

# James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the  
Library of Congress

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and Karen Linn Femia



Manuscript Division, Library of  
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2010

Contact information: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/mss/address.html>

Finding aid encoded by Library of  
Congress Manuscript Division, 2010

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010009>

# Collection Summary

Title: James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers

Span Dates: 1825-1887

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1840-1866)

ID No.: MSS14258

Creator: Buchanan, James, 1791-1868

Creator: Johnston, Harriet Lane, 1830-1903

Extent: 1,600 items; 6 containers plus 1 oversize; 3 linear feet; 4 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: United States president, secretary of state, and representative and senator from Pennsylvania. Correspondence, his 1858 State of the Union message, and miscellaneous items pertaining primarily to Buchanan's career before his election as president. Also correspondence of Harriet Lane Johnston, Buchanan's niece and White House hostess.

## 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

Buchanan, James, 1791-1868.

Johnston, Harriet Lane, 1830-1903. James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston papers. 1825-1887.

Johnston, Henry Elliot, d. 1884--Correspondence.

Jones, J. Glancy (Jehu Glancy), 1811-1878--Correspondence.

Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851.

### Organizations

American Party.

Democratic National Convention (1852 : Baltimore, Md.)

Democratic Party (Pa.)

Democratic Party (U.S.)

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854- )

United States. Dept. of State.

Whig Party (U.S.)

### Subjects

Abolitionists--United States.

African Americans--Politics and government.

Canals--Delaware.

Crimean War, 1853-1856.

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Great Britain.

Fashion.

International trade.

Missouri compromise.

Monopolies--Great Britain.

Nullification (States' rights)

Oregon question.

Political conventions--Maryland--Baltimore.

Postal service--International cooperation.

Presidents--United States--Election--1852.

Presidents--United States--Election--1856.

Presidents--United States--Messages.

Railroads--United States.  
Slavery--United States.  
Tariff--United States.

#### Places

Cuba--Foreign relations--United States.  
Cumberland Road.  
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.  
Kansas--History--1854-1861.  
Mexico--Foreign relations--United States.  
National banks (United States)  
Nebraska--History--19th century.  
Northwest boundary of the United States.  
Pennsylvania--Politics and government--1775-1865.  
United States--Foreign relations--Cuba.  
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.  
United States--Foreign relations--Mexico.  
United States--History--1815-1861.  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Causes.  
United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.  
Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

#### Titles

*New York herald.*

#### Occupations

Cabinet officers.  
Presidents--United States.  
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Pennsylvania.  
Senators, U.S. Congress--Pennsylvania.

## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The papers of James Buchanan, president of the United States, and his niece and White House hostess, Harriet Lane Johnston, were given to the Library of Congress by Johnston's cousin, May S. Kennedy, in 1918. Additional material was acquired by the Library through gift, transfer, and purchase, 1903-2010.

### Processing History

The papers of James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston were arranged and described in 1976. Additional material was incorporated into the collection and the finding aid revised in 1983, 2003, and 2010.

### Additional Guides

In 1979, the Library published *James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston: A Register and Index of Their Papers in the Library of Congress*, which includes an index to Series I-II and the photocopies in Series III.

### Related Material

The principal collection of James Buchanan's papers is located at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and has been reproduced on sixty reels of microfilm available for use in the Manuscript Division Reading Room of the Library of Congress.

## Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

## Access and Restrictions

Restrictions apply governing the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for information concerning these restrictions. In addition, many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on four 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 as available.

## Preferred Citation

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

# Biographical Notes

## James Buchanan

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1791, Apr. 23	Born, Cove Gap (near Mercersburg), Franklin Co., Pa.
1809	Graduated from Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.
1812	Admitted to the bar, Lancaster, Pa.
1819	Death of fiancée, Ann Coleman
1821-1831	United States Representative, fourth district, Pennsylvania
1832-1833	Minister to Russia
1834-1845	Senator from Pennsylvania
1845-1849	Secretary of state
1853-1856	Envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain
1854	Coauthor of Ostend Manifesto
1857-1861	President of the United States
1861	Retired to Wheatland estate, Lancaster, Pa.
1866	Published <i>Mr. Buchanan's Administration</i> . New York: D. Appleton

1868, June 1	Died, Wheatland, Lancaster, Pa.
Harriet Lane Johnston	
<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1830, May 9	Born, Mercersburg, Franklin Co., Pa.
1840	Attended the Misses Crawford boarding school, Lancaster, Pa.
1841	Became ward of her uncle, James Buchanan
1843	Attended boarding school, Charleston, Va.
1846-1848	Enrolled in the Academy of the Visitation, Georgetown, D.C.
1857-1861	Served as White House hostess
1866	Married Henry Elliott Johnston
1903, July 3	Died, Narragansett Pier, R.I.
1912	Opening of the Harriet Lane Home for Invalid Children, as part of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Md., established from the Harriet Lane Johnston estate funds

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of James Buchanan (1791-1868) and Harriet Lane Johnston (1830-1903) span the years 1825-1887, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1840-1866. They are organized in five series: [James Buchanan Papers](#), [Harriet Lane Johnston Papers](#), [Special Documents File](#), [Additions](#), and [Oversize](#).

[Series I: James Buchanan Papers](#) consists chiefly of correspondence but also includes notes, drafts of remarks made in the House of Representatives, Department of State commissions and transmittals to foreign service officers, land patents, petitions, a presidential message to Congress, and clippings. Among the topics discussed in the papers are Democratic politics in Pennsylvania and the nation, Joel R. Poinsett's negotiations with Mexico, the Cumberland Road, the Delaware Canal, the Oregon question, relaxation of the blockade of Mexico, British attempts to obtain a marine postal monopoly, trade treaties, Democratic presidential possibilities and the convention of 1852, and anti-Buchanan attacks in the *New York Herald*.

[Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers](#) consists chiefly of letters received concerning such topics as ladies' fashions, social affairs, and romance. Also included are letters of her husband, Henry E. Johnston, and others concerning the selection of a biographer of James Buchanan and efforts to provide financial support for the work.

[Series III: Special Documents File](#) consists of photocopies of selected Buchanan material in other repositories and typed transcripts of Buchanan letters from various collections in the Library of Congress. An earlier published guide to the James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers includes an index to items in Series I-II and the photocopies in Series III.

[Series IV: Additions](#) contains a group of letters from Buchanan to his friend, J. Glancy Jones, a Pennsylvania lawyer, Democratic party activist, and member of the United States House of

Representatives from 1851 to 1858. The correspondence includes discussions of national and Pennsylvania state politics and traces Buchanan's career from the Senate to the first year of his presidential term. His presidential ambitions are documented throughout, including assessments of support and comments on rivals, most notably during the election of 1856. The escalating sectional strife between North and South is also ever present in the letters, culminating in Buchanan's assertion in 1856 that the presidential election "ought to be run on the question of union or disunion. . . ." Many letters originate from London during Buchanan's service as minister to England with observations on his participation in formulating the Ostend Manifesto, Europe and the Crimean War, and domestic politics, including his dismissal of the Missouri Compromise as obsolete. Other topics include protective tariffs, abolitionists, the American Party (Know Nothings), "Black Republicans," government support for a transcontinental railroad, and cabinet appointments. Addition III includes a version (some variation from the published version) of the December, 1858 State of the Union message. This addition also contains nine letters written by Buchanan. Topics covered in his letters include the National Bank, the Whig Party, Pennsylvania politics, the Tariff of 1842, Nicaragua, the Missouri Compromise, the "will of the majority" for Kansas and Nebraska, nullification, and presidential politics, including his own presidential campaign. Also in Addition III is an inscribed book.

Series V: Oversize is an official patent signed by Buchanan while secretary of state, removed from Addition III.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- [Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868](#)
- [Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, 1846-1887](#)
- [Series III: Special Documents File, 1826-1861](#)
- [Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867](#)
- [Series V: Oversize, 1860](#)

## Description of Series

### *Container*

BOX 1-2  
REEL 1-2

### *Series*

#### Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868

General correspondence and other material, including notes and drafts of remarks made while Buchanan served in the House of Representatives and as president of the United States, commissions, land patents, petitions, and clippings.

Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.

BOX 3-4  
REEL 2-4

#### Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, 1846-1887

Chiefly letters received by Johnston.

Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.

BOX 5  
not filmed

#### Series III: Special Documents File, 1826-1861

Photocopies of documents from collections relating to Buchanan in other repositories and typewritten transcripts of Buchanan letters in other collections in the Library of Congress.

Arranged chronologically. Photocopies only are indexed in the published register.

BOX 5  
not filmed

#### Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867

Two additions of correspondence and a third addition with the 1858 State of the Union message, correspondence, and inscribed book.

Arranged in order of processing date and therein chronologically for the first two additions. Addition III is arranged alphabetically by type of material and name of correspondent.

BOX OV 1  
not filmed

#### Series V: Oversize, 1860

Official patent certificate signed by Buchanan while he was secretary of state.

# Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 16,939

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-2 REEL 1-2	Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868  General correspondence and other material, including notes and drafts of remarks made while Buchanan served in the House of Representatives and as president of the United States, commissions, land patents, petitions, and clippings. Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.
BOX 1 REEL 1	1825, Jan. 8-1840, Dec. 26
BOX 1 REEL 1	1841, Jan. 20-1843, Dec. 26
BOX 1 REEL 1	1844, Feb.6-Dec. 24
BOX 1 REEL 1	1845, Jan. 20-Dec. 29
BOX 1 REEL 1	1846
BOX 1 REEL 1	Jan. 12-June 17
BOX 1 REEL 1	June 22-Sept. 26
BOX 1 REEL 1	1846, Oct. 7-1847, Mar. 17
BOX 1 REEL 1	1847
BOX 1 REEL 1	Mar. 19-July 15
BOX 1 REEL 1	July 19- Nov. 23
BOX 1 REEL 1	1847, Dec. 2-1848, Jan. 2
BOX 1 REEL 1	1848, Jan. 3-May 16
BOX 2 REEL 1	1848, May 18-1849, Feb. 12
BOX 2 REEL 1	1849, Feb. 16-1851, July 1
BOX 2 REEL 1	1851, Aug. 10-1852, Mar. 20
BOX 2 REEL 1	1852, Mar. 29-1853, Feb. 3
BOX 2 REEL 2	1853, Feb. 6-May 10

Series I: James Buchanan Papers, 1825-1868

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 2 REEL 2	1853, May 24,-1855, Jan. 9
BOX 2 REEL 2	1855, Jan. 20-Nov. 30
BOX 2 REEL 2	1855, Dec. 4-1856, Mar. 27
BOX 2 REEL 2	1856, Apr. 3-1859, June 10
BOX 2 REEL 2	1860, May 3-1863, June 26
BOX 2 REEL 2	1863, Aug. 3-1868, Jan. 2, n.d.
BOX 3-4 REEL 2-4	Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, 1846-1887  Chiefly letters received by Johnston. Arranged chronologically. Indexed in the published register.
BOX 3 REEL 2	1846, Feb. 14-1856, Jan. 18
BOX 3 REEL 2	1856, Feb. 5-1858, June 28
BOX 3 REEL 2	1858, July 13-1859, Sept. 7
BOX 3 REEL 3	1859, Sept. 19-1860, Feb. 25
BOX 3 REEL 3	1860
BOX 3 REEL 3	May 5-Sept. 25
BOX 3 REEL 3	Oct. 7-Dec. 28
BOX 3 REEL 3	1861, Jan. 5-July 12
BOX 3 REEL 3	1861, July 16-1862, Aug. 30
BOX 3 REEL 3	1862, Sept. 8-1863, Sept. 1
BOX 3 REEL 3	1863, Sept. 5-1864, May 31
BOX 3 REEL 3	1864, June 7-1865, Dec.
BOX 4 REEL 4	1866, Jan. 7-1874, Feb. 12

Series II: Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, 1846-1887

*Container*

*Contents*

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BOX 4 REEL 4	1874, Apr. 21-1887, Feb. 2, undated  (2 folders)
BOX 5 not filmed	Series III: Special Documents File, 1826-1861  Photocopies of documents from collections relating to Buchanan in other repositories and typewritten transcripts of Buchanan letters in other collections in the Library of Congress. Arranged chronologically. Photocopies only are indexed in the published register.
BOX 5 not filmed	Photocopies of documents in other repositories, 1838-1859
BOX 5	Typewritten transcripts of documents from other collections, 1826-1861, undated (2 folders)
BOX 5 not filmed	Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867  Two additions of correspondence and a third addition with the 1858 State of the Union message, correspondence, and inscribed book. Arranged in order of processing date and therein chronologically for the first two additions. Addition III is arranged alphabetically by type of material and name of correspondent.
BOX 5 not filmed	Addition I, correspondence, 1846-1861
BOX 5	Addition II, correspondence, Buchanan to J. Glancy Jones, 1842-1858, 1867 (7 folders)
BOX 5	Addition III
BOX 5	Correspondence, Buchanan to
BOX 5	Cabinet of Franklin Pierce, 1857
BOX 5	Campbell, James, 1851
BOX 5	Herrick, Anson, 1863-1864 (2 folders)
BOX 5	Hunter, William, 1855
BOX 5	McClernand, John Alexander, 1850
BOX 5	Pickens, Francis W., 1853
BOX 5	Plumer, Arnold, 1844
BOX 5	Tyler, Robert, 1851
BOX 5	Worrell, William, 1856
BOX 5	Patent signed by Buchanan, 1860 <i><u>See Oversize</u></i>
BOX 5	<i>Presbyterian Historical Almanac</i> , 1860

Series IV: Additions, 1842-1867

*Container*

*Contents*

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BOX 6  
not filmed

State of the Union message, 1858, Dec. 3

BOX OV 1  
not filmed

Series V: Oversize, 1860

Official patent certificate signed by Buchanan while he was secretary of state.

BOX OV 1

Patent signed by Buchanan, 1860 (Container 5)