Collection Summary
Title: Joseph Desha and John R. Desha Papers
Span Dates: 1773-1871
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1800-1855)
ID No.: MSS18333
Creator: Desha, Joseph, 1768-1842
Creator: Desha, John R., 1804-1878
Extent: 1,900 items ; 5 containers ; 1.6 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Soldier and politician (Joseph Desha) and physician (John R. Desha). Correspondence, contracts, land records, wills, receipted bills, and newspapers dealing with the War of 1812, Kentucky politics, and national affairs.

Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Calhoun, John C. (John Caldwell), 1782-1850--Correspondence.
Desha, Joseph, 1768-1842.
Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841--Correspondence.
Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841.
Johnson, Richard M. (Richard Mentor), 1781-1850--Correspondence.
Kendall, Amos, 1789-1869--Correspondence.
Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851--Correspondence.

Organizations
United States. Congress.

Subjects
Agriculture--Arkansas.
Deeds.
Medicine--Kentucky.
Presidents--United States--Election--1816.
Slavery--United States.
Surveys.
Wills.

Places
Arkansas--Economic conditions.
Kentucky--Politics and government--1792-1865.
South America--Description and travel.
United States--History--War of 1812.
United States--Politics and government--1783-1865.
Washington (D.C.)--History--Capture by the British, 1814.

Occupations
Governors--Kentucky.
Physicians.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Kentucky.
Administrative Information

Provenance
The papers of Joseph and John R. Desha were given to the Library of Congress by Desha Breckinridge in 1921. Additional material was purchased between 1929 and 1979.

Processing History
The papers of Joseph and John R. Desha were arranged and described in 1970. The collection was reprocessed and the finding aid revised in 2007.

Additional Guides
Notice of the original gift was made in the Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress, 1921.

Copyright Status
The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Joseph and John R. Desha is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions
The papers of Joseph and John R. Desha are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Joseph Desha and John R. Desha Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joseph Desha</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768, Dec. 9</td>
<td>Born, Monroe County, Pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1784-1789</td>
<td>Fought against Indians in Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>Married Margaret Bledsoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794-1795</td>
<td>Fought against Indians under Gen. Anthony Wayne and William Henry Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>Member, Kentucky House of Representatives, also served in 1799-1802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802-1807</td>
<td>Member, Kentucky State Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Commissioned major general, Kentucky militia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807-1819</td>
<td>Member, United States House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>Fought at Battle of Thames River, Ontario, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824-1828</td>
<td>Governor of Kentucky</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1842, Oct. 12  Died, Georgetown, Ky.

**John R. Desha**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1804, June 24</td>
<td>Born, Mason Co., Ky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circa 1821-circa 1825</td>
<td>Attended Transylvania University, Lexington, Ky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825-1878</td>
<td>Practiced medicine in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Married Mary Curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878, July 27</td>
<td>Died, Georgetown, Ky.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scope and Content Note**

The papers of Joseph Desha (1768-1848) and John R. Desha (1804-1878) span the years 1773-1871, with the bulk of the material dating between 1800 and 1855. The collection consists of correspondence, indentures, contracts, deeds, wills, surveyors' notes, bills and receipts, and newspapers. Some correspondence and legal records, primarily of Joseph Desha, have been bound in two volumes.

The papers illustrate the activities of a soldier-politician in Kentucky in the early nineteenth century and of his physician son. The correspondence covers the subjects of military affairs during the War of 1812, including the fall of Washington, D.C., and the conduct of William Henry Harrison, Kentucky politics, and national politics, notably the 1816 presidential election. Other topics include descriptions of South American cities, and agricultural and economic affairs in Arkansas. The receipts contain many slavery bills of sale.

Prominent correspondents include William Henry Harrison, John C. Calhoun, Amos Kendall, Joel R. Poinsett, and Richard M. Johnson.

**Arrangement of the Papers**

The bound material is arranged chronologically. The unbound material is arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.
## Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Vol. 1, 1783-1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>Vol. 2, 1832-1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>Unbound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>Bills and receipts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>Desha, John R., 1825, 1836-1857, undated (2 folders)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>Desha, Joseph</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td>1795-1818 (5 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 4</td>
<td>1819-1856, undated (7 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>Correspondence, 1794-1871, undated (4 folders)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>Legal records, 1797-1855 (2 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>Miscellany, 1773, 1841-1856, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 5</td>
<td>Newspapers, 1818, 1831-1835, 1855 (2 folders)</td>
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