

John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Library of Congress

Prepared by Karen Linn Femia



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2011

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

Finding aid encoded by Library of
Congress Manuscript Division, 2011

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms011222>

Collection Summary

Title: John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont Papers

Span Dates: 1828-1980

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1835-1890)

ID No.: MSS1459

Creator: Frémont, John Charles, 1813-1890 Frémont, Jessie Benton, 1824-1902

Extent: 1,000 items; 9 containers plus 1 oversize and 1 artifact; 9 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: Explorer of the western United States, army officer, and politician (John Charles Frémont). Author (Jessie Benton Frémont). Correspondence, presidential campaign material from 1856, Civil War items, writings, prints, photographs, and printed matter relating to the careers of both John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont.

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

Beecher, Henry Ward, 1813-1887--Correspondence.

Bok, Edward William, 1863-1930--Correspondence.

Frémont, Jessie Benton, 1824-1902. John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont papers. 1828-1980.

Frémont, John Charles, 1813-1890.

Johnson, Robert Underwood, 1853-1937--Correspondence.

Park, T. W. (Trenor William), 1823-1882--Correspondence.

Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851--Correspondence.

Waring, George E. (George Edwin), 1833-1898.

Organizations

United States. Army. Mountain Department.

United States. Army. Western Department.

Subjects

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

Places

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

United States--Politics and government--1853-1857.

Occupations

Army officers.

Authors.

Explorers.

Politicians.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont were acquired by the Library of Congress through purchase in 1903 and 2011 and by transfer in 1930.

Processing History

The 1903 purchase contained three items and formed the John Charles Frémont letters and was part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection until 2011. The 1930 transfer also contained three items and formed the Jessie Benton Frémont Papers and was part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection until 2011. When the Library purchased the John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont Papers, which had been at the James S. Copley Library in La Jolla, California, the two previous MMC collections were incorporated into the new collection during processing in 2011. While organizing the papers received from the Copley Library, the Correspondence and Newspapers of Jesse A. Park were separated from the Frémont material and made into its own collection as it had been previously at the Copley Library.

Transfers

Some prints and photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont papers.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont papers 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 Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

John Charles Frémont (1813-1890) first gained public attention through his participation in and eventual leadership of scientific and mapping expeditions in the American West (1838, 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1845). In 1841 he married Jessie Ann Benton (1824-1902), the daughter of Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, who was an advocate of United States expansion into the West and a political supporter of his son-in-law's expeditions, which received Congressional backing. Jessie Benton Frémont assisted in the writing of her husband's 1844 expedition report, which enjoyed popularity with the general public, and with his subsequent writings. During his final expedition, Frémont became involved in California's uprising against Mexico. He was appointed military governor of California, but later was arrested and court-martialed in Washington, D.C., in 1847-1848 for disobedience. His penalty was set aside by President James K. Polk and he and Jessie moved to California in 1849. They became wealthy after the discovery of gold on their Las Mariposas land grant. In 1850, Frémont was elected senator from the new state of California and served briefly in that office. He ran as the first presidential candidate of the Republican party in 1856 on a free-soil anti-slavery platform. He served as a Union general in the Department of the West during the Civil War. Frémont was governor of the Arizona territory, 1878-1883. He died in New York City in 1890. The Frémonts suffered economic reversals and in later years were supported primarily through Jessie Benton Frémont's writings. During the 1870s through the 1890s she authored books, stories, and many articles that appeared in leading magazines. She died in Los Angeles, California, in 1902.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Charles Frémont (1813-1890) and Jessie Benton Frémont (1824-1902) span the years 1828-1980 with the bulk of the material dating from 1835 to 1890. The collection includes correspondence, presidential campaign material from 1856, Civil War items, writings, prints, photographs, printed matter, and books. Throughout the collection are typed transcripts of letters, lists of items, and occasional typed descriptions of items. These were not created by the Library of Congress but came with the collection and have been retained as supplemental information.

The Civil War file contains no items written by John Charles Frémont. Some letters are addressed to Frémont as commander in charge of the Western Department and the Mountain Department. Other items are related to his command during the war or are addressed to Major George E. Waring who took over his command in Missouri. Before and after the war, Waring was a prominent sanitary engineer and civic reformer, leading projects such as the engineering of the drainage system for New York's Central Park.

The correspondence consists mainly of letters sent by Jessie Benton Frémont and John Charles Frémont. All but five letters are written by the Frémonts. The Jessie Benton Frémont correspondence includes many letters to Robert Underwood Johnson and Edward William Bok. A lengthy run of letters to T. W. (Trenor William) Park in the John Charles Frémont correspondence primarily concerns the Frémont's California property. Other notable correspondents include Henry Ward Beecher and Joel Roberts Poinsett.

The presidential campaign of 1856 material includes pamphlets supporting and opposing Frémont, songbooks, and graphic material. The printed matter contains both items written by the Frémonts and items written about them. The book collection, part of the printed matter file, includes items authored by the Frémonts. The books remain unorganized in four record center cartons. A list of contents is in each box. Other items in the collection include engravings, prints, photographs, legal papers, printed matter, and a dispatch box.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein, except for the Civil War file, which is arranged alphabetically.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Civil War file
BOX 1	List of contents
BOX 1	A-W, 1860-1864 <i>See also Oversize</i> (5 folders)
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Frémont, Jessie Benton
BOX 1	List of contents
BOX 1	1840-1902, undated (4 folders)
BOX 1	Frémont, John Charles
BOX 1	List of contents
BOX 1	1835-1863 (7 folders)
BOX 2	1864-1889, undated (5 folders)
BOX 2	"Diary of Richard H. Kern, a Member of John C. Frémont's Expedition, Oct. 20, 1848-Feb. 16, 1849"
BOX 2	Dispatch box inscribed with Frémont name and letter concerning provenance of box, 1973, undated <i>See also Container VA 1, Artifact, Dispatch box</i>
BOX 2	Engravings, prints, and photographs
BOX 2	Frémont, Jessie Benton, circa 1890-circa 1905
BOX 2	Frémont, John Charles, circa 1850-circa 1862, circa 1890, 1956
BOX 2	Newspaper clippings, 1884-1890, 1972
BOX 2	Legal papers, 1828, 1854-1868, 1875 (2 folders)
BOX 2	Miscellany, 1889, 1901, 1935, 1950, undated
BOX 2	Presidential campaign of 1856
BOX 2	Graphic material, 1856 <i>See also Oversize</i>
BOX 2	Miscellany, 1856
BOX 2	Opposing Frémont, 1856
BOX 2	Songbooks, 1856
BOX 3	Supporting Frémont, 1856, 1864
BOX 3	Printed matter
BOX 3	Biographical material about John Charles Frémont, 1848-1862, 1903, circa 1910, 1980 (2 folders)
BOX 3	Circle of friends of the medallion, honoring John Charles Frémont, 1913
BOX 3	<i>Cora O'Kane; or, The Doom of the Rebel Guard</i> , 1868
BOX 3	House of Representatives documents, 1847-1848, 1862
BOX 3	"Letter from Col. Benton to the People of Missouri," 1853
BOX 4	Mariposa estate, California, 1863-1873

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 4	<i>Plantæ Frémontiane; or, Descriptions of Plants Collected by Col. J. C. Frémont in California</i> , 1853
BOX 4	Reports of the governor of Arizona, 1878-1879, 1895
BOX 4	Senate documents
BOX 4	California claims, 1848-1856 (3 folders)
BOX 4	"Conquest of California" by J. R. Thomson, 1850
BOX 5	Court martial, 1848
BOX 5	Expedition reports, 1843, 1854
BOX 5	"Geographical Memoir upon Upper California" by John Charles Frémont, 1848
RC 1-4	Unarranged books
BOX OV 1	Oversize
BOX OV 1	Civil War file, A-W, Rosters and charts of the 4th Regiment Cavalry, Missouri Volunteers, 1863-1864 (Container 1)
BOX OV 1	Presidential campaign of 1856, Graphic material, "Grand National Republican Banner," 1856 (Container 2)
BOX VA 1	Artifact, Dispatch box inscribed with Frémont name, undated (Container 2)