James O. Harrison 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://lccn.loc.gov/mm78025106

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010039

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Revised by Margaret McAleer

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2010

Collection Summary

Title: James O. Harrison Papers
Span Dates: 1803-1913
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1836-1888)
ID No.: MSS25106
Creator: Harrison, James O., 1804-1888
Extent: 5,000 items
Extent: 19 containers
Extent: 7.4 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78025106
Summary: Lawyer, educator, and railroad official. Correspondence, legal and financial records, biographical material, photographs, writings, notes, notebooks, scrapbooks, and printed matter documenting Harrison's personal and professional life, including his law practices in various Southern states and work with Lexington, Kentucky, public schools.

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
Barry, William T. (William Taylor), 1785-1835--Correspondence.
Blair, Montgomery, 1813-1883--Correspondence.
Breckinridge, John C. (John Cabell), 1821-1875--Correspondence.
Browning, Orville Hickman, 1806-1881--Correspondence.
Butler, Benjamin F. (Benjamin Franklin), 1818-1893--Correspondence.
Cass, Lewis, 1782-1866--Correspondence.
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852--Correspondence.
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852--Estate.
Crittenden, John J. (John Jordan), 1787-1863--Correspondence.
Cushing, Caleb, 1800-1879--Correspondence.
Ewing, Thomas, 1789-1871--Correspondence.
Foote, Henry S. (Henry Stuart), 1804-1880--Correspondence.
Harrison family--Correspondence.
Harrison family.
Harrison, Albert M., 1850-1916--Correspondence.
Harrison, George Ross, approximately 1834-1860--Correspondence.
Harrison, James O., 1804-1888.
Harrison, Jilson Payne, 1806-1874--Correspondence.
Harrison, Margaretta Pindell Ross, 1810-1883--Correspondence.
Harrison, Micajah, 1776-1842--Correspondence.
Harrison, Polly Payne, -1851--Correspondence.
Harrison, Richard Pindell, 1830-1855--Correspondence.
Holt, Joseph, 1807-1894--Correspondence.
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845.
Miller, William Henry, 1829-1870--Correspondence.
Pierce, Franklin, 1804-1869--Correspondence.
Prentiss, S. S. (Seargent Smith), 1808-1850--Correspondence.
Trimble, Isaac Ridgeway, 1802-1888--Correspondence.
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852--Correspondence.

Subjects
Education--Kentucky--Lexington.

Epidemics--United States.
Frontier and pioneer life--Brazil.
Frontier and pioneer life--Honduras.
Frontier and pioneer life--Texas.
Practice of law--Georgia--Eatonton.
Practice of law--Kentucky--Lexington.
Practice of law--Louisiana--New Orleans.
Practice of law--Mississippi--Vicksburg.
Practice of law--Southern States.
Practice of law--Virginia--Richmond.
Presidents--United States--Election--1876.
Schools--Kentucky--Lexington.
Yellow fever--United States.

Places
Brazil--Social life and customs.
Confederate States of America--Social life and customs
Honduras--Social life and customs.
Kentucky--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
Louisiana--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
New Orleans (La.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
New York (State)--Politics and government--19th century.
Southern States--Social life and customs--19th century.
Texas--Social life and customs--19th century.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--Politics and government--1865-1900.

Occupations
Educators.
Lawyers.
Railroad officials.

Provenance

The papers of James O. Harrison, lawyer, educator, and railroad official, were given to the Library of Congress by his grandson, James O. Harrison Simrall, in 1927.

Processing History

The papers of James O. Harrison were arranged and described in 1980. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of James O. Harrison 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, James O. Harrison Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1804, Apr. 11	Born, Mt. Sterling, Ky.
1822	B.A., Transylvania University, Lexington, Ky.
1824	LL.B., Transylvania University, Lexington, Ky. Admitted to the Lexington, Ky., bar
1827-1835	Attorney of the county court, Lexington, Ky.
1830	Married Margaretta P. Ross, niece of Henry Clay
1833-1835	Commonwealth district attorney for Fayette, Scott, and Owen counties, Ky.
1835	Opened private law practice, Vicksburg, Miss.
1837-1840	Established partnership with Joseph Holt, Vicksburg, Miss.
1840-1842	Temporary retirement
1842	Opened private law practice, Lexington, Ky.
1848-1853	Chairman of school committee, Lexington, Ky.
1850s	President, Lexington and Frankfort Railroad Co.
1857	Appointed chief justice of the Kansas Territory by President Franklin Pierce; withdrew acceptance following political controversy
1860	Opened private law practice, New Orleans, La.
1863	Expelled from New Orleans, La., by Union army command
1863-1864	Residence and law practice in Eatonton, Ga.
1864-1865	Law practice in partnership with Humphrey Marshall, Richmond, Va.
1865-1869	Law practice, New Orleans, La.
1869	Reestablished private law practice, Lexington, Ky.
1870-1873	Professor of law, Kentucky University, Lexington, Ky.
1873-1879	Superintendent of schools, Lexington, Ky.
1888, Aug. 1	Died, Lexington, Ky.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of James O. Harrison (1804-1888) span the years 1803-1913, with the bulk of material dating from 1836 to 1888. The collection documents many aspects of Harrison's personal and professional life, including his law practice and work with Lexington, Kentucky, public schools. Although much of his legal and professional career was centered in Lexington, Harrison established law practices at different times in Vicksburg, Mississippi; New Orleans, Louisiana; Eatonton, Georgia; and Richmond, Virginia. The papers are in English and comprise correspondence, legal and financial records, biographical material, photographs, writings, notes, notebooks, scrapbooks, and printed matter. The collection is arranged in seven series: Family Correspondence, General Correspondence, Special Correspondence, Biographical File, Financial Records, Legal Records, and Miscellany.

The Family Correspondence series documents Harrison's private life and provides glimpses into the intimate world of an upper middle-class Southern family during the nineteenth century. Family correspondents, in addition to James O. Harrison, include his father, Micajah Harrison (1776-1842); his mother, Polly Harrison (died 1851); his wife, Margaretta P. Ross Harrison (1810-1883); a son Richard Pindell Harrison (1832-1858) who was a New Orleans attorney; a son George Ross Harrison (circa 1834-1860) who attended the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1850-1851 and became a Texas cattleman for a brief period; a daughter Mary Eliza Harrison; a son James O. Harrison (1839-1867) who served in the Confederate army; a daughter Margaretta ("Dettie") H. Martin (circa 1837-1867), the wife of a Mississippi

planter; a daughter Ellen Simrall Harrison; a son Albert (“Allie”) M. Harrison (born 1848) who was a Confederate naval cadet and later became a planter and trader in Honduras and a public official in Lexington, Kentucky; and a daughter Susan Lucretia Harrison (1850-1883). Other letters in the series were written by James O. Harrison’s brother Jilson Harrison; his sister-in-law Ellen Reily Harrison; a sister Mary P. Hannah and her husband Dr. J. A. Hannah; a son-in-law Colonel William H. Martin; a granddaughter Margaretta (“Maggie”) H. Martin; and a daughter-in-law Mary H. Harrison.

In addition to domestic affairs, family letters discuss pioneer life in Texas, Honduras, and Brazil; hardships experienced by the residents of New Orleans during the Union army occupation of the city; activities of Union troops in Kentucky during the Civil War; a yellow fever epidemic following the war; and popular political reaction in New York to the presidential election of 1876. Other family material can be found in the Financial Records and Legal Records series.

The professional and business life of James O. Harrison is told in his autobiography which is located in the Biographical File. Additional material filed in the General Correspondence series and in the professional parts of the Financial Records and Legal Records series augments this narrative account. Almost all of this material pertains to Harrison’s legal practice and his work with the Lexington public schools. There is very little material on his activities connected with the Lexington and Frankfort Railroad Company or with the Law Department of Kentucky University.

The Special Correspondence series contains letters from William T. Barry, Henry Clay, John J. Crittenden, Joseph Holt, and William Henry Miller, a former slave of the Harrison family. A scrapbook in the Biographical File contains additional letters from Barry, Clay, Crittenden, and Holt, as well as from other historically important figures, acquaintances, and friends of Harrison made during the course of both his professional and private life. Included are letters from Montgomery Blair, John C. Breckinridge, Orville Hickman Browning, Benjamin F. Butler, Lewis Cass, Caleb Cushing, Thomas Ewing, Henry S. Foote, Andrew Jackson, Franklin Pierce, S. S. Prentiss, Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, and Daniel Webster. Photographs, explanatory notes, and other material accompany the correspondence in the scrapbook. Biographical sketches of Breckinridge, Clay, and Holt are among the unbound papers in the Biographical File. Additional documentation on Harrison's role as executor of Henry Clay's estate is filed in the General Correspondence, Financial Records, Legal Records, and Miscellany series.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in seven series:

- Family Correspondence, 1830-1905
- General Correspondence, 1803-1912
- Special Correspondence, 1826-1893
- Biographical File, 1835-1907
- Financial Records, 1835-1913
- Legal Records, 1820-1886
- Miscellany, 1844-1904

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-6	**Family Correspondence, 1830-1905** Letters and telegrams exchanged among members of Harrison's family. Arranged chronologically with a large amount of undated correspondence filed at the end.
BOX 7-10	**General Correspondence, 1803-1912** Mostly incoming business correspondence, including correspondence of the law firm of Harrison and Holt. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 11	**Special Correspondence, 1826-1893** Letters from William T. Barry, Henry Clay, John J. Crittenden, Joseph Holt, and William Henry Miller. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 12-13	**Biographical File, 1835-1907** An autobiography, biographical sketches, and a scrapbook containing letters, photographs, explanatory notes, certificates of offficial appointments, and newspaper clippings. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and thereunder alphabetically by name of person.
BOX 14-15	**Financial Records, 1835-1913** Bills, receipts, account books, estate records, banknotes, canceled checks, bills of sale for slaves, and tax records. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 16-17	**Legal Records, 1820-1886** Affidavits, court orders and decrees, licenses, certificates, estate records, wills, contracts and agreements, deeds, oaths, a pass, and petitions. Arranged as records from his legal practice and personal and family life and thereunder alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 18-19	**Miscellany, 1844-1904** Newspapers, memorabilia, school records, notes, notebooks, a sketch, booklets, writings, a copybook, and a scrapbook of clippings. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-6	**Family Correspondence, 1830-1905**
	Letters and telegrams exchanged among members of Harrison's family.
	Arranged chronologically with a large amount of undated correspondence filed at the end.
BOX 1	1830-1854
BOX 2	1855-1866
BOX 3	1867-1875
BOX 4	1876-1905
BOX 5	Undated
BOX 6	Undated and unidentified fragments
BOX 7-10	**General Correspondence, 1803-1912**
	Mostly incoming business correspondence, including correspondence of the law firm of Harrison and Holt.
	Arranged chronologically.
BOX 7	1803-1841
BOX 8	1842-1868
BOX 9	1869-1879
BOX 10	1880-1912, undated
BOX 11	**Special Correspondence, 1826-1893**
	Letters from William T. Barry, Henry Clay, John J. Crittenden, Joseph Holt, and William Henry Miller.
	Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 11	Barry, William T., 1829-1834
BOX 11	Clay, Henry, 1826-1852
BOX 11	Crittenden, John J., 1835
BOX 11	Holt, Joseph, 1837-1893, undated
	(4 folders)
BOX 11	Miller, William Henry, 1861-1881, undated
BOX 12-13	**Biographical File, 1835-1907**
	An autobiography, biographical sketches, and a scrapbook containing letters, photographs, explanatory notes, certificates of offficial appointments, and newspaper clippings.
	Arranged alphabetically by type of material and thereunder alphabetically by name of person.
BOX 12	Autobiography of Harrison, 1880
BOX 12	Biographical sketches
BOX 12	Breckinridge, John C., undated
BOX 12	Clay, Henry, 1880s, undated
BOX 12	Holt, Joseph, fragment, undated

Container	Contents
BOX 12	Mason, Emily V., undated
BOX 12	Unidentified material, undated
BOX 12	Scrapbook
BOX 12	Original cover with explanatory note, 1884
BOX 13	Rebound volume, 1835-1907
BOX 14-15	**Financial Records, 1835-1913**
	Bills, receipts, account books, estate records, banknotes, canceled checks, bills of sale for slaves, and tax records.
	Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 14	Account books, 1839, 1870s-1885
BOX 14	Banknotes, 1838-1839
BOX 14	Bills of sale for slaves, 1835-1848
BOX 14	Business statements and receipts, 1835-1910s
	(5 folders)
BOX 14	Checks, 1838-1911
BOX 15	Estate records
BOX 15	Clay, Henry, 1837-1885
BOX 15	Inventories from Harrison's estate, 1873-1888
BOX 15	Personal and household bills and receipts, 1839-1913, undated
	(5 folders)
BOX 15	Tax statements and receipts, 1848-1900
BOX 15	Unidentified items, 1852-1887
BOX 16-17	**Legal Records, 1820-1886**
	Affidavits, court orders and decrees, licenses, certificates, estate records, wills, contracts and agreements, deeds, oaths, a pass, and petitions.
	Arranged as records from his legal practice and personal and family life and thereunder alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 16	Legal practice
BOX 16	Certificates and licenses
BOX 16	Docket lists
BOX 16	Estate records, Henry Clay
BOX 16	Other cases
	(2 folders)
BOX 17	Personal and family
BOX 17	Contracts and agreements
BOX 17	Deeds, titles, and related records
	(2 folders)
BOX 17	Oaths and a pass, 1862-1865
BOX 17	Petitions and briefs to recover property
	(3 folders)
BOX 17	Summons

Container	Contents
BOX 17	Wills
BOX 18-19	**Miscellany, 1844-1904** Newspapers, memorabilia, school records, notes, notebooks, a sketch, booklets, writings, a copybook, and a scrapbook of clippings. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.
BOX 18	Kentucky University Law School, Lexington, Ky., 1871-1873
BOX 18	Lexington, Ky., schools, 1852-1875, undated
BOX 18	Memorabilia, 1847-1892
BOX 18	Newspaper clippings (3 folders)
BOX 19	Notes (2 folders)
BOX 19	Poems, speeches, and other writings, 1844-1887, undated
BOX 19	Printed matter, 1844-1904
BOX 19	Sketch of Harrison's home, undated
BOX 19	Subscriptions toward Henry Clay's funeral
BOX 19	Volumes
BOX 19	Clippings, circa 1890-1892
BOX 19	Copybook with biographical sketches of S. S. Prentiss and Aaron Burr, notes on Christianity, and clippings, circa 1871-1875
BOX 19	Notebook of George R. Harrison, 1850-1857