

Publication Number: M-160

Publication Title: Records Of The Office Of The Secretary Of The Interior Relating To The Suppression Of The African Slave Trade And Negro Colonization, 1854-72

Date Published: 1961

RECORDS OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
RELATING TO THE SUPPRESSION OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE
AND NEGRO COLONIZATION, 1854-72

On the 10 rolls of this microcopy are reproduced three bound volumes and a quantity of unbound records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior relating to the suppression of the African slave trade and the colonization of recaptured and free Negroes. These records, dated between August 10, 1854, and February 3, 1872, are part of a body of records in the National Archives designated as Record Group Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior.

By an act of March 2, 1807, Congress prohibited the importation of slaves into the United States after January 1, 1808, and provided penalties for those engaged in the slave trade. This action initiated trade that was to last more than 60 years. An act of March 3, 1819 provided stringent penalties for the crime of importing slaves and appropriated \$100, 000 to enforce the law. It also authorized the President to employ any of the armed vessels of the United States to seize and bring into a United States port any ships or vessels of the United States engaged in the slave trade; to make regulations and arrangements "for the safe keeping, support, and removal beyond the limits of the United States, of all such Negroes, mulattos, or persons of color, as may be so delivered and brought within their jurisdiction"; and to appoint an agent or agents, upon the coast of Africa, to receive such persons. Supervision of the agents appointed under this act was delegated to the Secretary of the Navy by President Monroe.

The work of these agents was closely related to that of the American Colonization Society founded in December 1816 to colonize free Negroes arriving in Africa from the United States. In 1820 the Society sent out a small colony that was temporarily established on Sherbo Island off the coast of Sierra Leone until it could obtain land in the territory southeast of Sierra Leone, now known as Liberia. Occasionally the agent for the United States was also the agent for the Society. Ultimately a number of colonies were established in Liberia by the American Colonization Society and by State colonization societies.

Despite legislation and numerous congressional appropriations for enforcement, the activity of the slave traders increased until the peak was reached between 1840 and 1860. By the end of this period violations of the laws prohibiting the slave trade had become so numerous that the Government renewed its efforts to suppress the illicit traffic.

An act of Congress approved on June 16, 1860, authorized the President to negotiate contracts with persons or societies, for a term not exceeding 5 years, "to receive from the United States through their duly constituted agent or agents, upon the coast of Africa, all Negroes, mulattos, or persons of color, delivered from on board vessels seized in the prosecution of the slave trade, by

commanders of the United States armed vessels, and to provide . . . comfortable clothing, shelter, and provisions for a period not exceeding one year from the date of their being landed on the coast of Africa..." The same act provided for the commanders of the United States armed vessels to proceed directly to the coast of Africa with cargoes of recaptured Africans instead of first landing them in the United States.

One of the first acts of Abraham Lincoln as President was the consolidation in one department of all activities relating to the suppression of the slave trade. On May 2, 1861, he assigned to the Secretary of the Interior the responsibility for executing the laws that had been enacted for that purpose. Until then the detection and prosecution of persons engaged in the importation of slaves had been undertaken by the United States marshals and attorneys, who reported to the Judiciary Section of the Department of the Interior. The Treasury, State, Navy, and War Departments had also had various duties connected with the apprehension of slave traders at different times, but the responsibility of the various agencies had never been clearly delineated. George C. Whiting, formerly Chief Clerk and Commissioner of Pensions of the Department of the Interior, was selected by Secretary Caleb Smith "to take charge of the records and correspondence, and to attend to all the details" connected with the execution of the new responsibilities of the Department. The Secretary of the Interior immediately assembled at New York all the marshals of the loyal seaboard States and gave them instructions and also the opportunity to inspect in New York harbor vessels that were fully equipped for the African slave trade. Before the end of 1861 five slave vessels were seized and condemned and four slave traders were convicted.

In his annual report to the President, dated November 30, 1861, Secretary of the Interior Smith reported that within little more than a year the United States, under contracts negotiated with the Government of Liberia had delivered to that Republic, through the agency of the American Colonization Society, 4, 500 Africans recaptured on the high seas by vessels of the United States Navy. In accordance with the act of June 16, 1860 all such liberated persons were supplied with food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and medical attention for 1 year after their return to Africa. They were placed under the care and supervision of Rev. John Seys, a missionary and agent of the United States, based at Monrovia.

Negotiations for an even more effectual suppression of the slave trade culminated in a treaty between Great Britain and the United States that was concluded on April 7, 1862, and that was implemented by an act of Congress of July 11, 1862. This treaty granted mutual search rights to specially commissioned war vessels of both Governments. If any vessels boarded were found to be slave ships, or were suspected of engaging in the slave trade, they were to be sent to one of the Mixed Courts of Justice established at New York, the Cape of Good Hope, and Sierra Leone. These courts, consisting of one judge and one arbitrator for each government, were to judge the facts without appeal. The treaty provided that persons convicted as slave traders by the courts were to be punished in accordance with the laws of their respective countries. Financial arrangements with the American officers of the courts were to be made by the Department of the Interior, but reports on their activities were to be transmitted to the Department of State.

By the enforcement of the various measures mentioned above, the slave trade was checked so effectively that in his annual report of December 5, 1864, the Secretary of the Interior asserted

that "it is believed that in no port of the United States has a vessel been fitted out to engage in that nefarious traffic."

The efforts of the United States Government to colonize free Negroes beyond the territorial limits of the United States did not result in similar success. On April 16, 1862, Congress appropriated \$100, 000, to be expended under the direction of the President, "to aid in the colonization and settlement of such free persons of African descent now residing in said District [the District of Columbia], including those to be liberated by this act, as may desire to emigrate to the Republics of Hayti or Liberia, or such other country beyond the limit of the United States as the President may determine." A second statute, approved on July 16, 1862, appropriated an additional sum of \$500, 000 to enable the President to colonize these persons and also "to colonize those to be made free by the possible passage of a confiscation bill." The "confiscation bill," enacted on July 17, 1862, authorized the President to make provision for the transportation, colonization, and settlement, in some tropical country beyond the territorial limits of the United States, of persons of African descent, made free by the act, who might be willing to emigrate. Another act of July 17, 1862, empowered the President to enter into contracts with foreign governments having possessions in the West Indies or other tropical regions to receive and wages, Negroes freed from slave ships by United States armed vessels.

On August 4, 1862, Rev. James Mitchell was appointed by President Lincoln as an agent to assist in executing the legislation on colonization. His relations with other staff members of the Interior Department appear to have been inharmonious and the records of the Department indicate that his title of Commissioner of Emigration was never an official designation.

A colonization project was undertaken at Ile a Vache, Haiti, but proved unsuccessful. In October 1863 D. C. Donnohue was appointed special agent to investigate and report upon the condition of the emigrants at Ile a Vache. The colony was subsequently abandoned and the emigrants were returned to the United States in 1864.

A projected plan for the colonization of free Negroes in New Granada, under the direction of S. C. Pomeroy, also failed to reach fruition, due largely to the opposition of neighboring Central American countries. In his annual report of December 5, 1863, the Secretary of the Interior asserted that there appeared to be no disposition among the colored persons, for whose colonization Congress had made provision, to leave the United States, and he questioned the feasibility of further efforts to colonize them beyond the territorial limits of the United States unless a friendly colony could be established in one of The Central American States.

An act of Congress approved July 2, 1864, repealed those sections of the acts of April 16 and July 16, 1862, that had provided appropriations for colonization projects, except insofar as such money might be needed to meet previously incurred expenses or existing commitments of the Government. Interest in colonization plans subsequently subsided and no additional projects were undertaken.

The slave trade was almost entirely suppressed by the close of the Civil War and the activities of the United States Government in this regard were gradually curtailed. An additional convention with Great Britain, concluded on June 3, 1870, abolished the Mixed Courts but left the main part

of the treaty of 1862 in force. The duties of the Interior Department respecting the suppression of the slave trade outside the territorial limits of the United States were transferred to the Department of State. When the Department of Justice was created by an act of Congress approved June 22, 1870 the supervisory powers previously exercised by the Secretary of the Interior over United States marshals and attorneys devolved upon the new Department. The Department of the Interior was thus relieved of all responsibility pertaining to slave-trade activities within the territorial limits of the United States. It was not for several years, however, that all unfinished business of the Department in regard to the suppression of the slave trade was concluded.

The records reproduced on this microcopy were received originally in the Office of the Secretary of the Interior and were filed with the records of the Patents and Miscellaneous Division. At that time the system of assigning numbers to correspondence received, by date of receipt, had not been fully developed. As a result the records pertaining to the slave trade were arranged by subject with some reference to date but without any effort to develop logically arranged groups of records. The file clerk depended upon the outer wrappings, many of which are now missing, to maintain the identity of the various subject groups. It will be noted that a numeral has been recorded above the endorsement on many of these letters. It appears probable that, in the original arrangement of these records, certain communications were numbered in consecutive order to indicate that they should be filed in a particular subject category.

The records relating to the slave trade were transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Library of Congress in 1909 and were transferred from the latter agency to the National Archives on April 28, 1945.

These records were reclassified according to subject by the Library of Congress and placed in folders, but no effort appears to have been made to arrange the various series in logical order. No attempt has been made by the National Archives and Record Service to restore the original order of this material. Some rearrangement has been under taken, however, in order to integrate series pertaining to allied subjects. The communications within each series have been arranged in chronological order whenever feasible. It will be noted that a number of enclosures transmitted with the correspondence have not been located; conversely, the covering letters for several enclosures appear to be missing.

A few bound volumes and a small quantity of papers from among these records do not appear sufficiently valuable to justify their reproduction. These comprise two bound-volumes of payrolls of the U. S. Steamship Memphis, 1858-59, a bound-volume containing weekly returns of provisions expended on the U. S. Steamship *Atlanta*, 1858-59, and miscellaneous accounts of the Atlanta, 1858-59. No relationship between these records and the suppression of the slave trade has been found.

Attention is called to the fact that certain correspondence pertaining to the suppression of the slave trade and to colonization projects has been published (37th Cong., 3d sess., H. Ex. Doc. 28; and 39th Cong., 1st sess., S. Ex. Doc. 55).

Additional material concerning these subjects is in several record groups in the National Archives. Information concerning these sources is available in *A Guide to Documents in the National Archives: for Negro Studies*, compiled by Paul Lewinson (American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, *Publications*, No. 1, 1947), and in "Preliminary Report on Materials in the National Archives Relating to Africa," by Morris Rieger, in *African Studies B* vol. 2, no. 2 (April 1959).

In Record Group 21, Record of District Courts of the United States, are case files concerning admiralty and criminal matters pertaining to the slave trade. The admiralty cases in district courts were largely proceedings in rem (against the ship, her cargo, and tackle) and related to the seizure, condemnation, and sale of ships engaged in the slave trade. The criminal cases in district and circuit courts concerning the slave trade pertained to charges of outfitting slave ships and to the service of masters and crew aboard.

In Record Group 45, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, are letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from commanding officers of the African Squadron, 1843-61 (reproduced as Rolls 101-112 of Microcopy 89); the letterbooks of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, 1843-45 (Microcopy 206), and of Commodore William C. Bolton, 1847-49, commanding officers of the African Squadron; and correspondence with agents of the United States upon the coast of Africa for the reception of liberated Africans and letters from members of the American Colonization Society with the Navy Department, 1819-44 (Microcopy 205).

Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, contains diplomatic correspondence pertaining to the slave trade, including despatches from United States including despatches from the United States to Great Britain, 1792-1906 (Microcopy 30), Brazil, 1809-1906 (Microcopy 121), and Liberia, 1863-1906 (Microcopy 170); despatches from United States consuls at Monrovia, 1852-1906 (Microcopy 169); and letters sent (domestic letters), 1784-1906 (Microcopy 40), and miscellaneous letters received, 1789-1906 (Microcopy 179), which include scattered correspondence with various colonization societies.

Record Group 60, General Records of the Department of Justice, contains scattered correspondence concerning the slave trade; Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, contains material supplementing that in Record Group 59; and Record Group 118, Records of United States Attorneys and Marshals, contains scattered correspondence of the United States attorney for the Southern District of Alabama. 1830-60, dealing with the laws prohibiting the further importation of slaves.

Other materials relating to the African slave trade and Negro colonization are in the Library of Congress. The Library's *Handbook of Manuscripts* (Washington, 1918) lists, on page 23, the records of the American Colonization Society, 1816-1908; on page 203, the diary of Christian Wiltberger, Jr., February 2-December 31, 1821, kept during a voyage to Liberia with a shipload of colonists and during this missionary service there; and miscellaneous papers relating to the slave trade

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<u>Roll</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Letters sent, September 8, 1858-February 1, 1872, relating mainly to the capture of slave ships and vessels being outfitted for the slave trade; judicial proceedings against persons engaged in the slave trade; colonization attempts at Ile a Vache, Haiti; projected colonization schemes in the Danish West Indies, and British Honduras; and the delivery of recaptured Africans to Liberia. There are copies of contracts concerning the colonization of liberated Africans on the Isthmus of Chiriqui in the Republic of New Granada and on Ile a Vache.
2	Register of letters received, August 11, 1858-February 3, 1872
3	(1) Communications from the Presidents, August 31, 1858-January 28, 1864, consisting mainly of the letters referred to the Department of the Interior by the President. There are several letters from the Secretary of the Interior to the President that were returned with latter's approval; and a copy of a letter dated May 2 1861, from President Lincoln designating the Department as the agency responsible for executing the laws relating to the suppression of the slave trade. (2) Communication from the Department of State, November 6, 1860-November 7, 1870, including letters referred by that Department to the Secretary of the Interior; correspondence relating to the slave ships <i>Delicia</i> and <i>William L. Cogswell</i> ; letters relating to colonization on the island of Fernando Po near Kingston, Jamaica, and at Quito, Ecuador; and information concerning the activities and termination of the Mixed Courts of Justice. (3) Communication from the War Department, May 31, 1860- May 22, 1871, relating to the capture of a French slave ship, the request from the Secretary of War for authorization to tear down the barracoons at Key West, Fla., the refusal of the War Department to permit J.B Pinney and A. A. Constantine to visit Fort Monroe, and the claim of Rev. James Mitchell for compensation as Commissioner of Emigration. (4) Communications from the Navy Department, September 6, 1858-September 3, 1862, including inspection reports on vessels offered for the transportation of liberated Negroes; reports of Rev. John Seys, United States agent for liberated Africans in Liberia (forwarded by the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Interior); and information relating to the capture of the slave brig <i>Bonito</i> . (5) Communication from the Treasury Department, July 18, 1860-February 3, 1872, relating mainly to salary drafts of personnel of the Mixed Courts of Justice and of special agents outside the United States, accounts of the United States marshals, and payment of prize money. Including are a copy of a contract between the United States and the American Colonization Society; and a statement of the expenses and disbursements of the United States marshal at New York, December 18, 1862-September 18, 1864. (6) Communication from the Attorney General, April 13, 1859-June 2, 1865, relating to the compensation of J.W. Wayne as assistant counsel for the United

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- (7) Congressional resolutions and correspondence, 1861-66, relating to the suppression of the slave trade and the compensation of judges of the Mixed Courts of Justice; to the contracts with the American Colonization Society and to Rev. John Seys; to the slave bark *Augusta*; to vessels and persons engaged in the slave trade in the Southern District of New York, 1852-62; and to colonization accomplishments.
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- (1) Abstracts of laws of 34 States relating to Negroes.
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- (1) Communications from United States attorneys, 1860-69, pertaining to their activities in the prosecutions of persons engaged in the slave trade.
 - (2) Communications from E. Delafield Smith, United States attorney for the Southern District of New York, April 12, 1861-September 26, 1867, relating to the cases of the slaves ships *Augusta*, *Nightingale*, and *Erie*; papers relating to the claim for wages of the crew of the *William L. Cogswell*; letters from Robert Murray and other interested persons concerning payment for services in the use of the tug *Achilles*; and account of disbursements under the fund for the suppression of the slave trade.
 - (3) Copies of correspondence between J.C. Van Dyke, United States attorney at Philadelphia, and the State and Treasury Departments, and communication from Van Dyke to the Interior Department, August 10, 1854-March 21, 1862, relating to various slave ships, his claims for expenses incurred in the suppression of the slave trade, and the testimony of witnesses in the trial of James G. Darnaud for piracy.
 - (4) Documents relating to the slave bark *Augusta*, 1861-62, consisting of:
 - (a) General incoming correspondence, July 3, 1861-March 8, 1862, including communications from Robert Murray, United States marshal at New York, and E. Delafield Smith, United States attorney at New York, relating to the case of the *Augusta*; communications from Judge William D. Shipman pertaining to the request of the Secretary of the Interior that he conduct an investigations in to charges of collusion between Federal officers and parties engaged in the slave trade; and the decision of Secretary of the Interior exonerating accused.
 - (b) One volume of testimony in the investigation ordered by the Secretary of the Interior at New York in December 1861 on the charges of collusion.
 - (c) Exhibits identified as B-I, K, and L-Y, consisting primarily of correspondence, October-December 1861.

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- (1) Communications relating to United States marshals, March 13, 1857- March 9, 1869, including correspondence pertaining to the slave trade in the vicinity of Florida and the recovery of Africans in South Carolina; reports concerning numerous slave ships; the findings of the grand jury and the testimony of witnesses in the escape of Appleton Oaksmith from the Boston jail; correspondence and depositions from the United States marshal in New York and his aides in regard to alleged misconduct of certain officers in the escape of the Storm King; and letters concerning the rescue of the fugitive slave Shadrack at Boston.
- (2) Communication relating to T. J. Moreno, United States marshal for the Southern District of Florida, May 4, 1860-April 3, 1862, including reports on various slave ships; correspondence relating to drafts drawn by Moreno; reports concerning recapture Africans transported to Liberia on ships of the American at Key West, and the number transported to Liberia; and correspondence and testimonials pertaining to Moreno's loyalty to the Union
- (3) Communications from Robert Murray, United States marshal for the Southern District of New York, May 11, 1861-April 1869, relating mainly to his claim and to that of Joseph Thompson, first deputy marshal, for compensation in recognition of extra services rendered and expenses incurred in suppression of the slave trade; letters relating to the investigation conducted by Judge Shipman in the *Augusta* case; reports relating to various slave ships, and the claim of Russell Sturgis for compensation for the use of the Achilles; copy of a bill for the more effectual suppression of the slave trade; and letters from the Treasury Departments pertaining to the settlements of the Murray's account.
- (4) Correspondence, April 24, 1860-November 7, 1861, pertaining to the claim of Lucien Peyton for services rendered in the case of the slave ship Wanderer.

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- (1) Communication relating to Benjamin Pringle, judge of the Mixed Court at Cape Town, South Africa, March 25, 1863-April 1, 1870, including correspondence pertaining to the organization and accounts of the court, the payment of salary drafts, and a leave of absence for Judge Pringle.
- (2) Communications from Truman Smith, judge of the Mixed Court at New York, May 14, 1863–October 24, 1870, relating to court accommodation, account for rent and salary drafts.
- (3) Communication relating to Charles V. Dyer, judge of the Mixed Court at Sierra Leone, West Africa, January 5, 1861- March 30, 1866, including correspondence pertaining to financial difficulties, an increase in the compensation of Dyer and of Timothy Hibbard, arbitrator of the court, and Dyer's salary drafts.
- (4) Communications relating to George W. Palmer, judge of the Mixed Court at Sierra Leone, April 20, 1867-December 22, 1870 including correspondence pertaining to accounts of the court and payment of salary of salary drafts; and Judge Palmer's letter of resignation
- (5) Communication relating to William L. Avery, United States arbitrator of the Mixed Court at Cape Town, February 9, 1863-May 31, 1869, including correspondence pertaining to accounts and salary drafts, the assassination of President Lincoln, and Avery's departure from Cape Town.

- (6) Communication relating to Timothy Hibbard, arbitrator of the Mixed Court at Sierra Leone, February 10, 1863-April 20, 1867, including correspondence pertaining to the interpretation of the treaty for suppression of the slave trade, the organization and accounts of the court, salary accounts, activities of the court, and the death of Mr. Hibbard.
- (1) Communication relating to Rev. James Mitchell, emigration agent of the department of the Interior to President's Lincoln recommending the discontinuance of Mitchell's services, correspondence between Mitchell and the Secretary relating to the former's position and authority, letters concerning Mitchell's claim for compensation, and a copy of a report from Mitchell to Presidents Lincoln concerning colonization.
- (2) Miscellaneous letters pertaining to colonization, May 23, 1860-October 10, 1868, including communications to the Secretary of State concerning offers to transport recaptured Negroes to Liberia; reports from agents; a copy of a note from the Spanish Minister to the Secretary to the Secretary of the State concerning colonization on the island of Fernando Po; communications relating to proposed colonization on the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and in Mexico; and colonization accounts.
- (3) Communications relating to colonization in British Honduras, March 7, 1861-May 20, 1863, including several of the James Grant papers, copies of original land grants in British Honduras, letters from John Hodge, an agent of the British Honduras Company, and Pamphlets concerning the advantages of colonization in British Honduras.
- (4) Communications relating to S. C. Pomeroy, United States colonization agent, September 12, 1862-January 30, 1872, including a copy of his instructions, a contract between the United States and Ambrose Thompson pertaining to colonization on the Isthmus of Chiriqui and correspondence regarding the settlement of accounts.
- (5) Records relating to negotiations with Denmark concerning colonization, April 23, 1862-October 3, 1865. Included are an agreement dated July 19, 1862, as to the receiving of recaptured Negroes in St. Croix; printed and manuscript copies of the proprietors of landed estates and the rural population of free laborers of the Danish West Indies; and communications from the Danish Legation to the State Department regarding the agreement of 1862.
- (6) Miscellaneous contracts and agreements pertaining to colonization, 1860-65, including proposals for furnishing ships to transport Negroes from Key West, copies of contracts with the American Colonization Society for transporting Negroes from Key West to Liberia and for the support of liberated Africans, a copy of an agreement between the Republic of Liberia and the American Colonization Society regarding recaptured Africans landed in Liberia by the Society under its contract with the United States, several drafts of contracts, the charter of the ship *Ocean Ranger*, a printed statement relating to the colonization of free Negroes at Ile a Vache, and a draft of a Haitian proclamation relating to colonization.
- (7) Requisition and letters, 1861-66, mainly letters from G. C. Whiting to the Secretary of the Interior or the disturbing agents requesting for the United

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- (1) Documents pertaining to Bernard Kocks' proposal for colonization at Ile a Vache, September 6, 1862-March 21, 1863.
 - (2) Correspondence dated February 20, 1863-May 28, 1868, concerning the claim of Paul S. Forbes and Charles K. Tuckerman for the compensation specified under their contract with the United States to colonize Ile a Vache, including the signed contract between the United States and Forbes and Tuckerman; testimonials regarding the ability of Forbes and Tuckerman to undertake the project; notice of the sailing of the *Ocean Ranger* with 500 emigrants; and a printed statement of the circumstance attending the experiment of colonizing free Negroes at Ile a Vache.
 - (3) Correspondence and reports relating to D. C. Donnohue, special agent appointed to investigate the colonization project at Ile a Vache, September 10, 1863-May 9, 1864, including communications from the State Department that transmitted despatches from the consul general at Haiti; correspondence between the Secretary of the Interior and Donnohue concerning the latter's appointment as special agent; reports from Donnohue; and correspondence pertaining to the payment of drafts.
 - (4) Communications, February 9, 1863-January 18, 1869, relating to the claims of James De Long, United States consul at Aux Cayes, Haiti, for money expended assisting the colonists at Ile a Vache.
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- (1) Communication from Rev. John Seys, United States agent for liberated African at Monrovia, 1860-65, consisting of accounts and receipts for expenditures; reports concerning the arrival of American Colonization Society vessels and the condition of liberated African; and a report to the Secretary of the Interior concerning the contract between the American Colonization Government and the number of recaptured Africans delivered to the Society's agent.
 - (2) Accounts and financial correspondence of the American Colonization Society, January 1861-May 1863, including communications from the Treasury Department to the Department of the Interior concerning accounts of the Society.
 - (3) Communications pertaining to Rev. William McLain, financial secretary of the American Colonization Society, May 23, 1860-December 2, 1868, including proposals for transporting Africans to Liberia, letters from McLain relating to the sailing schedules of the Society's ships, letter transmitting reports to the Department from agents; and correspondence concerning the claim of the American Colonization Society for the support of recaptured Africans.