

John Dean Caton Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2011

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

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Collection Summary

Title: John Dean Caton Papers

Span Dates: 1826-1947

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1826-1895)

ID No.: MSS15396

Creator: Caton, John Dean, 1812-1895

Extent: 9,500 items; 33 containers; 13.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Businessman and jurist. Correspondence, speeches, writings, legal records, financial records, a scrapbook, printed matter, and other material documenting mainly Caton's activities as a lawyer and businessman in Chicago and as associate and chief justice of the supreme court of Illinois.

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

Basnett, Thomas--Correspondence.

Breese, Sidney, 1800-1878--Correspondence.

Catlin, Thomas D.--Correspondence.

Caton, John Dean, 1812-1895.

Caton, Laura A.--Correspondence.

Caton, William P.--Correspondence.

Churchill, Seldon--Correspondence.

Churchill, W. C.--Correspondence.

Cornell, Ezra, 1807-1874--Correspondence.

French, Austin C.--Correspondence.

Fuller, Melville Weston, 1833-1910--Correspondence.

Gatiss, George H.--Correspondence.

Howell, L.--Correspondence.

Joy, James F. (James Frederick), 1810-1896--Correspondence.

Judd, Norman B. (Norman Buel), 1815-1878--Correspondence.

Matheson, Joel A.--Correspondence.

O'Riley, Henry, 1806-1886--Correspondence.

Sibley, Hiram, 1807-1888--Correspondence.

Smith, Nathan--Correspondence.

Sweet, E. D. L.--Correspondence.

Treat, Samuel Hubbel, 1811-1887--Correspondence.

Trumbull, Lyman, 1813-1896--Correspondence.

Walker, Pinkney Houston, 1815-1885--Correspondence.

White, Horace, 1834-1916--Correspondence.

Williams, Norman--Correspondence.

Wilson, J. J. S.--Correspondence.

Organizations

Illinois and Mississippi Telegraph Company.

Illinois Starch Company.

Illinois. Supreme Court.

Josiah Macy's Sons--Correspondence.

Oneida Solar Salt Company.

Subjects

Courts--Illinois.
Mines and mineral resources--West (U.S.)
Nature study.
Practice of law--Illinois--Chicago.
Telegraph.
Voyages and travels.

Places

Illinois--Commerce.

Occupations

Businessmen.
Jurists.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of John Dean Caton, businessman and jurist, were deposited in the library of Congress by Catherine Beveridge and Delia Spencer Field between 1932-1952 and converted to a gift in 1952. Additional installments were given by Beveridge and others in 1953, 1968, and 1982.

Processing History

The papers of John Dean Caton were arranged and described in 1962. The collection was expanded and revised in 1983. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Additional Guides

The John Dean Caton Papers are described in *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*, 1932-1933 and 1933-1934. An index to the greater part of the correspondence in this collection is in the Manuscript Reading Room.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Dean Caton 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, John Dean Caton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1812, Mar. 19	Born, Monroe, N.Y.
1833	Moved to Chicago, Ill. Established first law office in Chicago, Ill.

- 1834 Member and secretary of the first Illinois political convention held in Ottawa, Ill.
Elected justice of the peace, Ottawa, Ill.
- 1835 Married Laura Sherill
Admitted to the Illinois bar
- 1837 Elected as an alderman in Chicago, Ill.
- 1842-1864 Associate justice of the Illinois Supreme Court and served as chief justice in 1855 and again from 1857 to 1864
- 1849-1867 President of the Illinois and Mississippi Telegraphic Co.
- 1875 Published *A Summer in Norway; with Notes on the Industries, Habits, Customs and Peculiarities of the People, the History and Institutions of the Country, Its Climate, Topography and Productions*. Chicago: Jansen, McClurg and Co.
- 1877 Published *The Antelope and Deer of America*. New York: Hurd and Houghton
- 1895, July 30 Died, Chicago, Ill.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Dean Caton (1812-1875) span the period from 1826 to 1947 with the bulk concentrated in the period 1826-1895. Caton was the first lawyer who settled in Chicago and was an associate justice of the supreme court of Illinois from 1842 to 1864 and served as chief justice of that court in 1855 and from 1857 to 1864. For more than a generation he was in correspondence with lawyers and public men of his state including those prominent in its history.

Caton's papers consist of family, professional and legal correspondence, speeches, drafts of an unpublished memoir, other writings, and a scrapbook. The bulk covers Caton's activities as a lawyer in Chicago, as an associate and chief justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, 1842-1867, as chief stockholder and director of the Illinois and Mississippi Telegraph Company, 1849-1867, as an investor in western mines, as a stockholder and director of the Oneida Salt Company, the Illinois Starch Company, and other business enterprises, and as a traveler and contributor of articles relating to nature studies and to the bench and bar in Illinois.

Included are Caton's own letters, those of his wife, Laura A. Caton, his brother, William P. Caton, and other members of his family. Other correspondents include Thomas Basnett, Sidney Breese, Thomas D. Catlin, Seldon Churchill, W. C. Churchill, Ezra Cornell, Austin C. French, Melville Weston Fuller, George H. Gatiss, L. Howell, Josiah Macy's Sons, James F. Joy, Norman B. Judd, Joel A. Matheson, Henry O'Riley, Hiram Sibley, Nathan Smith, E. D. L. Sweet, Samuel Hubbel Treat, Lyman Trumbull, Pinkney Houston Walker, Horace White, Norman Williams, and J. J. S. Wilson.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged by type of material.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	1826-1842
BOX 2	1843-1848
BOX 3	1848-1850
BOX 4	1850-1852
BOX 5	1853-1854
BOX 6	1854-1855
BOX 7	1855-1856
BOX 8	1856-1857
BOX 9	1857-1858
BOX 10	1858-1859
BOX 11	1860-1861
BOX 12	1861-1862
BOX 13	1862-1863
BOX 14	1864-1865
BOX 15	1865-1866
BOX 16	1866-1867
BOX 17	1868
BOX 18	1869
BOX 19	1870-1872
BOX 20	1873-1875
BOX 21	1876-1878
BOX 22	1879-1880
BOX 23	1880-1895
BOX 24	Speeches and writings
BOX 25	Mining material, 1862-1882
BOX 26	Miscellany, mostly undated correspondence
BOX 27	Printed matter
BOX 28	Scrapbook
BOX 29	Financial papers
BOX 30	Financial papers
BOX 31	Correspondence
BOX 31	1831-1842 (9 folders)
BOX 32	1843-1879, 1933-1947, undated (10 folders)
BOX 33	Financial and business file, 1820s-1830s, undated (6 folders)
BOX 33	Miscellany, 1830-1865
BOX 33	Biographical sketches, 1947