any measure that has been taken, and all the it has done both Houses, give it to an unpopular measure, if you change it it may seem, in any case, to be a disadvantage of it. The general will not be here before next month, what he is coming for I cannot determine. I have got him the command of that place, & Dyson

Typical of Burbeck's drafts, this January 6, [1810], letter to Captain Samuel Dyson bears a date but lacks the year. One of the challenges of processing the collection will be to determine the years in which roughly 400 drafts were written. This example is from the Dr. David P. Harris Collection.

Major Burbeck

To Catherine Hustler Jan

1797

3. Aug For Washing M of 50 Dozen at 1/2 Dozen = 25 Dols

Mich. Mackinac 3 August 1797 Received the above in full

Catherine Hustler
mark

The U.S. Army allowed four to six soldiers' wives per company to remain with their husbands. They helped support their families by laundering for the troops. In 1797 Catherine Hustler applied her mark to this receipt for washing at Fort Mackinac. Documentation of the roles of women in the early nineteenth-century army is scattered throughout the Burbeck collection.

in the form of petitions for the release of husbands from service. Joanna Morrison's spouse Abraham transferred from Fort Constitution to Fort Jay in the spring of 1807, leaving Joanna "Destitute of house or home or any thing to subsist upon" in Plymouth, New Hampshire. Her pitiable plea to Henry Dearborn, signed "your Obedient Handmaiden," requests that Abraham be transferred back to New Hampshire or be released from service.

A mixed selection of letters, documents, financial paperwork, and other writings comprise the collection's approximately 230 pre-1802 and post-1812 records. The earliest materials include receipts for the payment of soldiers' wages, receipts for supplies—among them an "Invoice of Indian Goods" sent under Burbeck's charge from Greenville to the "Foot of the rapids" (Maumee, Ohio) in June 1796—and a 1784 orderly book of the 1st American Regiment commanded by Colonel Henry Jackson at West Point. War of 1812-era manuscripts include a series of letters respecting prisoners of war from Commodore Thomas M. Hardy, commanding the HMS *Ramillies* off the coast of New London. Near the end of his life, Henry Burbeck drafted lengthy letters to Charles Davies of the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, reflecting on his Revolutionary War service. These writings include remarks on Israel Putnam, Henry Knox, and other prominent individuals.

The Henry Burbeck Papers are extensive and promise to support many different topics of inquiry. They augment existing holdings on the American Revolution, interactions and conflicts with Native Americans in the Old Northwest and in the South, and the War of 1812; and they are now the Library's most substantial military collection for the period between 1802 and 1812.

— Cheney J. Schopieray
Curator of Manuscripts

Monthly Return for the Garrison of Fort M. Henry.

Station	Regiment	Company or Detachment	Present											
			Commiss ^o Officers	Commiss ^o for Duty	Commiss ^o for Private	Commiss ^o for Private	Commiss ^o for Private	Commiss ^o for Private	Commiss ^o for Private	Commiss ^o for Private	Commiss ^o for Private	Commiss ^o for Private		
Fort M. Henry	Artillery	Capt. A. Amistead	1	1	3	3	1	2	4	39	17	1	1	65
"	"	Detachment	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1
"	"	5 Regt. Inf. Co. 1st Detach	-	1	1	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	2	13
			1	1	1	4	3	2	4	51	18	1	6	82

Absentees Accounted for

Personnel and equipment "returns" account for many of the documents in the Burbeck collection. This detail from the July 1810 return from Fort McHenry in Baltimore reports the strength of the garrison.

Richard Whaley at Fort Columbus (over 130 items), and John Walbach at Fort Constitution (over 60 items). Additional Burbeck correspondents wrote about courts martial and other administrative issues. Persons familiar with the Clements Library's holdings will recognize many writers represented in the Burbeck Papers. Highlights include: Secretaries of War Henry Dearborn, and Lewis Cass; General James Wilkinson, artilleryman Anne-Louis de Tousard; Lieutenant Christopher Van Deventer; and artilleryman and West Point storekeeper Alexander Thompson. Women's letters and documents are present among those by other civilians, most commonly

THE HENRY BURBECK PAPERS: KEEPING HISTORY INTACT

Understanding the provenance or chain of ownership of an object is important for determining its authenticity and contextual meanings. The Henry Burbeck Papers reflect a dilemma common to groups of paper materials: Large archives rarely survive intact. They are often divided many times by families, estates, dealers, and auction houses.

When Henry Burbeck died in 1848, his papers passed to his wife Lucy. A group of orderly books, accounts, receipts, genealogical research, and other items left the family in the early 1870s when one of the three Burbeck daughters donated them to the newly formed New London County Historical Society in Connecticut. Lucy Burbeck sent the majority of the remaining papers to West Point professor Asa Bird Gardiner in 1875 to assist him in writing a history of General Burbeck's military career. The resulting biography, published in *The Magazine of American History* in 1883, remains the most substantial sketch of Burbeck's life.

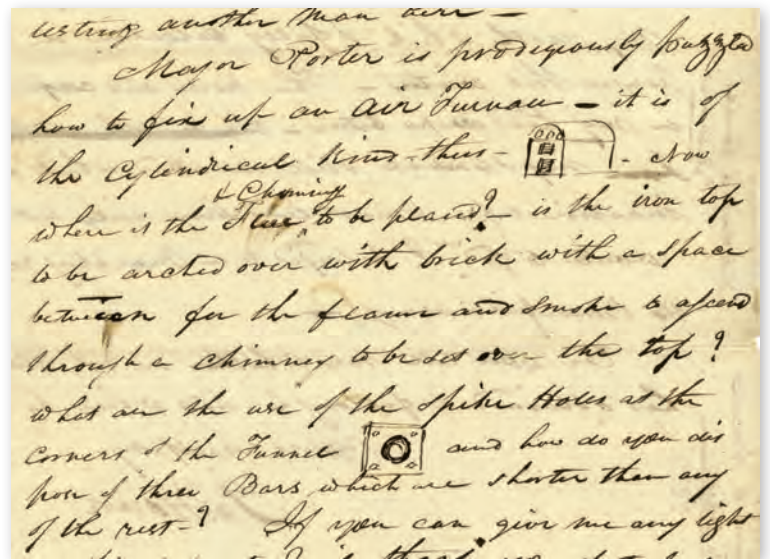
Lucy Burbeck died in 1880, and the papers remained in Gardiner's hands despite efforts by Henry and Lucy's grandson, Chandler Smith, to reacquire them in the early twentieth century. After fielding repeated requests, Gardiner claimed that the papers had been destroyed in a fire. After his death in 1919, to Smith's (and our) good fortune, Asa's widow, Mary A. Gardiner, rediscovered the papers and donated them to the Veteran Corps of Artillery of the State of New York (VCASNY). Chandler Smith, an artilleryman, veteran of the Great War, and officer of the VCASNY promptly acquired his grandfather's archive. Around 1904, Smith had donated four and a half linear feet of correspondence, accounts, receipts, orderly and letter books, publications owned by Burbeck, and other materials to the Fraunces Tavern Museum in New York City. With the recovery of materials from the Gardiners, however, the majority of Henry Burbeck's papers existed in the Smiths' New York home in the 1920s.

The first acquisition of Burbeck papers by the Clements Library was in 1951, with the purchase of 15 James Wilkinson letters to Burbeck dating from 1796-97. Where New York City bookseller and private collector Edward Eberstadt came by the Wilkinson letters is currently unknown. The paper trail becomes faint and the movement of the remaining papers is murky until the 1980s, when two events occurred: the 1986 donation of a group of manuscripts to the United States Military Academy at West Point by Cyril G. Cogswell and the purchase at auction of a significant collection of Burbeck materials by a dealer. The dealer sold an unknown number of letters and documents item-by-item over the course of his ownership. Many of these manuscripts went to collectors and other dealers. Via multiple intermediary owners, scholar and Clements Library donor Dr. David P. Harris brought together around 20 of these Burbeck letters, drafts, and documents, in the 1990s. Most of these items are now part of the David P. Harris Collection at the Clements.

Between 1998 and 2013, military antiques dealer James L. Kochan assembled over one linear foot of Burbeck manuscripts from the seller, who had acquired them in the 1980s. Kochan successfully purchased around five linear feet of Burbeck manuscripts (from an anonymous consigner) at Heritage Auctions in Los Angeles in 2011 and reunited them with the other items that he had accumulated. Consequently, by 2013, one owner held the largest existing archive of Henry Burbeck papers. Because of his personal interest in the colonel and his 15-year effort to bring the collection together, Kochan hoped to sell the papers intact rather than split them up into small lots. After reviewing the collection, the Clements Library staff decided to invest significant acquisition resources, made possible by the Norton Strange Townshend Fund, and launch fundraising efforts to offset the cost. Keeping this group of highly important manuscripts intact is a service to future generations of which the Library and the University of Michigan may be proud.

Our understanding of the history of the movement of the papers of Henry Burbeck will never be 100% complete. Undocumented individual items and small groups of material split away over the course of the late nineteenth through the twentieth century. Small groups of them may be found at the Burton Historical Collection, the New York Public Library, the Newberry Library, and other repositories. Additional items remain in private hands. As the preceding description suggests, however, between the Clements Library, Fraunces Tavern Museum, New London County Historical Society, and United States Military Academy, the vast majority of the parts of Henry Burbeck's fine collection have found permanent homes where they are accessible to researchers of all kinds.

— Cheney J. Schopieray
Curator of Manuscripts



Captain James House illustrated his October 3, 1810, letter to Burbeck with sketches of a proposed "Air Furnace" for use at Fort Warren in chilly Boston harbor.

THE BURBECK PLANS

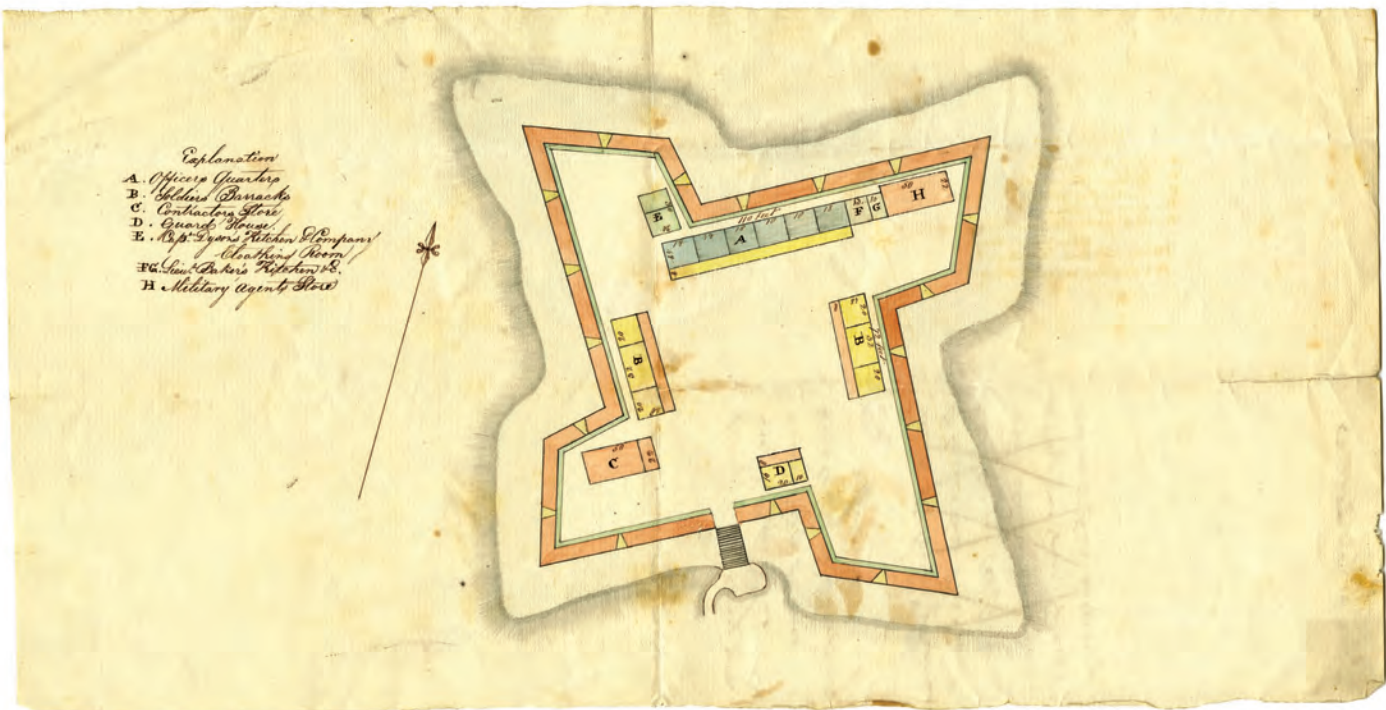
The Clements Library preserves more than 2,000 historical manuscript maps and plans, ranging from crudely sketched property surveys to veritable works of art. Many of the most significant and beautiful of these came to the Library with manuscript collections, where they had been retained by the original compiler for future reference. Although a small part of this body of cartography comprises printed maps, the bulk is in manuscript form. This is particularly true of the maps and plans found among the papers of military and political figures, who needed current visual information for the efficient fulfilment of their duties and who could call upon the talents of experienced engineers, surveyors, and draftsmen.

The Library's great British and American manuscript collections have been particularly rich in regard to maps and plans. The Thomas Gage Papers arrived at the Clements in 1937 accompanied by 89 of them; in 2005 Sir Eyre Coote's archive brought another 90; Josiah Harmar's papers included 56. Impressive as these numbers are, however, they pale in comparison to the whopping 380 maps of General Sir Henry Clinton—the headquarters maps of the British army in America from 1778 to 1782.

While the quantity of cartographic and architectural material in the Henry Burbeck Papers is relatively small—just nine manuscript plans, one view, and a single map—the importance and uniqueness of the individual items makes their discovery one of the

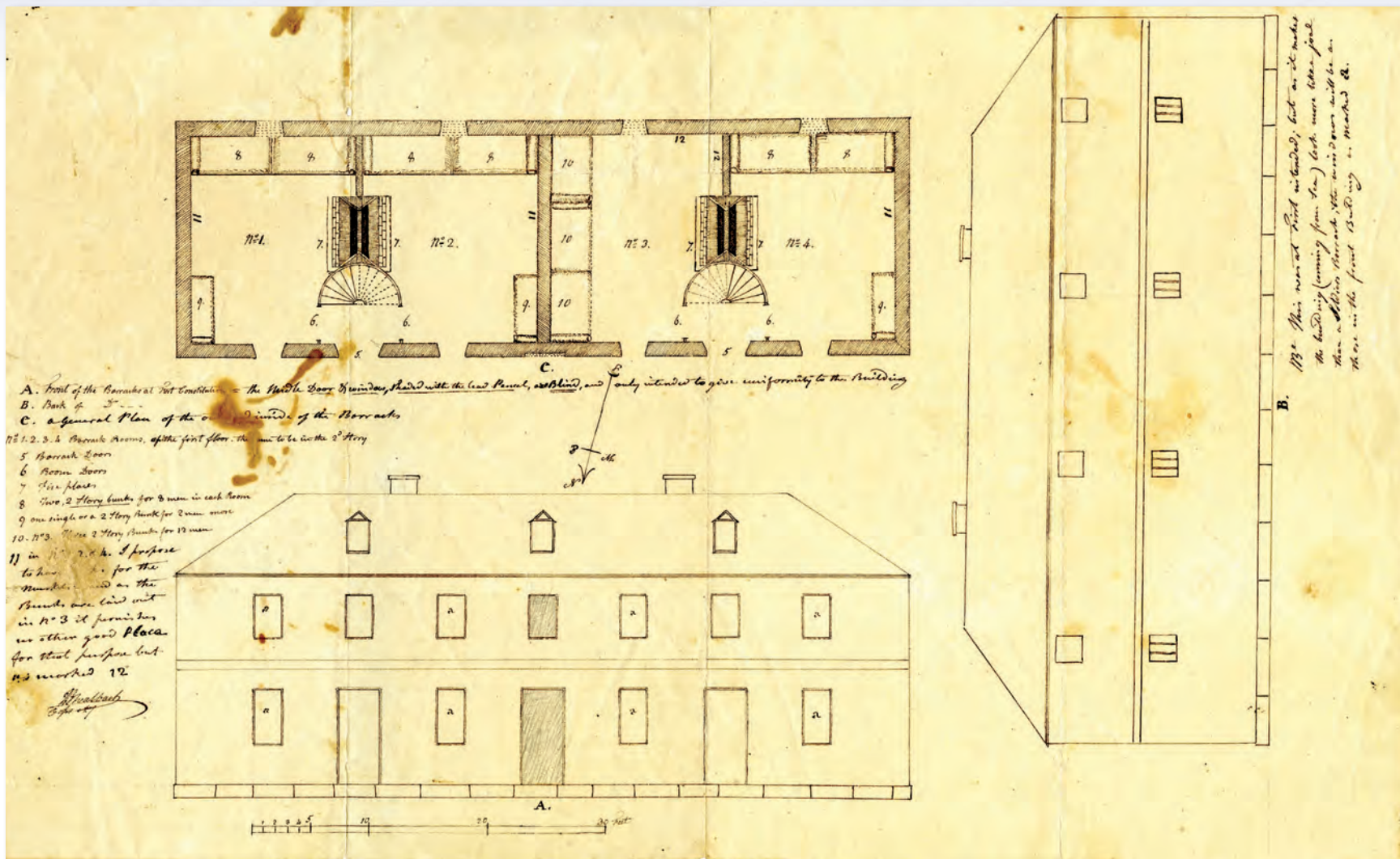
most exciting of the last fifty years—at least in terms of fortification plans relating to the Old Northwest. They include the only known contemporary ground plans of forts Recovery (1793) and Defiance (1794) and a “missing link” survey of Fort Mackinac (1797). A ca. 1809 plan of Fort Detroit (described as “Fort Leanue”) is the best representation of its appearance when surrendered to the British and Indians in 1812. Also included are precisely drawn renderings of forts Mifflin (1811), Scammel and Sumner (ca. 1802), and Norfolk (1811). Floor plans of buildings at forts Constitution and Independence (both ca. 1810) depict comfortable officers' quarters and a well-designed barracks for enlisted men. Fort St. Tammany, Georgia (ca. 1790), where Burbeck served during the early 1790s, is shown in a realistic view from the southeast. The sole map in the collection is an unfinished, two-sheet survey of what appears to be part of Washington County, Pennsylvania.

The plans associated with the Burbeck Papers represent a variety of fortification styles and designs. No two are alike. The choice of design and construction material for each was dictated by the fortification's purpose, location, and anticipated threat. Thus, the simple square trace of Fort Recovery, with four one-story log blockhouses connected by stockades was perfectly adequate to repel Native Americans. The similarly laid out Fort Defiance was greatly strengthened with a ditch and earth banked up around the stockade to resist light artillery should British forces advance up the Maumee



The fort at Detroit, constructed by the British during the American Revolution as Fort Lernoult and identified phonetically on this ca. 1809 plan as Fort “Leanue,” was Burbeck's command in 1808-09. Officially, the fortification had been renamed Fort Detroit in 1805. It appeared much as in this plan when surrendered to the British and Indians in 1812.

you do not want any diversion in your favour I can therefore very well spare him 1500 men I shall try something certainly towards the close of the year but not at any rate. It may be of use to inform you that



Elevations and floor plans for enlisted men's barracks at Fort Constitution (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), ca. 1810. Bunks for the soldiers are shown attached to the walls.

River from Lake Erie to challenge Anthony Wayne's army. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Fort Mifflin sited on the Delaware River as the guardian of Philadelphia against amphibious attack. Its earth-backed, masonry walls and heavy guns were intended to oppose naval vessels.

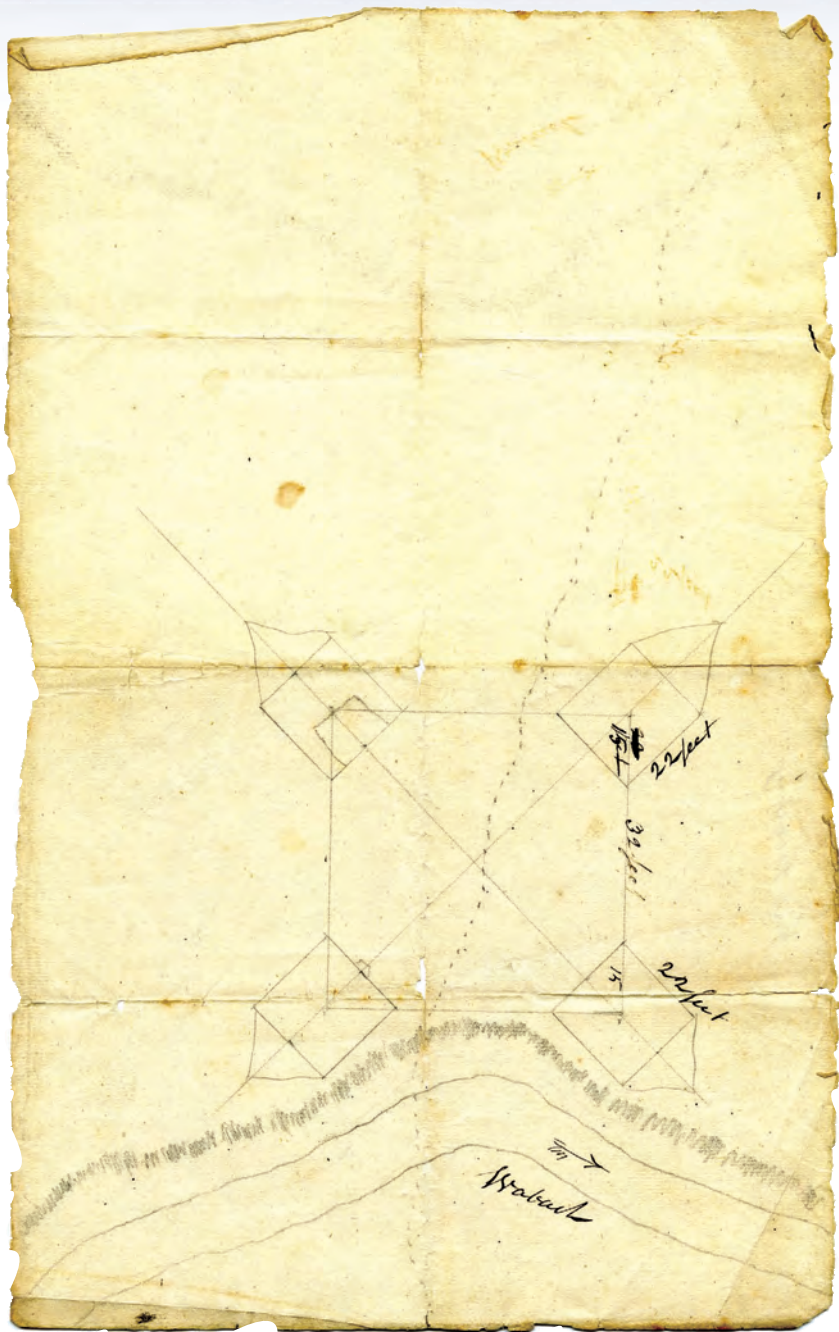
The plans that survive in the Burbeck Papers were for the most part sent to him by junior officers reporting the condition of their posts or by his superiors giving instructions on how to build or renovate a particular fortification. Although Burbeck was an experienced artilleryist and a competent engineer (he supervised construction of forts Recovery, Wayne, and Defiance in 1794), there is no evidence that he was much of an artist or draftsman. With the possible exception of a survey of Fort Mackinac made in the fall of 1796 and used as the basis of the 1797 plan of the post, there seem to be no drawings or plans by his hand.

Numerous documents in the collection suggest that many

more maps and plans were submitted to Burbeck than remain with the papers today. Captain John Walbach's October 13, 1811, letter to Burbeck from Fort Constitution (Portsmouth, New Hampshire) is typical of those enclosing plans that subsequently were separated and passed on to other parties, lost, or destroyed. Reporting on the defenses of Portsmouth, Walbach noted, "I have also added to the plans of the forts a Profile of the works and a sketch, or south view of a Part of this, seen from the sea." The whereabouts of many of these plans and sketches are currently unknown.

More satisfying are those cover letters that match surviving images. The uncolored, pen and ink plan of Fort Mifflin is identifiable by its distinctive outline, but it is undated. Its provenance is revealed, however, in a November 17, 1811, letter to Burbeck from Captain James Read, commandant of Fort Mifflin. Read first apologizes for the "imperfect sketch" he has enclosed in place of the "correct plan" he had intended to forward. Illness (a "pain in my

you do not want any discussion in your favour I can therefore very well spare him 1500 men I shall try something certainly towards the close of the year whether at any rate it may be of use before you shall see any more of it



Henry Burbeck constructed Fort Recovery on the site of Arthur St. Clair's 1791 defeat using this rough plan provided by General Anthony Wayne. This is the only known rendering of the small, stockade fort.

heart") had made it necessary for him to order Lieutenant William Gates to make a rough copy from an existing sketch by Read.

Two of the plans are identifiable as having been given to Burbeck by senior officers. That of Fort Recovery was enclosed in a December 22, 1793, letter from General Anthony Wayne. He instructed Burbeck to march a detachment to the site of Arthur St. Clair's catastrophic 1791 defeat by the Indians of the Great Lakes. Burbeck was to select a spot on the south side of the Wabash River

and there erect a small fort with four blockhouses "agreeably to the enclosed plan or draught."

Similarly, the "Plan of the Garrison of Michilimackinac" was left with Burbeck after General James Wilkinson inspected the post in August 1797. The British had constructed the fort in 1779-84 and peacefully handed it over to Burbeck and a detachment of U.S. troops in September 1796. Wilkinson recognized that higher ground to the north of the fort would permit an enemy to place cannon where they could dominate the defenses. Realizing that "human force and ingenuity could not make it [Fort Mackinac] tenable against the attacks of artillery," Wilkinson ordered the place to be secured against Indian attack by the construction of two blockhouses and alteration of the fort's walls.

On August 19, 1797, Wilkinson presented Burbeck with "a plan of the present works" showing the proposed improvements and demolitions. This is almost certainly the pen and ink outline preserved in Burbeck's papers. It includes the walls and buildings constructed by the British but adds two structures described in the table of references as "H. Supposed Block Houses." Workmen completed the two buildings in 1798, and they stand today in historic Fort Mackinac.

The plans acquired with the Burbeck Papers are a cartographic windfall that enriches the Clements Library's map collection. Although they represent only a fraction of the cartographic and architectural material that passed through Burbeck's hands, the plans that he chose to retain cast much light on under-documented military posts from the twenty years preceding the War of 1812.

— Brian Leigh Dunnigan
Associate Director & Curator of Maps

A LIST OF BURBECK MAPS AND PLANS

- Nathan Hayward, "S. East View of Ft. St. Tammany," ca. 1790 [Fort Recovery], [1793]
- "Plan of Fort Defiance erected at the Confluence of the Miami & AuGlaise Rivers in August 1794"
- Henry Burbeck and James Wilkinson, "Plan of the Garrison of Michilimackinac," [1797]
- "Fort Scammel"; "Fort Sumner," ca. 1802
- [Plan of Fort Leanue (sic: Lernoult)], ca. 1809
- [A Ground plan of the Officers Barracks at Fort Independence], ca. 1810
- [Plan & elevation of barracks at Fort Constitution], ca. 1810
- Constant Freeman, "Sketch [of] Fort Norfolk," [1811]
- [William Gates], [Fort Mifflin], [1811]
- [Part of Washington County, Pennsylvania], n.d.

You do not want any discussion in your favour I can therefore very well spare him. 1800 men I shall try something certainly towards the close of the year not till then at any rate. It may be done before you that

SUPPORTING ACQUISITIONS

Acquiring primary sources through purchase and donation—and keeping them safe for study and display—is the core of the Clements Library’s mission. The acquisition of the Henry Burbeck Papers continues a tradition of visionary collecting across the range of our interests—broad areas such as nineteenth-century Americana, early American photography, sources on

race, ethnicity, and gender, and defining eras such as the American Revolution and the Civil War. Financial support is essential to make this possible; bold collecting requires steady and substantial resources. Many of our greatest acquisitions would have been lost without the backing of our generous donors. One of our supporters recently wrote, “I’m delighted that such a large body of Burbeck



The Burbeck Papers include a rich selection of early U.S. Army and government imprints. Among those seen here are a handbill describing the soldier’s annual clothing issue (right) and a Congressional act of 1791 for the defense of the frontier (left).

The Papers of Henry Burbeck

October 2014

material was still available; it would have been a pity if it had been scattered piecemeal among institutions and collectors in various parts of the country.”

The cost of acquiring the Burbeck archive was substantial, and we are fortunate to be able to spread the expense over two years. But we still face a daunting challenge in stretching our budget to make the quarterly payments. That is why we are appealing for donations. Our current Director, Kevin Graffagnino, past Director, John Dann, and two curators who work closely with this collection, Cheney Schopieray and Brian Dunnigan, have made personal contributions to the Burbeck acquisition fund before asking friends and supporters of the Clements to do the same. More recently, the Frederick S. Upton Foundation has committed a \$10,000 challenge grant to help with the purchase of the collection. It will match every dollar up to \$10,000 in total giving, so the value of your gift will be doubled.

We are confident that the Burbeck collection will be used by noted scholars, faculty, and students to support their research into a crucial period in American history. Researchers worldwide will discover the collection through electronic cataloging in the University of Michigan online system. The Clements will publicize the Burbeck papers to current and potential research fellows and include information in our fellowship posting and in our electronic newsletter sent to 2,500 professors and history students nationwide so they learn of the research potential of this important collection.

We are also seeking additional funding to preserve the most fragile items in the collection. In this way, the documents will be available for generations to come. Most of the collection is in excellent condition, with only a handful of items in need of extensive preservation work. Collectors, students of American military history, historical manuscript aficionados, and anyone with an interest in early Michigan and the Northwest Territory will enjoy learning more about the papers of Henry Burbeck. One of our former curators, Albert Klyberg, wrote this note about the Burbeck purchase: “This stretch to acquire the right stuff has been a hallmark of the library since its origins by Mr. Clements and the directors to the present.” I think you will agree with me that making the “stretch” for high-quality acquisitions such as Burbeck is what makes the Clements Library one of the most important research repositories in the nation. Please consider making a gift that will support our efforts to bring the best materials available to the Clements Library.

— Ann Rock
Director of Development

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