

William L. Marcy Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2012

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm79031336>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms013135>

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Revised and expanded by David Mathisen with the assistance of Sherralyn McCoy
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Collection Summary

Title: William L. Marcy Papers

Span Dates: 1806-1930

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1806-1857)

ID No.: MSS31336

Creator: Marcy, William L. (William Learned), 1786-1857

Extent: 3,100 items

Extent: 88 containers

Extent: 19.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm79031336>

Summary: U.S. secretary of war and secretary of state, governor of New York, and lawyer. Correspondence, commonplace book, diary, drafts of diplomatic dispatches, writings, and other papers relating chiefly to Marcy's career in politics, diplomacy, and as a cabinet member in the administrations of James K. Polk and Franklin Pierce. Included is material collected and compiled by Henry Barrett Learned and others.

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

Andrews, W. R.--Correspondence.
Angel, Benjamin Franklin, 1815-1894--Correspondence.
Bancroft, George, 1800-1891--Correspondence.
Belmont, August, Sr., 1813-1890--Correspondence.
Berret, James G. (James Gabriel), 1815-1901--Correspondence.
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868--Correspondence.
Campbell, Archibald, -1856--Correspondence.
Cass, Lewis, 1782-1866--Correspondence.
Dallas, George Mifflin, 1792-1864--Correspondence.
Davis, Charles Augustus, 1795-1867--Correspondence.
Eames, Charles, 1812-1867--Correspondence.
Gadsden, James, 1788-1858--Correspondence.
Jenkins, Timothy, 1799-1859--Correspondence.
Jewett, Simon B.--Correspondence.
Koszta, Martin, 1819-1858.
Learned, Henry Barrett, 1868-1931.
Livingstone, John, active 1853-1856--Correspondence.
Marcy, William L. (William Learned), 1786-1857.
Mason, John Y. (John Young), 1799-1859--Correspondence.
Miles, William Porcher, 1822-1899--Correspondence.
Newell, George W.--Correspondence.
Perry, Horatio J. (Horatio Justus), 1824-1891--Correspondence.
Pierce, Franklin, 1804-1869--Correspondence.
Pierce, Franklin, 1804-1869.
Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849--Correspondence.
Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849.
Redfield, Heman J. (Heman Judd), 1788-1877--Correspondence.
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866--Correspondence.
Seymour, Horatio, 1810-1886--Correspondence.
Soulé, Pierre, 1801-1870.

Taylor, Zachary, 1784-1850--Correspondence.
Thomas, John Addison, 1811-1858--Correspondence.
Tilden, Samuel J. (Samuel Jones), 1814-1886--Correspondence.
Van Buren, Martin, 1782-1862--Correspondence.
Wetmore, Prosper Montgomery, 1798-1876--Correspondence.
Worth, Gorham A., 1783-1856--Correspondence.
Wright, Silas, 1795-1847--Correspondence.

Organizations

Black Warrior (Steamer)
Brown University.
Democratic Party (N.Y.)
Democratic Party (U.S.)

Subjects

Diplomatic and consular service, American.
Gadsden Purchase.
Universities and colleges--Rhode Island.

Places

Mexico--Boundaries--United States.
New York (State)--Politics and government--1775-1865.
Southwest, New--History--1848-
Spain--Foreign relations--United States.
United States--Boundaries--Mexico.
United States--Foreign relations--1815-1861.
United States--Foreign relations--Spain.
United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.

Occupations

Lawyers.

Provenance

The papers of William L. Marcy, U.S. secretary of war and secretary of state, governor of New York, and lawyer, were received by the Library of Congress from Edith Marcy Sperry and other members of the Marcy family from 1915 to 1949 and converted to a gift, 1915-1949. Additional material was received by gift, purchase, and transfer from 1909 to 1989.

Processing History

The Marcy Papers were processed in 1963 and revised and expanded in 1993. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Additional Guides

A note on the acquisition of these papers appeared in the *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*, (1916): 43-44, and was further described in the Library's *Handbook of Manuscripts* (1918): 241-242. An index listing Marcy's correspondents is filed in the card catalogs in the Manuscript Reading Room. Letters from James Y. Mason and James M. Mason in the Addition series at the end of the collection are not included in the index.

Transfers

An engraved plate was transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division where it is identified as part of these papers.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of William L. Marcy 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.

Preferred Citation

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

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1786, Dec. 12	Born, Sturbridge, Mass.
1808	Graduated, Brown University, Providence, R.I. Moved to Troy, N.Y., to study and practice law
1812	Married Dolly Newell (died 1821) Ensign, 155th Regiment; participated in War of 1812
1816	Recorder and vice mayor, Troy, N.Y.
1821	Adjutant general, New York
1823	Moved to Albany, N.Y.
1823-1829	Comptroller of New York
1829	Appointed associate justice, New York state supreme court
1831-1833	United States Senate from New York; coined phrase "to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy"
1833-1838	Governor of New York
1840-1842	Member Mexican Claims Commission
1845-1849	Secretary of war
1853-1857	Secretary of state
1857, July 4	Died, Ballston, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of William Learned Marcy (1786-1857) span the years 1806-1857, with the bulk of the items concentrated in the period 1806-1857. They begin with a commonplace book for his senior year at Brown University and include an early diary, 1831-1857, the draft of an autobiography, a private letterbook while Marcy served as secretary of war, and another private letterbook while secretary of state. The papers include drafts of diplomatic dispatches, drafts in Marcy's hand of presidential messages to Congress, 1854-1856, and copies of James Buchanan's letters to Marcy in 1853-1856 when Buchanan was minister to England. The material has been organized into seven series: [General Correspondence](#), [Family Correspondence](#), [Letterbooks](#), [Diaries](#), [Subject File](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Addition](#).

The collection relates to Marcy's public career and reflects New York state and national Democratic politics in the three decades prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Most of the later material is dated in the 1850s. Other subjects range from the Martin Koszta and Black Warrior cases and the Gadsden purchase to questions concerning the proper attire for American diplomats abroad and Pierre Soulé's conduct in Spain. Included also are papers relating to Marcy collected and compiled by Henry Barrett Learned.

Prominent among Marcy's correspondents are W. R. Andrews, Benjamin Franklin Angel, George Bancroft, August Belmont, James G. Berrett, James Buchanan, Archibald Campbell, Lewis Cass, George Mifflin Dallas, Charles Augustus Davis, Charles Eames, James Gadsden, Timothy Jenkins, Simon B. Jewett, John Livingstone, John Y. Mason, William Porcher Miles, George W. Newell, Horatio J. Perry, Franklin Pierce, James K. Polk, Herman J. Redfield, Horatio Seymour, John Addison Thomas, Samuel J. Tilden, Martin Van Buren, Gorham A. Worth, and Silas Wright. Numerous letters or drafts to Prosper Montgomery Wetmore deal with New York state politics. Many others were addressed to Samuel Marcy, James G. Berrett, Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor, and Archibald Campbell.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in seven series:

- [General Correspondence, 1806-1857](#)
- [Family Correspondence, 1831-1864](#)
- [Letterbooks, 1845-1856](#)
- [Diaries, 1831-1857](#)
- [Subject File, 1807-1897](#)
- [Miscellany, 1826-1930](#)
- [Addition, 1850-1856](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-76	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1806-1857</u></p> <p>Bound volumes of letters received with memoranda and attached and related matter. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 77-78	<p><u>Family Correspondence, 1831-1864</u></p> <p>Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 78-80	<p><u>Letterbooks, 1845-1856</u></p> <p>Bound volumes of letters received while Marcy served as secretary of war and secretary of state and copies of letters from James Buchanan. Volumes are arranged chronologically by earliest date.</p>
BOX 81-83	<p><u>Diaries, 1831-1857</u></p> <p>Bound diaries. Volumes are arranged chronologically by earliest date.</p>
BOX 83-84	<p><u>Subject File, 1807-1897</u></p> <p>Correspondence, financial matter, jottings, notes, printed matter, photographs, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by name of person, topic, or type of material.</p>
BOX 84-88	<p><u>Miscellany, 1826-1930</u></p> <p>Correspondence, financial matter, writings, research notes and papers, transcripts of a diary, printed matter, and miscellaneous material relating to Marcy compiled or collected by Henry Barrett Learned, Thomas Maitland Marshall, George W. Newell, and John T. Sprague. Arranged alphabetically by name of person and by topic or type of material therein.</p>
BOX 88	<p><u>Addition, 1850-1856</u></p> <p>Letters from Marcy to James Y. Mason and James M. Mason. Arranged chronologically.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-76	General Correspondence, 1806-1857 Bound volumes of letters received with memoranda and attached and related matter. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1	1 Nov. 1806-5 Nov. 1832
BOX 2	10 Nov. 1832-16 Nov. 1836
BOX 3	17 Nov. 1836-16 Oct. 1838
BOX 4	17 Oct. 1838-25 Dec. 1839
BOX 5	31 Dec. 1839-26 May 1840
BOX 6	27 May 1840-11 July 1841
BOX 7	12 July 1841-26 Nov. 1842
BOX 8	28 Nov. 1842- 6 Dec. 1843
BOX 9	8 Dec. 1843-12 Jan. 1845
BOX 10	13 Jan.-4 Nov. 1845
BOX 11	5 Nov. 1845-3 Sept. 1846
BOX 12	5 Sept. 1846-18 Feb. 1847
BOX 13	21 Feb.-21 Oct. 1847
BOX 14	27 Oct.-6 May 1848
BOX 15	7 May 1848-19 Apr. 1849
BOX 16	20 Apr.-4 Oct. 1849
BOX 17	5 Oct. 1849-30 May 1850
BOX 18	31 May 1850-15 Feb. 1851
BOX 19	19 Feb.-4 Sept. 1851
BOX 20	5 Sept.-1 Dec. 1851
BOX 21	2-26 Dec. 1851
BOX 22	27 Dec. 1851-12 Feb. 1852
BOX 23	13 Feb.-26 Apr. 1852
BOX 24	27 Apr.-7 June 1852
BOX 25	8 June-25 Aug. 1852
BOX 26	27 Aug.-2 Nov. 1852
BOX 27	3 Nov. 1852-14 Jan. 1853
BOX 28	15 Jan.- 3 Mar. 1853
BOX 29	4-10 Mar. 1853
BOX 30	11-17 Mar. 1853
BOX 31	18-23 Mar. 1853
BOX 32	24 Mar.-1 Apr. 1853
BOX 33	2-10 Apr. 1853
BOX 34	11-21 Apr. 1853
BOX 35	22 Apr.-2 May 1853
BOX 36	3-13 May 1853
BOX 37	14-30 May 1853
BOX 38	31 May-11 June 1853

General Correspondence, 1806-1857

Container	Contents
BOX 39	12 June-3 July 1853
BOX 40	4-25 July 1853
BOX 41	26 July-8 Sept. 1853
BOX 42	9-26 Sept. 1853
BOX 43	28 Sept.-24 Oct. 1853
BOX 44	25 Oct.-19 Nov. 1853
BOX 45	20 Nov.-19 Dec. 1853
BOX 46	20 Dec. 1853-4 Jan. 1854
BOX 47	5 Jan.-4 Feb. 1854
BOX 48	6 Feb.-15 Mar. 1854
BOX 49	17 Mar.-25 Apr. 1854
BOX 50	27 Apr.-27 June 1854
BOX 51	28 June-8 Aug. 1854
BOX 52	9 Aug.-20 Sept. 1854
BOX 53	21 Sept.-1 Nov. 1854
BOX 54	2 Nov.-4 Dec. 1854
BOX 55	4-31 Dec. 1854
BOX 56	1 Jan.-7 Feb. 1855
BOX 57	8 Feb.-17 Mar. 1855
BOX 58	19 Mar.-14 Apr. 1855
BOX 59	15 Apr.-8 May 1855
BOX 60	9 May-2 June 1855
BOX 61	3 June-7 July 1855
BOX 62	8 July-11 Aug. 1855
BOX 63	12 Aug.-22 Sept. 1855
BOX 64	23 Sept.-28 Oct. 1855
BOX 65	29 Oct.-22 Dec. 1855
BOX 66	23 Dec. 1855-25 Jan. 1856
BOX 67	26 Jan.-10 Mar. 1856
BOX 68	11 Mar.-1 Apr. 1856
BOX 69	2 Apr.-14 May 1856
BOX 70	16 May-3 July 1856
BOX 71	4 July-4 Sept. 1856
BOX 72	5 Sept.-1 Dec. 1856
BOX 73	2-13 Dec. 1856
BOX 74	15 Dec. 1856-8 Jan. 1857
BOX 75	9 Jan.-11 May 1857
BOX 76	12 May-30 Dec. 1857
BOX 77-78	Family Correspondence, 1831-1864 Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 77	1831-1854 (10 folders)

Family Correspondence, 1831-1864

Container	Contents
BOX 78	1855-1857, 1863-1864, undated (3 folders)
BOX 78-80	Letterbooks, 1845-1856 Bound volumes of letters received while Marcy served as secretary of war and secretary of state and copies of letters from James Buchanan. Volumes are arranged chronologically by earliest date.
BOX 78	Vol. I, private letterbook kept while secretary of war, 1845-1849
BOX 79	Vol. II, copies of letters from James Buchanan, minister to England, 1853-1855
BOX 80	Vol. III, private letterbook kept while secretary of state, 1853-1856
BOX 81-83	Diaries, 1831-1857 Bound diaries. Volumes are arranged chronologically by earliest date.
BOX 81	Vol. I, 1831-1857
BOX 82	Vols. II-VII, 1833-1857 (6 folders)
BOX 83	Vol. VIII, 1857
BOX 83-84	Subject File, 1807-1897 Correspondence, financial matter, jottings, notes, printed matter, photographs, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by name of person, topic, or type of material.
BOX 83	Fay, Theodore, letters regarding case of Withers and Withors, 1855, undated
BOX 83	Financial matter, 1834-1864, undated
BOX 83	Jottings, notes, and printed matter
BOX 83	<i>100 Extracts from 43 Authors</i> , 1841-1855, undated
BOX 83	<i>Catalog of the Libraries of the Late Ex-Gov. Wm. L. Marcy and Ex-Gov. Washington Hunt</i> , 1871
BOX 83	<i>'Cato,' 'Cato Major,' and 'Philo Cato,' on the New York Canals; Who Were the Authors?</i> 1858
BOX 83	Clark, Joseph S., <i>An Historical Sketch of Sturbridge, Mass.</i> , 1838
BOX 83	Clippings, 1851-1852, undated
BOX 83	<i>Nominations</i> , 1856, 1851-1856
BOX 84	<i>Notes on Reading the Federalist</i> , 1831
BOX 84	<i>Politics for American Farmers; Being a Series of Tracts Exhibiting the Blessings of Free Government As It Is Administered in the United States Compared with the Boasted Stupendous Fabric of British Monarchy</i> , 1807
BOX 84	Miscellany, 1834-1862, undated
BOX 84	Photographs, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Marcy, undated
BOX 84	Press notices and tributes on the death of Marcy and others, 1869-1897, undated
BOX 84-88	Miscellany, 1826-1930 Correspondence, financial matter, writings, research notes and papers, transcripts of a diary, printed matter, and miscellaneous material relating to Marcy compiled or collected by

Miscellany, 1826-1930

Container

Contents

Henry Barrett Learned, Thomas Maitland Marshall, George W. Newell, and John T. Sprague.

Arranged alphabetically by name of person and by topic or type of material therein.

- BOX 84** Learned, Henry Barrett, 1912-1930, undated
- BOX 84** Notes and papers relating to Marcy's life and career
- BOX 84** Set I
(22 folders)
- BOX 85** Set II
(16 folders)
- BOX 85** Set III
(12 folders)
- BOX 86** Set IV
(7 folders)
- BOX 86** Set V
- BOX 86** Nos. 1-10
(10 folders)
- BOX 87** Nos. 11-16
(6 folders)
- BOX 87** Marshall, Thomas Maitland, transcript of diary by Marcy, 1849-1851, 1857
- BOX 87** Newell, George W.
- BOX 87** Abstract of letters from Marcy to Prosper Montgomery Wetmore, 1834-1857
- BOX 87** Clippings and printed matter, 1858-1861, undated
- BOX 87** Correspondence, 1859-1863, undated
(4 folders)
- BOX 87** Financial matter, 1861-1862
- BOX 87** Miscellany, circa 1850-1863
- BOX 87** Writings, 1858-1861, undated
- BOX 87** Sprague, John T.
- BOX 87** Correspondence
1826, 1853-1859
(2 folders)
- BOX 88** 1860, undated
- BOX 88** Financial matter, 1858-1860, undated
(4 folders)
- BOX 88** Legal file, 1854-1860
- BOX 88** **Addition, 1850-1856**
Letters from Marcy to James Y. Mason and James M. Mason.
Arranged chronologically.
- BOX 88** Letters from Marcy to James Y. Mason and James M. Mason, 1850-1856