

John McLean Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2022

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78032326>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009262>

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division Staff, 2009
Revised 2022 March

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

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

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	<p><u>Correspondence, 1817-1861</u></p> <p>The Correspondence series includes letters received and a few drafts of letters sent. It is supplemented by printed matter, memoranda, financial data, legal briefs, and newspaper clippings. Correspondents include Caleb Atwater, James Buchanan, John C. Calhoun, Salmon P. Chase, John M. Clayton, Thomas Corwin, George Mifflin Dallas, John Henry Eaton, Ninian Edwards, Edward Everett, Thomas Ewing, Duff Green, Isaac Hill, Samuel D. Ingham, Richard M. Johnson, Henry Lee, James Madison, Duncan McArthur, James Monroe, Richard Peters, William C. Rives, Richard Rush, Winfield Scott, Thomas Sergeant, William Henry Seward, Edwin McMasters Stanton, Joseph Story, Charles Sumner, Roger Brooke Taney, John Tyler, Henry Dana Ward, Daniel Webster, Thurlow Weed, and James Whitcomb.</p> <p>Material types include correspondence, printed matter, memoranda, legal briefs, and newspaper clippings.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 20-24 REEL 13-17	<p><u>Legal File, 1829-1860</u></p> <p>The Legal Files 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.</p> <p>Material types include briefs, opinions, memoranda, and reports.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by name of case.</p>
BOX 25 REEL 18	<p><u>Printed Matter, 1830-1860</u></p> <p>The Printed Matter series includes legal briefs, pamphlets, reports, political tracts, and miscellaneous items.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 25-27 not filmed	<p><u>Additions, 1816-1866</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Material types include correspondence, printed matter, and miscellaneous items.</p> <p>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>

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 13,817

Container	Contents
BOX 1-19 REEL 1-12	Correspondence, 1817-1861 <p>The Correspondence series includes letters received and a few drafts of letters sent. It is supplemented by printed matter, memoranda, financial data, legal briefs, and newspaper clippings. Correspondents include Caleb Atwater, James Buchanan, John C. Calhoun, Salmon P. Chase, John M. Clayton, Thomas Corwin, George Mifflin Dallas, John Henry Eaton, Ninian Edwards, Edward Everett, Thomas Ewing, Duff Green, Isaac Hill, Samuel D. Ingham, Richard M. Johnson, Henry Lee, James Madison, Duncan McArthur, James Monroe, Richard Peters, William C. Rives, Richard Rush, Winfield Scott, Thomas Sergeant, William Henry Seward, Edwin McMasters Stanton, Joseph Story, Charles Sumner, Roger Brooke Taney, John Tyler, Henry Dana Ward, Daniel Webster, Thurlow Weed, and James Whitcomb.</p> <p>Material types include correspondence, printed matter, memoranda, legal briefs, and newspaper clippings.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 1 REEL 1-2	1817, Aug. 29-1827, Aug. 13
BOX 2 REEL 1-2	1827, Aug. 14-1828, May 21
BOX 3 REEL 2	1828, May 22-1829, Mar. 10
BOX 4 REEL 2	1829, Mar. 11-Dec. 12
BOX 5 REEL 3	1829, Dec. 13-1831, Mar. 1
BOX 6 REEL 3	1831, Mar. 2-1832, Dec. 21
BOX 7 REEL 4	1832, Dec 22-1834, Jan. 10
BOX 8 REEL 4	1834, Jan. 11-Aug. 13
BOX 9 REEL 5	1834, Aug. 14-1836, Mar. 23
BOX 10 REEL 5	1836, Mar. 24-1842, Mar. 8
BOX 11 REEL 6	1842, Mar. 9-1846, Apr. 23
BOX 12 REEL 7	1846, Apr. 24-1847, Jan. 12
BOX 13 REEL 7	1847, Jan. 13-Dec. 5
BOX 14 REEL 8	1847, Dec. 6-1848, Mar. 24
BOX 15 REEL 8	1848, Mar. 25-July 28
BOX 16 REEL 9	1848, July 29-1850, Jan. 29
BOX 17 REEL 10	1850, Jan. 30-1853, Sept.
BOX 18 REEL 11	1853, Oct.-1856, June
BOX 19 REEL 12	1856, July-1861, Mar.
BOX 20-24 REEL 13-17	Legal File, 1829-1860 <p>The Legal Files 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.</p> <p>Material types include briefs, opinions, memoranda, and reports.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by name of case.</p>
BOX 20 REEL 13	Cases

Legal File, 1829-1860

Container	Contents
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.
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

Additions, 1816-1866

Container	Contents
BOX 26	Hayward, Joshua (son-in-law), 1835-1854
BOX 26	Healy, G. P. A. (George Peter Alexander), 1852, June 5
BOX 26	Hildt, George (brother-in-law), 1835-1852
BOX 26	Hildt, John McLean (nephew), 1852, Aug. 8
BOX 26	Lowe, P. R., 1845, May 15
BOX 26	McLean, John Bennet (grandson), 1850, Jun. 6
BOX 26	McLean, John, Jr. (son), 1835-1851
BOX 26	McLean, Milton (nephew), 1846, Jan.
BOX 26	McLean, Nathaniel (brother), 1842, Mar. 3
BOX 26	McLean, Nathaniel C. (son), 1835-1836
BOX 26	McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1835-1838
BOX 27	McLean, Sarah (sister), 1842, Jul. 4
BOX 26	McLean, William (brother), 1835-1836
BOX 26	Napier, 1848, Feb. 14
BOX 26	Peters, Michael, 1831-1845
BOX 26	Powell, Llewellyn, 1842, Jul. 13
BOX 26	Richards, B. W., 1834-1847
BOX 26	Sehon, Caroline (niece), 1841, Mar. 11
BOX 26	Simpson, M. T., 1836, Mar. 18
BOX 26	Taney, Roger Brooke, 1858, Feb. 22
BOX 26	Taylor, Evelyn McLean (daughter), 1842-1851
BOX 26	Taylor, Joseph P. (son-in-law), 1844, Jul. 18
BOX 26	Thomas, Alfred, 1844, Jul. 18
BOX 26	Vaughan, Charles R., 1828, Sep. 2
BOX 26	Weed, E., 1836, Jun. 10
BOX 26	Wright, John F., 1842, Jan. 7
BOX 26	Invitations, 1828
BOX 27	McLean, John to Board of Managers, American Bible Society, 1846, Mar. 9
BOX 27	McLean, John to Dunlop, James, 1847, Jan. 7
BOX 27	McLean, John to McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1816-1836
BOX 27	McLean, John to McLean, Sarah B. (wife), 1847-1852
BOX 27	McLean, John to Trustees of Spring Grove Cemetery, 1851, Apr. 2
BOX 27	McLean, John, Jr. (son) to McLean, Nathaniel (son), 1851, Apr. 2
BOX 27	McLean, Sarah (daughter) to McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1836
BOX 27	Taylor, Eveline M. (daughter) to McLean, Rebecca Edwards (wife), 1835
BOX 27	Memoranda, 1849-1866
BOX 27	Miscellaneous receipts, shipping documents, and correspondence, 1842-1851, undated