

Louis McLane Correspondence

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Collection Summary

Title: Louis McLane Correspondence

Span Dates: 1795-1894

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1817-1855)

ID No.: MSS57083

Creator: McLane, Louis, 1786-1857

Extent: 600 items ; 4 containers ; 1.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Lawyer, U.S. representative and senator from Delaware, diplomat, and cabinet officer. Correspondence primarily between McLane and members of his family relating to social life in Washington, D.C., his diplomatic duties, and national and congressional politics.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Aberdeen, George Hamilton Gordon, Earl of, 1784-1860--Correspondence.

Adams, John Quincy, 1767-1848.

Bancroft, George, 1800-1891--Correspondence.

Barney, William Chase--Correspondence.

Boyd, McHenry--Correspondence.

Buchanan, James, 1791-1868--Correspondence.

Canby, Edward Richard Sprigg, 1817-1873--Correspondence.

Clay, Henry, 1777-1852.

Hamilton, Philip, b. 1802--Correspondence.

Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845.

Johnston, Joseph E. (Joseph Eggleston), 1807-1891--Correspondence.

Mason, John Y. (John Young), 1799-1859--Correspondence.

McClane, Robert M. (Robert Milligan), 1815-1898--Correspondence.

McLane, Allan, b. 1823--Correspondence.

McLane, Catherine Mary Milligan, 1791-1849--Correspondence.

McLane, Louis, 1786-1857.

McLean family.

Milligan family.

Monroe, James, 1758-1831.

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

Ridgely, Henry M. (Henry Moore), 1779-1847--Correspondence.

Sigoigne, Adele--Correspondence.

Simms family.

Tiffany family.

Tyler, John, 1790-1862.

Upshur, A. P. (Abel Parker), 1790-1844--Correspondence.

Urquhart, David, 1805-1877--Correspondence.

Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852.

Wells family.

Organizations

United States. Congress--History--19th century.

Subjects

Diplomatic and consular service, American--China.

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Great Britain.
Indians of North America--Florida--Wars.
Mexican War, 1846-1848--Naval operations.
Mexican War, 1846-1848.
Presidents--United States--Election--1824.
Seminole War, 2nd, 1835-1842.

Places

China--Foreign relations--United States.
Delaware--Social life and customs.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
Oregon--Boundaries.
Southwestern States--History, Military.
United States--Foreign relations--China.
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.
Veracruz Llave (Mexico)--History.
Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

Occupations

Cabinet officers.
Diplomats.
Lawyers.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Delaware.
Senators, U.S. Congress--Delaware.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The correspondence of Louis McLane, lawyer, U.S. representative and senator from Delaware, diplomat, and cabinet officer, were given to the Library of Congress by Louis McLane in 1976. A few items were purchased in 1917, 1922, and 1982.

Processing History

The papers of Louis McLane were arranged and described in 1978 and expanded in 1985. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The McLane Correspondence is 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, Louis McLane Correspondence, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1786, May 28	Born, Smyrna, Del.
1798-1801	Served in United States Navy
1807	Admitted to Delaware bar and practiced law, Smyrna, Del.
1812	Joined the Wilmington, Delaware, Artillery Company under Caesar A. Rodney and later became first lieutenant Married Catherine Mary Milligan
1817-1827	Member, United States House of Representatives from Delaware
1827-1829	Member, United States Senate from Delaware
1829-1831	Minister to England
1831-1833	Secretary of the treasury
1833-1834	Secretary of state
1835	Elected president, Morris Canal and Banking Co., New York, N.Y.
1837	Moved to Baltimore, Md.
1837-1847	President, Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Co.
1845-1846	Minister to England
1850	Delegate, Maryland constitutional convention
1857, Oct. 7	Died, Baltimore, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The correspondence of Louis McLane (1786-1857) spans the years 1795-1894, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1817-1855. The collection consists principally of correspondence of McLane with members of his family, particularly with his wife, Catherine Mary Milligan McLane, and his oldest son, Robert M. McLane. Louis McLane had thirteen children as well as other relatives. The letters written to his wife and son Robert are the most significant. In these he discusses in rich detail national politics and social affairs of the administrations of James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, as well as diplomatic questions of the James K. Polk administration. The collection is arranged chronologically and includes a considerable amount of undated material.

McLane was diligent in keeping his wife informed concerning the unofficial side of life in Washington. Although there are few letters for the period when McLane served in Andrew Jackson's administrations as a diplomat and cabinet member (his wife and most of the family were with him during the greater part of those years), Jackson is a "vivid presence" in many of McLane's earlier letters. He writes of the 1819 debate in the House of Representatives over a resolution of censure against Jackson for his conduct in Florida during the Seminole War and of Henry Clay's speech in support of the censure. He also records his own initial reaction to Jackson when Jackson appeared on the floor of the House after the resolution's defeat. Another prominent contemporary about whom he wrote was Daniel Webster, a figure opposed by McLane throughout his

career. In later years, 1845, when McLane, as minister to Great Britain, was engaged in negotiating the settlement of the Oregon question he learned that the "Ministerial Circle" in England had adopted Webster as their advocate," McLane later modified his views somewhat toward Webster, at least with regard to a settlement of northwestern boundary. The boundary question is the principal subject of discussion in more than thirty-five letters to Robert, some of unusual length and detail. McLane conveyed to Robert that he believed that when England and the United States discovered the differences that really divided them, neither would assume the responsibility of going to war rather than consenting to some further concession.

There are other segments of the Louis McLane family papers that will be of interest to students of nineteenth-century political, military, and diplomatic history. Robert M. McLane, first son and second child of Louis and Catherine, had careers in all of these fields. A graduate of the United States Military Academy, he served briefly in the second Seminole War, but left military service not long thereafter. He served in Congress as a United States Representative from Maryland, 1847-1851 and 1879-1883. He was appointed United States Commissioner to China and Japan, 1853-1854, by President James K. Polk and was President James Buchanan's choice as minister to Mexico, 1859-1860. After one term as governor of Maryland, he served as minister to France, 1885-1889. Robert's papers number approximately seventy items. The more significant of his letters, addressed chiefly to his father and mother, relate to his military experiences in Florida and his diplomatic mission to China.

Joseph E. Johnston, who later became one of the leading generals in the Confederate Army, married McLane's daughter, Lydia. He is represented in the collection by letters to Robert M. McLane, chiefly from the period of the war with Mexico and during a tour of duty in the Southwest following that war.

The greater part of the remainder of the collection is made up of letters exchanged by various other members of the family. There are nearly fifty letters of Catherine, addressed to her husband and children, and forty letters and other papers of McLane's son, Allan McLane (born 1823), several of which concern naval activities at Vera Cruz during the Mexican War. Also included in these papers is a thirty two-page autobiographical memorandum prepared by Louis McLane in which he sets forth the highlights of his career from the War of 1812 to 1833. Several items relating to McLane's father, Allen McLane, who fought in the Revolutionary War, are also in the papers.

Principal correspondents include George Hamilton Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen (1784-1860), George Bancroft, William Chase Barney, McHenry Boyd, James Buchanan, Edward Richard Sprigg Canby, Philip Hamilton, Charles Eugene McLane, George McLane, Georgine Urquhart McLane, James Latimer McLane, Juliette McLane, Mary E. McLane, Rebecca Wells McLane, John Y. Mason, George Baldwin Milligan, Henry M. Ridgely, Adele Sigoigne, Mary H. Sims, Henry Tiffany, Sally Jones McLane Tiffany, John Tyler, A. P. Upshur, David Urquhart, and S. Teackle Wallis.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged chronologically and includes a considerable amount of undated material.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	1795, Jan. 21-1826, Aug. 11 (9 folders)
BOX 2	1826, Aug. 17-1846, Jan. 17 (8 folders)
BOX 3	1846, Jan. 28-1894, Mar. 7 (5 folders)
BOX 4	Undated (8 folders)