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C O N T E N T S Original manuscripts, papers,
and letters relating to
MacCartney's mission to China
1792-1794

Biographical Note

Wason L.P. MSS+DS M117

Historical Note regarding the Manuscripts

Credential Letter of Sir George Staunton to the Emperor of Japan

Credential Letter of Sir George Staunton to the King of Cochin-China

Blank Covenant Form

Counterpart Covenant of Acheson Maxwell, Secretary to the Ambassador to the
Emperor of China, August 30, 1792

Covenant of Doctor William Scott, Surgeon to the China Embassy, August 30, 1792

Complete List of Documents in Volumes 2 to 10

B I O G R A P H I C A L N O T E

George, Earl Macartney, was born in Ireland on May 14, 1737. He was the only son of George Macartney of Lissanoure. At the age of thirteen, George matriculated at Trinity College, Dublin, from whence he graduated in 1759. He entered as a student at the Middle Temple, but not seeking a call to the bar, he travelled on the Continent for some time.

On his return, having been a great friend of the Holland family, he was appointed envoy-extraordinary to St. Petersburg, to conclude a commercial treaty with the Empress Catherine, which he accomplished to the satisfaction of both Fox and Burke. Before leaving on his mission he was knighted (October 19, 1764). In 1768 he married a daughter of Lord Bute, and in the following year was appointed chief secretary for Ireland. In 1775 he became Governor of the Caribbee Islands, and was captured by the French when Granada was attacked in 1779.

In 1780 he was appointed by the East India Company governor of Fort St. George, in Madras, at the time of the Mahratta War, and remained in India until 1786, when he resigned in consequence of his views not being upheld at home.

In 1792, owing to the injustice done to the English subjects by the Chinese, he was sent as Ambassador to Peking, and embarked on board the "Lion" on September 26. This embassy, the most noted of its kind in history, was splendidly equipped. To lend more dignity to the embassy, Lord Macartney was created an earl before embarking on this voyage. Accompanied by a large guard of militia, by men of science, secretaries, etc., everything possible was done to make the embassy worthy of the cause.

On his arrival, the Earl was most graciously received. The embassy collected much important and valuable information relating to conditions in China, trade, customs and usages, etc. In so far that they did not succeed in securing permission to have a British minister resident in China, which was one of the prime objects, the embassy has been termed by some a failure. But in the light of what was accomplished, there is no justice in such a stigma.

In 1795 he was sent to Verona on a confidential mission to Louis XVIII. He subsequently became governor of the newly captured colony of the Cape of Good Hope. He died in 1806.

HISTORICAL NOTE REGARDING THE MANUSCRIPTS

Several years ago Mr. Charles W. Wason purchased, for his Collection of Books and Manuscripts relating to China and the Chinese, the complete set of original manuscripts comprising the Official Documents and Reports of Lord Macartney's Embassy to China, 1792 to 1794, in the original 21 large folio volumes as gathered together and bound up by Lord Macartney. These were secured from the celebrated collection of manuscripts formed by Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart. His collection was the most valuable and important ever gathered together. Among other manuscripts relating to Lord Macartney's mission, purchased from the Phillipps collection, and now included in this collection, are Lord Macartney's Commonplace Book, kept during his Embassy in China, and the Original Manuscript Journal and Log of H.M.S. "Lion" including the records of the voyage kept by Sir Erasmus Gower. The Lion being the ship upon which Lord Macartney's Embassy sailed to China, and which remained in the Yellow Sea and the Canton River during the years of his embassy.

The present collection of manuscripts forms a most important and valuable supplement to the above. These manuscripts were never sold but remained in the hands of the Macartney family until purchased for Mr. Wason's collection. They passed directly from the Macartney family to this collection. At the death of Lord Macartney, they passed to Mr. C.G. Macartney of Lissanoure Castle, Killagan County, Antrim, Ireland. During July, 1915 they were offered for sale by Mr. C.G. Macartney and purchased for this collection.

At the time of their purchase they were tied up in the original bundles with red tape. They have been carefully sorted out, arranged, classified, indexed, and bound to preserve them, and to make them available for use, and accessible to the historian or investigator.

A.H.C.

October, 1917

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- Letter to Lord Macartney from M. Boulton, dated Birmingham, July, 25, 1792 regarding exhibits to be sent from Birmingham for China. Also enclosing copy of a letter from the Treasury, dated July 19, 1792 Vol. 4, Doc. 150
- Letter to Lord Macartney from M. Boulton, dated Birmingham Aug. 5, 1792 and relating to exhibits of cutlery and coins to be sent to China Vol. 4, Doc. 168

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- Letter to Wm. Pitt from F. Bristow, dated Aug. 1792, requesting to send pattern boots to China Vol. 4, Doc. 162

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Note from W. Devaynez to Lord Macartney, dated March 7, 1795, requesting record of measurage of the Hindostan and of the duty of the homeward bound cargo, Pencil notation on the bottom of the note giving same Vol. 7, Doc. 316

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Letter from J. Dinwiddie to Lord Macartney dated, June 10, 1792, Attached to this is a list of curiosities, questions and answers relating to China, etc. Vol. 4, Doc. 130

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