

John Fairfield Correspondence
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/mm80020255>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009017>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2009
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Collection Summary

Title: John Fairfield Correspondence

Inclusive Dates: 1828-1876

Bulk Dates: 1835-1847

ID No.: MSS20255

Creator: Fairfield, John, 1797-1847

Extent: 900 items

Extent: 6 containers

Extent: 1.8 linear feet

Extent: 3 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm80020255>

Summary: U.S. senator and representative and governor of Maine. Principally letters from Fairfield to members of his family in Saco, Maine, while he was serving in Congress and as governor relating to personal and family affairs, politics, and life and society in Washington, D.C., and Augusta, Maine.

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

Anderson, Hugh Johnston, 1801-1881--Correspondence.

Clifford, Nathan, 1803-1881--Correspondence.

Emery, Stephen A. (Stephen Albert), 1841-1891--Correspondence.

Fairfield family.

Fairfield, John, 1797-1847.

Nourse, Amos, 1794-1877--Correspondence.

Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849.

Shepley, Ether, 1789-1877--Correspondence.

Williams, C. R. (Catherine Read), 1790-1872--Correspondence.

Williams, Reuel, 1783-1862--Correspondence.

Organizations

United States. Congress.

Subjects

Aroostook War, 1839.

Dueling--United States.

Places

Augusta (Me.)--Social life and customs.

Canada--Boundaries--Maine.

Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.

Maine--Boundaries--Canada.

Maine--Politics and government.

Maine--Social life and customs.

Northeast boundary of the United States.

Saco (Me.)--History.

United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.

United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.

Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

Titles

John Fairfield papers
Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842 August 9)

Occupations

Governors--Maine.

Representatives, U.S. Congress--Maine.

Senators, U.S. Congress--Maine.

Acquisition Information

The correspondence of John Fairfield, United States senator and representative and governor of Maine, was given to the Library of Congress by Martha W. Fairfield in 1913. Additional material was purchased in 1943.

Processing History

The correspondence of John Fairfield was processed by Walter Albano in 1980 and prepared for microfilming in 1985. The finding aid was revised in 2003 by Patrick Kerwin. The finding aid was updated in 2023 by Maria Farmer as part of a division-wide remediation project by the Inclusive Description Working Group.

Other Repositories

Other Fairfield papers are in the possession of the Maine Historical Society in Portland, Maine.

Related Material

The Manuscript Division also holds John Fairfield correspondence in the papers of James K. Polk and Martin Van Buren.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The correspondence of John Fairfield is 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 this correspondence is available on three reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, John Fairfield Correspondence, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1797, Jan. 30	Born, Saco, Maine
1825	Married Anna Paine Thornton
1826	Admitted to the Maine bar
1832	Appointed reporter, Supreme Judicial Court of Maine
1835-1838	Member, United States House of Representatives from Maine
1839-1843	Governor of Maine; resigned to become United States senator
1843-1847	United States senator from Maine
1847, Dec. 24	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The correspondence of John Fairfield (1797-1847) spans the years 1828 to 1876, with the bulk of the material extending over the period 1835 to 1847. The collection consists chiefly of letters from Fairfield to his wife, Anna Paine Thornton Fairfield, and their children during Fairfield's service away from home and correspondence to Fairfield in his official capacities.

A Democrat, John Fairfield served the state of Maine as a representative in Congress, governor, and senator. During these periods Fairfield maintained a faithful correspondence with his family in Saco, Maine, and discussed personal and family affairs, described his colleagues and other prominent personages, commented on political developments, depicted social functions, and reported news of the day.

Following the death in a duel in 1838 of Jonathan Cilley, a fellow congressman from Maine, Fairfield called for an investigation of the affair. His stand in this matter precipitated the demise of dueling in Congress and brought Fairfield widespread popularity.

In 1839, while Fairfield was governor, hostilities erupted between Maine and the Canadian province of New Brunswick over the northeastern boundary, resulting in the "Aroostook War." As belligerency subsided, Fairfield played a leading role in arriving at a negotiated settlement of the dispute between the United States and Great Britain which was ultimately resolved by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty in 1842.

As his career progressed, Fairfield became increasingly involved in party politics. When President James K. Polk's cabinet was being formed, Fairfield was an unsuccessful contender for the post of secretary of the navy. Fairfield was influential in many political appointments and served as chairman of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs.

Prominent correspondents in the collection include Hugh J. Anderson, Nathan Clifford, Stephen A. Emery, Amos Nourse, Ether Shepley, Catharine Read Williams, and Reuel Williams. Approximately half of the personal correspondence has been published in *The Letters of John Fairfield* (1922), edited by Arthur G. Staples. The letters in this volume do not often comprise the full text of the originals.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 19,264

Container	Contents
BOX 1 REEL 1	Personal correspondence
BOX 1 REEL 1	1835, Dec. 4-1836, June 4
BOX 2 REEL 1	1836, June 5-1838, June 25
BOX 3 REEL 2	1838, June 27-1844, Dec. 22 <u><i>See also Container 6, Miscellaneous correspondence</i></u>
BOX 4 REEL 2	1844, Dec. 23-1847, Dec. 23
BOX 5 REEL 3	Official and business correspondence
BOX 5 REEL 3	1828, Dec. 10-1840, Dec. 29 (13 folders)
BOX 6 REEL 3	1841, Jan. 13-1847, Dec. 7 (11 folders)
BOX 6 REEL 3	Miscellaneous correspondence, including fragments, 1876, undated, and typed copies of personal correspondence from <i>Container 2</i> , 1837, Jan. 1-Mar. 2