

James Fowler Simmons Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



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

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78040055>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010252>

Prepared by Suzanne J. Harris

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Revised 2021 September

Collection Summary

Title: James Fowler Simmons Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1771-1939

Bulk Dates: 1840-1860

ID No.: MSS40055

Creator: Simmons, James Fowler, 1795-1864

Extent: 21,000 items

Extent: 58 containers

Extent: 19 linear feet

Extent: 1 microfilm reel

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78040055>

Summary: Manufacturer, political leader, and United States senator from Rhode Island. Correspondence, family letters, memoranda, legal documents, account books, photographs, and printed matter relating to Simmons's cotton and yarn manufacturing enterprises and to public matters, including the tariff, Thomas Dorr and the Dorr Rebellion of 1842, the nomination and election of Abraham Lincoln as president, and social, economic, and political conditions in Rhode Island.

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

Abbott, Lawrence F. (Lawrence Fraser), 1859-1933--Correspondence.

Adams, Charles Francis, 1807-1886--Correspondence.

Anthony, Henry B. (Henry Bowen), 1815-1884--Correspondence.

Armington, Hervey 1793-1868--Correspondence.

Bliss, Zenas R. (Zenas Randall), 1835-1900--Correspondence.

Combs, Leslie, 1793-1881--Correspondence.

Cranston, H. G.--Correspondence.

Cranston, Robert Bennie, 1791-1873--Correspondence.

Dickins, Asbury, 1780-1861--Correspondence.

Dorr, Thomas Wilson, 1805-1854.

Eno, Edward J.--Correspondence.

Everett, Edward, 1794-1865--Correspondence.

Ferguson, William--Correspondence.

Gerry, Elbridge, 1791-1883--Correspondence.

Gibbs, William C. (William Channing), 1789-1871--Correspondence.

Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841.

Hunter, William, 1774-1849--Correspondence.

Jackson, Charles, 1775-1855--Correspondence.

Jackson, George W., 1803 or 1804-1860--Correspondence.

Jenckes, Thomas A. (Thomas Allen), 1818-1875--Correspondence.

Knight, Nehemiah Rice, 1780-1854--Correspondence.

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865--Correspondence.

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865.

Morse, Samuel Finley Breese, 1791-1872--Correspondence.

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

Potter, Charles--Correspondence.

Randolph, Richard K. (Richard Kidder), 1781-1849--Correspondence.

Ruggles, Nathan S.--Correspondence.

Sargent, Nathan, 1794-1875--Correspondence.

Seward, William H. (William Henry), 1801-1872--Correspondence.
Simmons family--Correspondence.
Simmons, James Fowler, 1795-1864.
Simmons, Walter C.--Correspondence.
Tallmadge, Nathaniel Pitcher, 1795-1864--Correspondence.
Tillinghast, Joseph L. (Joseph Leonard), 1791-1844--Correspondence.
Tyler, John, 1790-1862--Correspondence.
Walker, Amasa, 1799-1875--Correspondence.
Watson, William A.--Correspondence.
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852--Correspondence.

Organizations

Abbott & Bliss--Correspondence.
Bank of the United States (1816-1836)
Fearing & Hall--Correspondence.
Liverman & Cushing--Correspondence.
Tiffany, Ward & Company--Correspondence.
Whig Party (U.S.)

Subjects

Bounties--United States.
Cotton manufacture--Rhode Island.
Dorr Rebellion, 1842.
Elections--United States--1860.
International trade.
Manufacturing industries--United States.
Presidents--United States--Election--1860.
Slavery--United States.
Tariff--United States.
Textile industry--Rhode Island.
Yarn.

Places

Rhode Island--Economic conditions.
Rhode Island--History--1775-1865.
Rhode Island--Politics and government.
Rhode Island--Social conditions.
Texas--Annexation to the United States.
United States--Economic policy--To 1933.
United States--Politics and government--1783-1865.

Occupations

Industrialists.
Politicians.
Senators, U.S. Congress--Rhode Island.

Acquisition Information

The papers of James Fowler Simmons, manufacturer, political leader, and United States senator from Rhode Island, were purchased in 1940. A small addition was given by Whitman Bailey in 1948.

Processing History

The papers of James Fowler Simmons were arranged and described in 1978. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Transfers

Maps have been transferred to the Geography and Maps Division where they are identified as part of the James Fowler Simmons Papers and described in their finding aid at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/eadgmd.gm021023>. Patrons are encouraged to contact the Geography and Map Division in advance of a research visit.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of James Fowler Simmons 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 select items from these papers is available on one reel. 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.

Preferred Citation

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

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1795, Sept. 10	Born near Little Compton, R.I.
1820	Married Eliza Randall (died 1833)
1822	In Simmonsville, N.H., manufacturing yarns
1827	Moved to Johnston, R.I.; engaged in the manufacture of yarns and in agricultural pursuits
1829-1841	Representative, Rhode Island general assembly
1835	Married Sarah Scott Whipple
1841-1847	United States senator from Rhode Island
1842	Appointed chairman, Senate Committee on Manufacturing
1847	Returned to Johnston, R.I., and resumed his former pursuits
1857-1862	Served in United States Senate
1864, July 10	Died, Johnston, R.I.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of James Fowler Simmons (1795-1864) span the years 1771-1939 and consist primarily of correspondence and business papers, supplemented by legal papers, notes, drafts of reports, speeches, and printed matter. The collection is organized in [Family Correspondence](#), [General Correspondence](#), [Financial Papers](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Printed Matter](#) series.

The bulk of the material falls between the years 1840 and 1862 when Simmons's political career reached the national level. His cotton manufacturing business in Rhode Island was still of major concern to him although it was managed by his eldest son, Walter C. Simmons, when the senator was in Washington. The correspondence and papers concerning both his public and business affairs during this period, together with some pertinent family letters, reflect the major aspects of his career. Specifically, they depict Simmons's activities as a Whig in state and national politics, significant political and economic issues of the time, and the operations of a typical business concern in the mid-nineteenth century.

James Fowler Simmons's time was much in demand. In pursuing two major careers he did not allow himself the luxury of extensive correspondence. One exception to this is a group of about 250 "husband-wife" letters which were removed from the collection by the donor and never returned. Another exception is Simmons's letters to his son Walter Cook. These letters, usually brief, constitute the largest number of letters in this collection written by James Fowler Simmons to any one person. They span the years 1838-1861 and primarily concern business matters, although from time to time political events in Washington are discussed. The papers also contain the letters of Walter C. Simmons to his father. They include family and political subjects, especially political affairs in Rhode Island, as well as detailed accounts of the family business.

The bulk of the [General Correspondence](#) relates to political matters, state and national, and appears to be the most significant group of papers in the collection. When Simmons was a member of the Rhode Island General Assembly, 1828-1841, he received many letters from his constituents concerning contemporary political and economic issues, especially on the state and local level. Other significant correspondence of the late 1820s and 1830s are the letters of Nehemiah Rice Knight to Simmons. Knight was in the United States Senate from 1821 to 1841 and wrote regularly to Simmons about the political situation on the national front. His letters discuss such topics as the nomination of William Henry Harrison to the presidency, tariff matters, Texas annexation, James K. Polk, the Bank of the United States, slavery, and bounty laws.

When Simmons, himself, served in the Senate, 1841-1847 and 1857-1862, his correspondence becomes not only more extensive, but comprehensive as well. He became chairman of the Committee on Manufacturing in the Senate in 1842 and much correspondence deals with the tariff, exporting and importing, and manufacturing throughout the country. Other significant subjects discussed are Abraham Lincoln, the Bank of the United States, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, the Dorr Rebellion in Rhode Island, and the changing party structure preceding the Civil War. Specific items include an invitation to the White House from President John Tyler, 1841; two letters from Charles Francis Adams against the annexation of Texas, 1845; a letter from Edward Everett concerning the merits of a sculptor, 1846; a note from William H. Seward, 1861; photocopies of an invitation, note, and letter from Webster, 1848; and a photocopy of a letter from Abraham Lincoln about Douglas enlisting support of some men from Rhode Island, August 17, 1860. Other notable correspondents include Lawrence F. Abbott, Henry B. Anthony, H. G. Cranston, R. B. Cranston, Edward J. Eno, William Ferguson, Elbridge Gerry (1791-1883), W. Hunter, Samuel F. B. Morse, Nathan Sargent, Nathan P. Tallmadge, and Amasa Walker.

[Financial Papers](#) make up the largest series in the papers. This series consists of business correspondence and business papers sent to and received from both Simmons and his son Walker Cook. It is quite technical in content, dealing specifically with types of material, receipts for merchandise, bills, invoices, and similar material.

The [Miscellany](#) series includes calling cards, legal papers, a memo book belonging to Simmons's father, Davis Simmons, photographs, notes and drafts of reports, and Simmons's speeches in the Senate.

The last series in this collection contains [printed matter](#). There are scattered issues of newspapers such as the *Providence Journal* and other New England papers, and a few issues of New York newspapers covering primarily the years 1840-1863 as well as a collection of circulars, handbills, reports, and other material.

Other correspondents include Hervey Armington, Zenas R. Bliss, Leslie Combs, Asbury Dinkins, William C. Gibbs, Charles Jackson, George W. Jackson, Thomas A. Jenckes, Charles Potter, Richard K. Randolph, Nathan S. Ruggles, Joseph L. Tillinghast, and William A. Watson; and the firms Abbott & Bliss; Fearing & Hall; Liverman & Cushing; and Tiffany, Ward, & Company.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- Family Correspondence, 1792-1939
- General Correspondence, 1788-1864
- Financial Papers, 1794-1869
- Miscellany, 1771-1909
- Printed Matter, 1808-1931

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-10	<p><u>Family Correspondence, 1792-1939</u></p> <p>Correspondence between James Fowler Simmons and his son, Walter C. Simmons, and between other family members. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 11-26	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1788-1864</u></p> <p>Primarily letters received, with some drafts of letters sent. Arranged chronologically to the month.</p>
BOX 27-47	<p><u>Financial Papers, 1794-1869</u></p> <p>Business correspondence, 1815-1869, consisting primarily of letters sent to and received from James Fowler Simmons and his son, Walter C. Simmons, concerning the cotton manufacturing business; and business papers, 1794-1869, including bills, bills of lading, receipts, invoices, bank notes, and an account book stemming from the cotton manufacturing business. Arranged chronologically by year within the two groups.</p>
BOX 48-53	<p><u>Miscellany, 1771-1909</u></p> <p>Calling cards, a journal, legal papers, memo book, notes, drafts of reports, photographs, and speeches. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically by year.</p>
BOX 54-58	<p><u>Printed Matter, 1808-1931</u></p> <p>Circulars, handbills, and reports, 1817-1875, and newspapers, 1808-1931. Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically by year.</p>

Container List

Select items available on microfilm edition. Shelf no. 6,358-1N-1P

Container	Contents
BOX 1-10	Family Correspondence, 1792-1939 Correspondence between James Fowler Simmons and his son, Walter C. Simmons, and between other family members. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1	Between Simmons and Walter C. Simmons (son)
BOX 1	1838-1842
BOX 2	1842-1844
BOX 3	1844-1846
BOX 4	1847-1858
BOX 5	1859-1861
BOX 6	1792-1833
BOX 7	1834-1842
BOX 8	1843-1849
BOX 9	1850-1860
BOX 10	Between other family members, 1861-1939, undated
BOX 11-26	General Correspondence, 1788-1864 Primarily letters received, with some drafts of letters sent. Arranged chronologically to the month.
BOX 11	1788-1840
BOX 12	1841
BOX 12	Jan.-June
BOX 13	July-Dec.
BOX 14	1842
BOX 15	Jan.-Mar.
BOX 16	Apr.-June
BOX 16	July-Dec.
BOX 17	1843
BOX 17	1844
BOX 17	Jan.-May
BOX 18	June-Dec.
BOX 18	1845
BOX 18	Jan.-Mar.
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BOX 19	1846
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BOX 20	1847
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General Correspondence, 1788-1864

Container	Contents
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BOX 23	1860
BOX 23	Jan.-Apr.
BOX 24	May-Dec.
BOX 24	1861
BOX 24	Jan.-Apr.
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BOX 26	1862-1864, undated
BOX 27-47	Financial Papers, 1794-1869 Business correspondence, 1815-1869, consisting primarily of letters sent to and received from James Fowler Simmons and his son, Walter C. Simmons, concerning the cotton manufacturing business; and business papers, 1794-1869, including bills, bills of lading, receipts, invoices, bank notes, and an account book stemming from the cotton manufacturing business. Arranged chronologically by year within the two groups.
BOX 27	Business correspondence
BOX 27	1815-1830
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BOX 34	Business papers
BOX 34	1794-1817
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BOX 44-45	1850
BOX 46	1851-1859
BOX 47	1860-1869, undated
BOX 48-53	Miscellany, 1771-1909 Calling cards, a journal, legal papers, memo book, notes, drafts of reports, photographs, and speeches. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically by year.
BOX 48	Calling cards
BOX 48	Journal, 1818
BOX 48	Legal papers, 1771-1909

Miscellany, 1771-1909

Container	Contents
BOX 48	Memorandum book (Davis Simmons), 1798
BOX 49	Notes and drafts of reports
BOX 49	Blackstone Canal, 1823-1849
BOX 49	Cheap postage, 1845
BOX 49	Tariff, export-import, manufacturing
BOX 49	1835-1862
BOX 50	Undated
BOX 51	Miscellaneous material
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BOX 51	Undated
BOX 52	Undated
BOX 53	Undated
BOX 53	Photographs
BOX 53	Speeches
BOX 53	1841, July 2, Bank of the United States
BOX 53	1842, Mar. 11, resolutions of Henry Clay
BOX 53	1844, Mar. 27, duties on imports
BOX 53	1845, Feb. 6, uniform rate of postage
BOX 53	1847, Feb. 20, Mexican War
BOX 53	1861, Jan. 16, state of the Union
BOX 53	Cloth samples
BOX 54-58	Printed Matter, 1808-1931 Circulars, handbills, and reports, 1817-1875, and newspapers, 1808-1931. Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically by year.
BOX 54	Circulars, handbills, and reports
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BOX 56	1875, undated
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