

James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2010

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm76014258>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010009>

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Revised and expanded by Michael Spangler and Karen Linn Femia
Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2010
Revised 2021 November

Collection Summary

Title: James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1825-1887

Bulk Dates: 1840-1866

ID No.: MSS14258

Creator: Buchanan, James, 1791-1868

Creator: Johnston, Harriet Lane, 1830-1903

Extent: 1,600 items

Extent: 6 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 3 linear feet

Extent: 4 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm76014258>

Summary: United States president, secretary of state, and representative and senator from Pennsylvania. Correspondence, his 1858 State of the Union message, and miscellaneous items pertaining primarily to Buchanan's career before his election as president. Also correspondence of Harriet Lane Johnston, Buchanan's niece and White House hostess.

Online Content: The papers of James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston are available on the Library of Congress Web site at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/collmss.ms000061>. *To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the online edition as available.*

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

Buchanan, James, 1791-1868.

Johnston, Harriet Lane, 1830-1903. James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston papers. 1825-1887.

Johnston, Henry Elliot, -1884--Correspondence.

Jones, J. Glancy (Jehu Glancy), 1811-1878--Correspondence.

Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851.

Organizations

American Party.

Democratic National Convention (1852 : Baltimore, Md.)

Democratic Party (Pa.)

Democratic Party (U.S.)

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)

United States. Department of State.

Whig Party (U.S.)

Subjects

Abolitionists--United States.

African Americans--Politics and government.

Canals--Delaware.

Crimean War, 1853-1856.

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Great Britain.

Fashion.

International trade.

Missouri compromise.

Monopolies--Great Britain.

Nullification (States' rights)

Oregon question.

Political conventions--Maryland--Baltimore.
Postal service--International cooperation.
Presidents--United States--Election--1852.
Presidents--United States--Election--1856.
Presidents--United States--Messages.
Railroads--United States.
Slavery--United States.
Tariff--United States.

Places

Cuba--Foreign relations--United States.
Cumberland Road.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
Kansas--History--1854-1861.
Mexico--Foreign relations--United States.
National banks (United States)
Nebraska--History--19th century.
Northwest boundary of the United States.
Pennsylvania--Politics and government--1775-1865.
United States--Foreign relations--Cuba.
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--Foreign relations--Mexico.
United States--History--1815-1861.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Causes.
United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.
Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

Titles

James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers at the Library of Congress
New York herald.

Occupations

Cabinet officers.
Presidents--United States.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Pennsylvania.
Senators, U.S. Congress--Pennsylvania.

Acquisition Information

The papers of James Buchanan, president of the United States, and his niece and White House hostess, Harriet Lane Johnston, were given to the Library of Congress by Johnston's cousin, May S. Kennedy, in 1918. Additional material was acquired by the Library through gift, transfer, and purchase, 1903-2010.

Processing History

The papers of James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston were arranged and described in 1976. Additional material was incorporated into the collection and the finding aid revised in 1983, 2003, and 2010.

Additional Guides

In 1979, the Library published *James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston: A Register and Index of Their Papers in the Library of Congress*, which includes an index to Series I-II and the photocopies in Series III. The index is available online at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/gdclccn.78027313>.

Related Material

The principal collection of James Buchanan's papers is located at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and has been reproduced on sixty reels of microfilm available for use in the Manuscript Division Reading Room of the Library of Congress.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

Restrictions apply governing the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for information concerning these restrictions. In addition, many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on four 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 as available.

Online Content

The papers of James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston are available on the Library of Congress Web site at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/collmss.ms000061>. *To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the online edition as available.*

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number or reel number, James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Notes

James Buchanan

Date	Event
1791, Apr. 23	Born, Cove Gap (near Mercersburg), Franklin Co., Pa.
1809	Graduated from Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.
1812	Admitted to the bar, Lancaster, Pa.
1819	Death of fiancée, Ann Coleman
1821-1831	United States Representative, fourth district, Pennsylvania
1832-1833	Minister to Russia
1834-1845	Senator from Pennsylvania
1845-1849	Secretary of state
1853-1856	Envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain
1854	Coauthor of Ostend Manifesto

1857-1861	President of the United States
1861	Retired to Wheatland estate, Lancaster, Pa.
1866	Published <i>Mr. Buchanan's Administration</i> . New York: D. Appleton
1868, June 1	Died, Wheatland, Lancaster, Pa.

Harriet Lane Johnston

Date	Event
1830, May 9	Born, Mercersburg, Franklin Co., Pa.
1840	Attended the Misses Crawford boarding school, Lancaster, Pa.
1841	Became ward of her uncle, James Buchanan
1843	Attended boarding school, Charleston, Va.
1846-1848	Enrolled in the Academy of the Visitation, Georgetown, D.C.
1857-1861	Served as White House hostess
1866	Married Henry Elliott Johnston
1903, July 3	Died, Narragansett Pier, R.I.
1912	Opening of the Harriet Lane Home for Invalid Children, as part of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Md., established from the Harriet Lane Johnston estate funds

Scope and Content Note

The papers of James Buchanan (1791-1868) and Harriet Lane Johnston (1830-1903) span the years 1825-1887, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1840-1866. They are organized in five series: [James Buchanan Papers](#), [Harriet Lane Johnston Papers](#), [Special Documents File](#), [Additions](#), and [Oversize](#).

[Series I: James Buchanan Papers](#) consists chiefly of correspondence but also includes notes, drafts of remarks made in the House of Representatives, Department of State commissions and transmittals to foreign service officers, land patents, petitions, a presidential message to Congress, and clippings. Among the topics discussed in the papers are Democratic politics in Pennsylvania and the nation, Joel R. Poinsett's negotiations with Mexico, the Cumberland Road, the Delaware Canal, the Oregon question, relaxation of the blockade of Mexico, British attempts to obtain a marine postal monopoly, trade treaties, Democratic presidential possibilities and the convention of 1852, and anti-Buchanan attacks in the *New York Herald*.

[Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers](#) consists chiefly of letters received concerning such topics as ladies' fashions, social affairs, and romance. Also included are letters of her husband, Henry E. Johnston, and others concerning the selection of a biographer of James Buchanan and efforts to provide financial support for the work.

[Series III: Special Documents File](#) consists of photocopies of selected Buchanan material in other repositories and typed transcripts of Buchanan letters from various collections in the Library of Congress. An earlier published guide to the James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers includes an index to items in Series I-II and the photocopies in Series III.

[Series IV: Additions](#) contains a group of letters from Buchanan to his friend, J. Glancy Jones, a Pennsylvania lawyer, Democratic party activist, and member of the United States House of Representatives from 1851 to 1858. The correspondence includes discussions of national and Pennsylvania state politics and traces Buchanan's career from the Senate to the first year of his presidential term. His presidential ambitions are documented throughout, including assessments of support and comments on rivals, most notably during the election of 1856. The escalating sectional strife between North and South is also ever present in the letters, culminating in Buchanan's assertion in 1856 that the presidential election "ought to be run on the question of union or disunion. . . ." Many letters originate from London during Buchanan's service as minister to England with observations on his participation in formulating the Ostend Manifesto, Europe and the Crimean War, and domestic politics, including his dismissal of the Missouri Compromise as obsolete. Other topics include protective tariffs, abolitionists, the American Party (Know Nothings), "Black Republicans," government support for a transcontinental railroad, and cabinet appointments. Addition III includes a version (some variation from the published version) of the December, 1858 State of the Union message. This addition also contains nine letters written by Buchanan. Topics covered in his letters include the National Bank, the Whig Party, Pennsylvania politics, the Tariff

of 1842, Nicaragua, the Missouri Compromise, the "will of the majority" for Kansas and Nebraska, nullification, and presidential politics, including his own presidential campaign. Also in Addition III is an inscribed book.

Series V: Oversize is an official patent signed by Buchanan while secretary of state, removed from Addition III.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868
- Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, 1846-1887
- Series III: Special Documents File, 1826-1861
- Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867
- Series V: Oversize, 1860

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-2 REEL 1-2	<p><u>Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868</u></p> <p>General correspondence and other material, including notes and drafts of remarks made while Buchanan served in the House of Representatives and as president of the United States, commissions, land patents, petitions, and clippings. Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.</p>
BOX 3-4 REEL 2-4	<p><u>Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, 1846-1887</u></p> <p>Chiefly letters received by Johnston. Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.</p>
BOX 5 not filmed	<p><u>Series III: Special Documents File, 1826-1861</u></p> <p>Photocopies of documents from collections relating to Buchanan in other repositories and typewritten transcripts of Buchanan letters in other collections in the Library of Congress. Arranged chronologically. Photocopies only are indexed in the published register.</p>
BOX 5 not filmed	<p><u>Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867</u></p> <p>Two additions of correspondence and a third addition with the 1858 State of the Union message, correspondence, and inscribed book. Arranged in order of processing date and therein chronologically for the first two additions. Addition III is arranged alphabetically by type of material and name of correspondent.</p>
BOX OV 1 not filmed	<p><u>Series V: Oversize, 1860</u></p> <p>Official patent certificate signed by Buchanan while he was secretary of state.</p>

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 16,939

Container	Contents
BOX 1-2 REEL 1-2	Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868 General correspondence and other material, including notes and drafts of remarks made while Buchanan served in the House of Representatives and as president of the United States, commissions, land patents, petitions, and clippings. Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.
BOX 1 REEL 1	1825, Jan. 8-1840, Dec. 26 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1841, Jan. 20-1843, Dec. 26 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1844, Feb. 6-Dec. 24 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1845, Jan. 20-Dec. 29 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1846
BOX 1 REEL 1	1846, Jan. 12-June 17 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1846, June 22-Sept. 26 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1846, Oct. 7-1847, Mar. 17 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1847
BOX 1 REEL 1	1847, Mar. 19-July 15 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1847, July 19- Nov. 23 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1847, Dec. 2-1848, Jan. 2 Digital content available
BOX 1 REEL 1	1848, Jan. 3-May 16 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 1	1848, May 18-1849, Feb. 12 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 1	1849, Feb. 16-1851, July 1 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 1	1851, Aug. 10-1852, Mar. 20 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 1	1852, Mar. 29-1853, Feb. 3 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 2	1853, Feb. 6-May 10 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 2	1853, May 24-1855, Jan. 9 Digital content available

Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868

Container	Contents
BOX 2 REEL 2	1855, Jan. 20-Nov. 30 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 2	1855, Dec. 4-1856, Mar. 27 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 2	1856, Apr. 3-1859, June 10 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 2	1860, May 3-1863, June 26 Digital content available
BOX 2 REEL 2	1863, Aug. 3-1868, Jan. 2, undated Digital content available
BOX 3-4 REEL 2-4	Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, 1846-1887 Chiefly letters received by Johnston. Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.
BOX 3 REEL 2	1846, Feb. 14-1856, Jan. 18 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 2	1856, Feb. 5-1858, June 28 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 2	1858, July 13-1859, Sept. 7 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1859, Sept. 19-1860, Feb. 25 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1860
BOX 3 REEL 3	1860, May 5-Sept. 25 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1860, Oct. 7-Dec. 28 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1861, Jan. 5-July 12 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1861, July 16-1862, Aug. 30 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1862, Sept. 8-1863, Sept. 1 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1863, Sept. 5-1864, May 31 Digital content available
BOX 3 REEL 3	1864, June 7-1865, Dec. Digital content available
BOX 4 REEL 4	1866, Jan. 7-1874, Feb. 12 Digital content available
BOX 4 REEL 4	1874, Apr. 21-1887, Feb. 2 Digital content available
BOX 4 REEL 4	Undated Digital content available
BOX 5 not filmed	Series III: Special Documents File, 1826-1861 Photocopies of documents from collections relating to Buchanan in other repositories and typewritten transcripts of Buchanan letters in other collections in the Library of Congress. Arranged chronologically. Photocopies only are indexed in the published register.

Series III: Special Documents File, 1826-1861

Container

Contents

BOX 5 not filmed	Photocopies of documents in other repositories, 1838-1859 Digital content available
BOX 5	Typewritten transcripts of documents from other collections
BOX 5	1826-1849 Digital content available
BOX 5	1850-1861, undated Digital content available
BOX 5 not filmed	Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867 Two additions of correspondence and a third addition with the 1858 State of the Union message, correspondence, and inscribed book. Arranged in order of processing date and therein chronologically for the first two additions. Addition III is arranged alphabetically by type of material and name of correspondent.
BOX 5 not filmed	Addition I, correspondence, 1846-1861 Digital content available
BOX 5	Addition II, correspondence, Buchanan to J. Glancy Jones
BOX 5	1842-1850 Digital content available
BOX 5	1851 Digital content available
BOX 5	1852 Digital content available
BOX 5	1853-1854 Digital content available
BOX 5	1855 Digital content available
BOX 5	1856 Digital content available
BOX 5	1857-1858 , 1867 Digital content available
BOX 5	Addition III
BOX 5	Correspondence, Buchanan to
BOX 5	Cabinet of Franklin Pierce, 1857 Digital content available
BOX 5	Campbell, James, 1851 Digital content available
BOX 5	Herrick, Anson, 1863-1864 Digital content available
BOX 5	Hunter, William, 1855 Digital content available
BOX 5	McClermand, John Alexander, 1850 Digital content available
BOX 5	Pickens, Francis W., 1853 Digital content available
BOX 5	Plumer, Arnold, 1844 Digital content available

Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867

Container	Contents
BOX 5	Tyler, Robert, 1851 Digital content available
BOX 5	Worrell, William, 1856 Digital content available
BOX 5	Patent signed by Buchanan, 1860 <i>See Oversize</i> Digital content available
BOX 5	<i>Presbyterian Historical Almanac</i> , 1860 Digital content available
BOX 6 not filmed	State of the Union message, 1858, Dec. 3 Digital content available
BOX OV 1 not filmed	Series V: Oversize, 1860 Official patent certificate signed by Buchanan while he was secretary of state.
BOX OV 1	Patent signed by Buchanan, 1860 (Container 5) Digital content available