

Archive Collection (T-SK)

The Stirling of Keir collection in Glasgow City Archives is one of the most important collections in Scotland related to gentry families with estates in the British West Indies. This digitised collection (Reference: T-SK-22 'Jamaican Estates: Miscellaneous') provides details of the Stirling family ownership of sugar plantations in eighteenth-century Jamaica. The 'Letter Book of James Stirling' (TS-K/22/2) contains correspondence to commercial associates and family in Great Britain and Jamaica and was written whilst the author was resident on the island between 1764 and 1772. 'Account Current Books' (T-SK 22/3-4) contains detailed financial transactions for Hampden and Frontier estates in the years 1764-1778 and 1781-1784. Three Invoice and Sales Books (T-SK 22/5-7) between 1770 and 1784 contain, for example, details of sugar sales in London and Bristol as well as valuations of Hampden in 1770, Frontier in 1773 as well as valuations of enslaved people, 1770-1776. Two books 'Arrivals of ships and sales of sugar and rum crop' (T-SK 22/11-12) shows transportation and sales of produce in London, Bristol and Glasgow between 1788-1792. The remaining documents related to plantation architecture and estate layout, including the 'Plan and elevation of Keir works at Hampden' (T-SK/22/13), the 'Front elevation of Hampden house' (T-SK/22/14) and finally, a 'Plan of Hampden estate' (T-SK/22/15). Although undated, these are clearly of the same period. The high-quality digital images of James Stirling's letter-book and complementary plantation records offer a comparative glimpse into life across two sugar estates in what was regarded as the 'silver-age of sugar' in the years before the War of American Independence. Historians such as Eric Williams suggested the loss of the thirteen colonies initiated a 'decline' in the profits of sugar estates and contributed to the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and ultimately emancipation in the British West Indies in 1834 although this disputed by others, notably Seymour Drescher.