Collection Summary

Title: John McLean Papers
Inclusive Dates: 1816-1866
Bulk Dates: 1829-1860
ID No.: MSS32326
Creator: McLean, John, 1785-1861
Extent: 4,000 items
Extent: 27 containers
Extent: 10.6 linear feet
Extent: 18 microfilm reels
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78032326

Summary: U.S. representative from Ohio, U.S. postmaster general, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and Ohio Supreme Court associate justice. Correspondence, financial data, docket book, printed matter, a file of reports, opinions and briefs arranged by case name, and other papers relating to McLean’s service as postmaster general and Supreme Court justice.

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
Atwater, Caleb, 1778-1867--Correspondence.
Berrien, John MacPherson, 1781-1856--Trials, litigation, etc.
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868--Correspondence.
Calhoun, John C. (John Caldwell), 1782-1850--Correspondence.
Chase, Salmon P. (Salmon Portland), 1808-1873--Correspondence.
Clayton, John M. (John Middleton), 1796-1856--Correspondence.
Corwin, Thomas, 1794-1865--Correspondence.
Dallas, George Mifflin, 1792-1864--Correspondence.
Eaton, John Henry, 1790-1856--Correspondence.
Edwards, Ninian, 1775-1833--Correspondence.
Everett, Edward, 1794-1865--Correspondence.
Ewing, Thomas, 1789-1871--Correspondence.
Green, Duff, 1791-1875--Correspondence.
Hill, Isaac, 1789-1851--Correspondence.
Ingham, Samuel D. (Samuel Delucenna), 1779-1860--Correspondence.
Johnson, Richard M. (Richard Mentor), 1780-1850--Correspondence.
Key, Francis Scott, 1779-1843--Trials, litigation, etc.
Lee, Henry, 1787-1837--Correspondence.
Madison, James, 1751-1836--Correspondence.
McArthur, Duncan, 1772-1839--Correspondence.
McLean family--Correspondence.
McLean family.
McLean, John, 1785-1861.
McLean, Rebecca Edwards, 1786-1841--Correspondence.
Monroe, James, 1758-1831--Correspondence.
Ogden, David Bayard, 1775-1849--Trials, litigation, etc.
Peters, Richard, 1780-1848--Correspondence.
Rives, William C. (William Cabell), 1793-1868--Correspondence.
Rush, Richard, 1780-1859--Correspondence.
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866--Correspondence.
Sergeant, Thomas, 1782-1860--Correspondence.
Seward, William H. (William Henry), 1801-1872--Correspondence.
Stanton, Edwin M. (Edwin McMasters), 1814-1869--Correspondence.
Story, Joseph, 1779-1845--Correspondence.
Sumner, Charles, 1811-1874--Correspondence.
Taney, Roger Brooke, 1777-1864--Correspondence.
Taney, Roger Brooke, 1777-1864--Trials, litigation, etc.
Tyler, John, 1790-1862--Correspondence.
Ward, Henry Dana, 1797-1884--Correspondence.
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852--Correspondence.
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852--Trials, litigation, etc.
Weed, Thurlow, 1797-1882--Correspondence.
Whitcomb, James, 1795-1852--Correspondence.
Wirt, William, 1772-1834--Trials, litigation, etc.

Organizations
United States. General Land Office.
United States. Post Office Department.
United States. Supreme Court.
Whig Party (U.S.)

Subjects
Constitutional law--United States.
Indians of North America--Government relations.
Law--United States.
Mexican War, 1846-1848.
Postal service--United States.
Presidents--United States.
Public lands--United States.
Secession.
Slavery--United States.

Places
Cincinnati (Ohio)--Politics and government.
Ohio--Politics and government.
United States--Foreign relations--1783-1865.
United States--Politics and government--19th century.
Washington (D.C.)--History.

Occupations
Cabinet officers.
Judges.
Justices, State.
Justices, U.S. Supreme Court.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Ohio.

Acquisition Information
The papers of John McLean, United States representative from Ohio, postmaster general, and Supreme Court justice, were given to the Library of Congress by Marshall McLean in 1907 and 1920. Additions were purchased between 1906 and 1943. Two items from an unknown source were transferred from the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection in 2005. A further addition was purchased in 2010.
Processing History

The papers of John McLean were processed in 1966 by J. Butler and Carolyn H. Sung and prepared for microfilming in 1972. A small addition was incorporated in 2008 and the finding aid revised by Karen Stuart. An addition was processed and the finding aid revised in 2022 by Joanne Archer.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

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

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on eighteen 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 McLean Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1785, Mar. 11</td>
<td>Born, Morris County, N.J.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Married Rebecca Edwards (died 1841)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807-1812</td>
<td>Founder and editor, The Western Star, Lebanon, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812-1816</td>
<td>United States congressman from Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816-1822</td>
<td>Associate justice, Ohio state supreme court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>Commissioner, United States General Land Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>1823-1829</td>
<td>United States postmaster general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829-1861</td>
<td>Associate justice, United States Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>Married Sarah Bella Garrard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861, Apr. 4</td>
<td>Died, Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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Scope and Content Note

The papers of John McLean (1785-1861) span the years 1816-1866 with the bulk of the material falling between 1829 and 1860. The collection documents McLean’s tenure as postmaster general, his service on the United States Supreme Court, and his potential candidacy for the U.S. presidency. The collection is in English. It contains the following series: Correspondence, Legal Files, Printed Matter, and Additions.
The McLean Papers contain very little for the early years of McLean’s government service at the state level in Ohio and nationally, but expand after 1822, when he was appointed commissioner of the United States General Land Office. Correspondence and printed matter from his tenure as postmaster general, 1823-1829, reflect problems relating to the early years of the United States postal service, the growth of Washington, D.C., and national political issues. Noteworthy in the collection is a volume containing McLean’s notes on oral arguments made before the Court in 1830, including cases argued by John MacPherson Berrien, Francis Scott Key, David Bayard Ogden, Roger Brooke Taney, Daniel Webster, and William Wirt. McLean was viewed as a prospective presidential candidate during this period, and his papers provide insight into presidential politics in the decades leading to the Civil War. Other topics include state and local politics in Ohio and Cincinnati, Indian affairs, international relations, the possible secession of Southern slave states from the Union, the Whig Party, and the question of slavery.

The Additions series primarily includes incoming and outgoing correspondence of McLean with colleagues and family members, including his first wife Rebecca Edwards McLean and their children, as well as business, legal, and political correspondence and information on court matters. Topics covered include the Mexican War, Whig politics, political appointments, and domestic matters.

The collection’s series are listed and briefly described below. A fuller description of each series and a list of its contents can be accessed in the series descriptions within the container list.

The **Correspondence** series contains letters received, as well as a few drafts of letters sent. It is supplemented by printed matter, memoranda, financial data, legal briefs, and newspaper clippings.

The **Legal Files** series contains briefs, opinions, memoranda, and reports.

The **Printed Matter** series contains legal briefs, pamphlets, reports, political tracts, and miscellaneous items.

The **Additions** series consists of two separate additions. The first consists of a printed circular and letter of transmittal by McLean pertaining to postal matters. The second addition contains correspondence between McLean and his family members.

### Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- **Correspondence, 1817-1861**
- **Legal File, 1829-1860**
- **Printed Matter, 1830-1860**
- **Additions, 1816-1866**
Description of Series

Container  Series
BOX 1-19 REEL 1-12  **Correspondence, 1817-1861**


Material types include correspondence, printed matter, memoranda, legal briefs, and newspaper clippings.
Arranged chronologically.

BOX 20-24 REEL 13-17  **Legal File, 1829-1860**

The Legal File series contains briefs, opinions, notes, memoranda, and reports. Included in this series is one volume of McLean’s notes on oral arguments before the United States Supreme Court in 1830.

Material types include briefs, opinions, memoranda, and reports.
Arranged alphabetically by name of case.

BOX 25 REEL 18  **Printed Matter, 1830-1860**

The Printed Matter series includes legal briefs, pamphlets, reports, political tracts, and miscellaneous items.
Arranged chronologically.

BOX 25-27 not filmed  **Additions, 1816-1866**

The Addition series consists of two separate additions. The 2008 addition consists of a printed circular and letter of transmittal by McLean pertaining to postal matters. The 2022 addition is primarily correspondence between McLean and his colleagues and family members. The letters detail the domestic and personal life of McLean and his extended family and provide insight into his relationship with his wife and children. The letters also shed light on McLean’s political views and activities, Whig Party politics, and his aspirations for higher office. Correspondents include Rebecca Edwards McLean, John McLean Jr., Nathaniel McLean, court reporter Richard Peters, and Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney. Family relationship to John McLean is indicated in the folder title when known.

Material types include correspondence, printed matter, and miscellaneous items.
Arranged in order of processing date. The 2022 addition is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent, as received, and thereunder arranged by incoming correspondence, outgoing correspondence, and correspondence between people that did not include John McLean. Miscellaneous items, including unidentified correspondence, are filed at the end of the addition.
# Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 13,817

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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### Container File, 1829-1860

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<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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| BOX 20 REEL 13 | A-C  
(10 folders) |
| BOX 21 REEL 14 | D-K  
(9 folders) |
| BOX 22 REEL 15 | L-R  
(8 folders) |
| BOX 23 REEL 16 | S-T  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 24 REEL 17 | W-Y  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 24 REEL 17 | Miscellany  
(2 folders) |
| BOX 24 REEL 17 | Notes on oral arguments, United States Supreme Court, 1830 |
| BOX 25 REEL 18 | Printed Matter, 1830-1860  
The Printed Matter series includes legal briefs, pamphlets, reports, political tracts, and miscellaneous items.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 25 REEL 18 | 1830-1860, undated  
(6 folders) |
| BOX 25-27 not filmed | Additions, 1816-1866  
The Addition series consists of two separate additions. The 2008 addition consists of a printed circular and letter of transmittal by McLean pertaining to postal matters. The 2022 addition is primarily correspondence between McLean and his colleagues and family members. The letters detail the domestic and personal life of McLean and his extended family and provide insight into his relationship with his wife and children. The letters also shed light on McLean’s political views and activities, Whig Party politics, and his aspirations for higher office. Correspondents include Rebecca Edwards McLean, John McLean Jr., Nathaniel McLean, court reporter Richard Peters, and Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney. Family relationship to John McLean is indicated in the folder title when known.  
Material types include correspondence, printed matter, and miscellaneous items.  
Arranged in order of processing date. The 2022 addition is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent, as received, and thereunder arranged by incoming correspondence, outgoing correspondence, and correspondence between people that did not include John McLean.  
Miscellaneous items, including unidentified correspondence, are filed at the end of the addition. |
<p>| BOX 25 not filmed | 2008 Addition 1823, undated |
| BOX 25 | Circular and letter of transmittal regarding the postal circulation of newspapers and periodicals, 1823, undated |
| BOX 26-27 not filmed | 2022 Addition, 1816-1866 |
| BOX 26 | Blair, F. W. (nephew), 1851, Mar. 25 |
| BOX 26 | Blair, William (nephew), 1841-1851 |
| BOX 26 | Boyd, Arabelle (niece), 1850, Nov. 9 |
| BOX 26 | Brighton, J. C., 1846, Mar. 6 |
| BOX 26 | Edwards, T. (brother-in-law), 1836, June 26 |
| BOX 26 | Edwards, James M. (nephew), 1842-1845 |
| BOX 26 | Hayward, John McLean (grandson), 1848, Feb. 20 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Hayward, Joshua (son-in-law), 1835-1854</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Healy, G. P. A. (George Peter Alexander), 1852, June 5</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Hildt, George (brother-in-law), 1835-1852</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Hildt, John McLean (nephew), 1852, Aug. 8</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Lowe, P. R., 1845, May 15</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>McLean, John Bennet (grandson), 1850, Jun. 6</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>McLean, John, Jr. (son), 1835-1851</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>McLean, Milton (nephew), 1846, Jan.</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>McLean, Nathaniel (brother), 1842, Mar. 3</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>McLean, Nathaniel C. (son), 1835-1836</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1835-1838</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, Sarah (sister), 1842, Jul. 4</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>McLean, William (brother), 1835-1836</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Napier, 1848, Feb. 14</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Peters, Michael, 1831-1845</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Powell, Llewellyn, 1842, Jul. 13</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Richards, B. W., 1834-1847</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Sehon, Caroline (niece), 1841, Mar. 11</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Simpson, M. T., 1836, Mar. 18</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Taney, Roger Brooke, 1858, Feb. 22</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Taylor, Evelyn McLean (daughter), 1842-1851</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Taylor, Joseph P. (son-in-law), 1844, Jul. 18</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Thomas, Alfred, 1844, Jul. 18</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Vaughan, Charles R., 1828, Sep. 2</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Weed, E., 1836, Jun. 10</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Wright, John F., 1842, Jan. 7</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Invitations, 1828</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, John to Board of Managers, American Bible Society, 1846, Mar. 9</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, John to Dunlop, James, 1847, Jan. 7</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, John to McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1816-1836</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, John to McLean, Sarah B. (wife), 1847-1852</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, John to Trustees of Spring Grove Cemetery, 1851, Apr. 2</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, John, Jr. (son) to McLean, Nathaniel (son), 1851, Apr. 2</td>
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<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>McLean, Sarah (daughter) to McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1836</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>Taylor, Eveline M. (daughter) to McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1835</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>Memoranda, 1849-1866</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>Miscellaneous receipts, shipping documents, and correspondence, 1842-1851, undated</td>
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