

William B. Randolph Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2023

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm77037283>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms007092>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2007
Revised 2023 July

Collection Summary

Title: William B. Randolph Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1696-1884

Bulk Dates: 1795-1855

ID No.: MSS37283

Creator: Randolph, William B., b. 1793

Extent: 7,500 items

Extent: 14 containers

Extent: 6 linear feet

Extent: 7 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm77037283>

Summary: Virginia plantation owner. Correspondence, legal and financial records, and miscellaneous material reflecting the life of a plantation owner and enslaver in Virginia prior to the Civil War, with particular emphasis on the economics of managing an extensive plantation worked by a large force of enslaved people.

Online Content: Selected correspondence from the William B. Randolph papers is available on the Library of Congress website at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms007092.001>.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Adams, Richard, active 1793. Richard Adams papers.

Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845--Inaugurations.

Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826.

Jones, P. S., active 1849.

Monroe, James, 1758-1831.

Randolph family.

Randolph, Elizabeth, active 1793. Elizabeth Randolph papers.

Randolph, Peter S. Peter S. Randolph papers.

Randolph, William B., 1793-1874.

Organizations

American Colonization Society.

Tredegar Iron Works (Richmond, Va.)

Virginia. General Assembly. House of Delegates.

Subjects

Agriculture--Virginia.

Land speculation--Kentucky.

Plantation life--Virginia.

Plantations--Virginia.

Presidents--United States--Election--1800.

Sheriffs--Virginia--Henrico County.

Slave rebellions--Virginia--Richmond.

Slave trade--Virginia.

Wheat--Harvesting machinery.

Places

Chatsworth Plantation (Va.)

Richmond (Va.)--History--War of 1812.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns.
United States--History--War of 1812--Campaigns.
United States--History--War of 1812--Participation, British.
Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Campaigns.
Virginia--History--War of 1812.
Washington (D.C.)--History--War of 1812.

Occupations

Plantation owners.

Acquisition Information

The papers of William B. Randolph, Virginia plantation owner, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1914 and 1938.

Processing History

The papers of William B. Randolph were arranged and described in 1970 by Alan Goodrich. The finding aid was revised by John R. Monagle and includes references to the microfilm edition produced in 2000. The finding aid was updated in 2023 by Maria Farmer as part of a division-wide remediation project by the Inclusive Description Working Group.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of William B. Randolph is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of William B. Randolph 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.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on seven reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Online Content

Selected correspondence from the William B. Randolph papers is available on the Library of Congress website at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms007092.001>.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, William B. Randolph Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

| Date | Event |
|-----------|--|
| 1793 | Born, Chatsworth, Henrico Co., Va. |
| 1804-1809 | Attended school, Culpeper, Va. |
| 1809-1810 | Attended school, Frederick, Va. |
| 1811-1813 | Attended Princeton College, Princeton, N. J. |
| 1814 | Returned to Chatsworth, Henrico Co., Va. |
| 1815 | Married Sarah Rutherford |
| 1841 | Justice of the peace, Henrico Co., Va. |
| 1848-1850 | High sheriff, Henrico Co., Va. |
| 1874 | Died, Chatsworth, Henrico Co., Va. |

Scope and Content Note

The papers of William B. Randolph (1793-1874) span the years 1696-1884, with the bulk of the material originating between 1795 and 1855. The collection includes Randolph's correspondence as well as that of his father, Peter S. Randolph; his mother, Elizabeth Randolph; his guardian, Richard Adams; and other relatives and friends. The papers contain four series: [Correspondence](#), [Legal File](#), [Financial Papers](#), and [Miscellany](#).

The Randolph Papers document the activities of the owner of Chatsworth, a large plantation in Virginia before the Civil War. A file of [financial papers](#) details the economic aspects of owning and managing this plantation and its large number of enslaved people. Much of the correspondence also refers to farming and plantation matters as well as to buying and selling enslaved people.

Other topics in the [Correspondence](#) series include the election of Thomas Jefferson as president in 1800, financial affairs affecting James Monroe, 1803-1805, British military activities near Richmond, and the burning of Washington, D.C., during the War of 1812. There is an critical appraisal of the American militia as well as comments on the formation, activities, and aspirations of the American Colonization Society, land sales in Kentucky, the inauguration of Andrew Jackson as president in 1829, and the Tredegar Iron Works of Richmond. Mention is also made of an actual or feared uprising of enslaved people near Richmond, 1830-1831. There is a description of the operation of a wheat reaper, 1842, and mention of military activities in western Virginia during the Civil War.

The [Legal File](#) contains papers relating to a contested election for the Virginia House of Delegates, 1835, and a contract between William B. Randolph and P. S. Jones whereby Randolph became high sheriff of Henrico County while Jones performed the duties and received all the emoluments of the office.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Correspondence, 1774-1884](#)
- [Legal File, 1696-1862](#)
- [Financial Papers, 1679-1867](#)
- [Miscellany, 1749-1843](#)

Description of Series

| Container | Series |
|-------------------|---|
| BOX 1-4 REEL 1-2 | <p><u>Correspondence, 1774-1884</u> Letters to and from Randolph, his parents and guardian, other relatives, and friends. Arranged chronologically.</p> |
| BOX 5 REEL 3 | <p><u>Legal File, 1696-1862</u> Contracts, deeds, wills, court warrants, maps, survey notes, depositions, and legal opinions. Arranged chronologically by year.</p> |
| BOX 6-13 REEL 3-7 | <p><u>Financial Papers, 1679-1867</u> Bills, receipts, and canceled checks relating to guardianship and estate accounts. Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically by year.</p> |
| BOX 14 REEL 7 | <p><u>Miscellany, 1749-1843</u> Calling cards, newspaper clippings, notes, essays, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.</p> |

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 21,995

| Container | Contents |
|--------------------------|---|
| BOX 1-4 REEL 1-2 | Correspondence, 1774-1884 Letters to and from Randolph, his parents and guardian, other relatives, and friends. Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 1 REEL 1 | 1774-1818 (6 folders) |
| BOX 2 REEL 1 | 1819-1828 (4 folders) |
| BOX 3 REEL 2 | 1829-1847 (7 folders) |
| BOX 4 REEL 2 | 1848-1884, undated (5 folders) |
| BOX 5 REEL 3 | Legal File, 1696-1862 Contracts, deeds, wills, court warrants, maps, survey notes, depositions, and legal opinions. Arranged chronologically by year. |
| BOX 5 REEL 3 | 1696-1862 (5 folders) |
| BOX 6-13 REEL 3-7 | Financial Papers, 1679-1867 Bills, receipts, and canceled checks relating to guardianship and estate accounts. Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically by year. |
| BOX 6 REEL 3 | Bills and receipts |
| BOX 6 REEL 3 | 1769-1792 (6 folders) |
| BOX 6 REEL 4 | 1793-1795 |
| BOX 7 REEL 4 | 1796-1815 (5 folders) |
| BOX 8 REEL 4 | 1816-1822 (4 folders) |
| BOX 8 REEL 5 | 1823-1824 |
| BOX 9 REEL 5 | 1825-1832 (5 folders) |
| BOX 10 REEL 5 | 1833-1841 (5 folders) |
| BOX 11 REEL 5 | 1842-1843 (5 folders) |
| BOX 11 REEL 6 | 1844-1851 |
| BOX 12 REEL 6 | 1852-1859 (4 folders) |
| BOX 13 REEL 6 | 1860-1861 |

Financial Papers, 1679-1867

| Container | Contents |
|------------------|--|
| BOX 13 REEL 7 | 1862-1869, undated (2 folders) |
| BOX 13 REEL 7 | Canceled checks, 1815-circa 1860s (3 folders) |
| BOX 14 REEL 7 | Miscellany, 1749-1843 Calling cards, newspaper clippings, notes, essays, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. |
| BOX 14 REEL 7 | Calling cards and oddments, undated |
| BOX 14 REEL 7 | Writings, 1749-1843, undated |