

William Henry Harrison Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2009

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Collection Summary

Title: William Henry Harrison Papers

Span Dates: 1734-1939

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1796-1841)

ID No.: MSS25148

Creator: Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841

Extent: 1,000 items; 12 containers; 2.5 linear feet; 4 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: United States president, senator, representative, and army officer from Ohio.

Correspondence and military papers, with special emphasis on Indian campaigns and affairs, a letterbook reporting on the War of 1812 in the Northwest Territory, and correspondence regarding Harrison's unsuccessful campaign for the presidency in 1836.

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.

Personal Names

Armstrong, John, 1758-1843--Correspondence.

Cleaves, Freeman, 1904- Chronology of the life of William Henry Harrison.

Eustis, William, 1753-1825--Correspondence.

Green, Duff, 1791-1875--Correspondence.

Harrison family.

Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841.

Johnston, John, 1775-1861--Correspondence.

Leftwich, Joel, 1759-1846--Correspondence.

McArthur, Duncan, 1772-1839--Correspondence.

Meigs, Return Jonathan, 1764-1825--Correspondence.

Monroe, James, 1758-1831--Correspondence.

Payne, John C.--Correspondence.

Schenck, William Cortenus, 1773-1821--Correspondence.

Shelby, Isaac, 1750-1826--Correspondence.

Tupper, Edward White, 1771-1823--Correspondence.

Wilkinson, James, 1757-1825--Correspondence.

Winchester, James, 1752-1826--Correspondence.

Subjects

Indians of North America--Government relations.

Indians of North America--Wars.

Presidents--United States--Election--1836.

Locations

Northwest, Old--History--War of 1812.

United States--History--War of 1812.

Occupations

Army officers.

Presidents--United States.

Representatives, U.S. Congress--Ohio.

Senators, U.S. Congress--Ohio.

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of William Henry Harrison, United States president, senator, representative, and army officer from Ohio, were obtained by the Library of Congress through gift, exchanges, and purchases, 1901-1969.

Processing History:

The William Henry Harrison Papers were arranged, indexed, and microfilmed in 1960. Subsequent additions were arranged and described in 1979. In 2009 the finding aid was expanded by including description of the main collection from the published index.

Additional Guides:

The microfilm edition of these papers (not including additions) is indexed in the *Index to the William H. Harrison Papers* (Washington, D.C.: 1960), prepared as part of the President's Papers Index Series. The index is available online in [PDF](#) and [page view](#) versions.

Copyright Status:

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

Access and Restrictions:

The papers William Henry Harrison 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.

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 or reel number, William Henry Harrison Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

History of the Collection

[From *Index to the William Henry Harrison Papers* (Washington, D.C.: 1960), pp. v-vi]

We learn from passengers who arrived by the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad, yesterday morning, between 1 and 2 o'clock, that as the train arrived at North Bend the old Log-Cabin was enveloped in flames, and that its destruction was complete. . . .

Of course nothing was saved in the way of furniture or documents, and the probability is that many valuable papers left by President Harrison, together with articles cherished as relics of the Old Hero, and of the early history of the West, have been destroyed with the building. . . .

Almost everything was lost. A little clothing and furniture and a few paintings were saved, but everything else was consumed. . . . the public has sustained a great loss in the destruction of a mass of valuable correspondence and papers reaching from

Gen. Harrison's first entry into public life till the untimely close of his career. These papers were stored in one of the garrets, and only a basketful or two were saved.

Thus reads a contemporary newspaper account of the end of the "old Log Cabin" commemorated by a spate of songs in the campaign of 1840. [1] Although the report of the fire in July 1858 plainly indicates that some items were saved, it was assumed for many years that all of the William Henry Harrison Papers were destroyed. As late as 1896 President Benjamin Harrison said in a letter to the Rev. Burke A. Hinsdale that his "grandfather's papers were all destroyed when the residence at North Bend was burned. Friends have sent me a good many letters and perhaps a pretty complete set of campaign publications and biographies which have been printed. I have not found time to arrange or classify them and am not just now in a position to consider the question of attempting to write my grandfather's biography." [2]

Gaillard Hunt, Chief of the Manuscript Division, first inquired about the William Henry Harrison Papers in 1910. [3] But it was not until September 1919 that the Library received a shipment of Benjamin Harrison Papers from Mary Lord Harrison, widow of the twenty-third President, who had begun to deposit her husband's papers three years earlier. One of the 11 boxes contained an important group of the William Henry Harrison Papers—the core of the present collection—composed of one of his letter-books, a number of drafts of his letters, and letters he had received. These papers, dated about 1805 to 1841, centered on the period of the War of 1812. There was also material relating to the 1840 Presidential campaign, some of which had been sent to Benjamin Harrison by friends and well-wishers. By direction of Mrs. Harrison, the entire shipment, including the William Henry Harrison Papers, was to be treated as part of the Benjamin Harrison collection and administered under the same conditions. The papers could be consulted only upon written permission from Mrs. Harrison or her daughter, Elizabeth, and could be withdrawn at the pleasure of either at any time. An interesting description of the William Henry Harrison segment at about this time was written by Dorothy Burne Goebel, one of the first scholars who was permitted to consult the papers. [4]

Two subsequent deposits by Mrs. Harrison also contained papers of William Henry Harrison. Several of his speeches were received in 1928, and some 70 papers of and relating to him, dated between 1735 and 1860, were received in 1932. By this time plans were being made to bind the William Henry Harrison segment as a separate collection, and restrictions on the examination of these papers by scholars were relaxed. The following year, on June 2, 1933, Mrs. Harrison presented all of the deposited material to the Library. [5] In a separate letter pertaining to the William Henry Harrison Papers, she specified only that they were to be bound within one year, a condition that was promptly fulfilled.

The Library, over the years, has acquired smaller numbers of Harrison materials from other sources, including gifts from two other members of the family, William Henry Harrison IX and John Scott Harrison, who presented certain original documents and allowed others to be photocopied. The Harrison Papers are now in nine volumes and two other containers. The number of pieces in the collection is 984.

In 1940 the Library began to formulate plans to insure the safety of its unique and particularly valuable materials. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941, and the declaration of war on the United States by Germany four days later, Archibald MacLeish, then Librarian of Congress, directed the evacuation of the specially selected materials according to plan. The Harrison Papers, with other materials, were evacuated from the Library on December 29, 1941, under the supervision of Alvin W. Kremer, Keeper of the Collections, and were stored in the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia. On August 14, 1944, they were returned to the Library. No item was lost or damaged in the vast evacuation program. Fortunately Washington was not attacked, but the Library of Congress was, in 1941, prepared for eventualities as it had not been prepared in 1814. [6]

Since 1944 the Harrison Papers have remained in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, where they may be consulted under the usual conditions which govern the use of

manuscripts. Additions unrestricted as to their use which are received after the completion of this film will eventually be microfilmed and indexed as a supplement to the entire microfilm reproduction of the Library's Presidential collections.

Inasmuch as many of President Harrison's papers have been destroyed, searchers may wish to examine the personal papers of his contemporaries in the Library of Congress and elsewhere for information about him and his times. Personal papers or autograph collections in the Library of Congress which are listed below contain varying numbers of letters by, to, or relating to President Harrison:

- [Clay, Henry](#)
- Clay, Thomas J.
- [Ewing, Thomas](#)
- Green, Duff
- Gregg Collection
- Harrison, John Scott
- Heaton, James
- Innes, Harry
- Jefferson, Thomas
- McArthur, Duncan
- McHenry, James
- [Madison, James](#)
- Marcy, William
- [Monroe, James](#)
- Piatt, John H.
- Randolph, John
- Rives, William C.
- Short, William
- Short Family Papers
- Stephenson, Nathaniel W.
- [Webster, Daniel](#)

Other libraries known to possess one or more William Henry Harrison manuscripts include the William L. Clements Library, the Indiana Historical Society, the New Jersey Historical Society, the New-York Historical Society, the Southern Historical Collections of the University of North Carolina, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Virginia Historical Society, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections may eventually reveal the whereabouts of other Harrison manuscripts.

1. *New York Times*, July 29, 1858.
2. July 9, 1896, copy (Tibbott transcript) in Benjamin Harrison Papers.
3. To W. Allen Scott, December 5, 1910.
4. "Manuscript Collections" in Dorothy B. Goebel, *William Henry Harrison, A Political Biography* (Indianapolis, 1926), pp. 383-88.
5. Letter from Mrs. Harrison to Herbert Putnam.
6. Most of the information concerning the evacuation of materials was furnished by Alvin W. Kremer, Keeper of the Collections. A statement concerning the evacuation appears in *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*, 1945, p. 59. See also article by Robert Penn Warren, "The War and the National Monuments," *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, 2 (November 1944), 64-75.

Scope and Content Note for Additions to the Collection

The [Addition](#) to the papers of William Henry Harrison spans the years 1793-1841 and consists mainly of original correspondence and photocopies of correspondence added to the Harrison Papers after the main portion of the collection was indexed and microfilmed as part of the Presidential Papers project in 1959. Included among the originals are letters exchanged between Harrison and Sherrod Williams, a Whig politician and congressman from Kentucky. In a twelve-page letter to Williams dated 1 May 1836, Harrison defines his opinions on various political issues of concern during the presidential campaign of 1836. Also in the original correspondence are letters by Harrison previously located in Subseries C of Series 4, which was not filmed or indexed with the main body of the papers. Most of the photocopies in the Addition are negative reproductions of letters contained in the microfilmed portion.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- [Series 1, General Correspondence, 1734-1939](#)
- [Series 2, Letterbook, 1812-1813](#)
- [Series 3, Miscellany, 1812-1932](#)
- [Series 4, Printed Matter, 1815-1922](#)
- [Series 5, Addition, 1793-1841](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
REEL 1-2	<u>Series 1, General Correspondence, 1734-1939</u> Bound volumes of letters and copies of letters to or from Harrison and a few related documents. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 2	<u>Series 2, Letterbook, 1812-1813</u> Copies of letters written by Harrison. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 3	<u>Series 3, Miscellany, circa 1812-1932</u> Typescripts, speech, printed matter, and other material. Arranged chronologically.
	<u>Series 4, Printed Matter, 1815-1922</u>
BOX 4:1 REEL 3	<u>Subseries A, Pamphlets, Including Addresses by Harrison, 1815-1892</u> Pamphlets, including two addresses by Harrison. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 4:1 REEL 3	<u>Subseries B, Pamphlets Concerning Harrison, 1836-1896</u> Arranged chronologically. Only the title pages of the pamphlets in Subseries B are available on microfilm.
BOX 4:2 not filmed	<u>Subseries C, Newspaper Clippings and Other Printed Matter, 1818-1922</u> Printed matter, newspaper clippings, typescripts, including several letters by Harrison, military balance sheets, and a photocopy of a document declaring Harrison as president. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 5:3 not filmed	<u>Series 5, Addition, 1793-1841</u> Original correspondence and negative photocopies duplicating items filed as part of Series 1. Grouped as originals and photocopies and arranged thereunder chronologically.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
REEL 1-2	Series 1, General Correspondence, 1734-1939 Bound volumes of letters and copies of letters to or from Harrison and a few related documents. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 1	1734-1813 Aug.
REEL 2	1813-Sept.1939
REEL 2	Series 2, Letterbook, 1812-1813 Copies of letters written by Harrison. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 2	1812-1813
REEL 3	Series 3, Miscellany, circa 1812-1932 Typescripts, speech, printed matter, and other material. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 3	Typescripts, abstracts, speech by Richard S. Coxe, newspaper extracts, a pamphlet, genealogical chart, and miscellany, circa 1812-1932, undated
	Series 4, Printed Matter, 1815-1922
BOX 4:1 REEL 3	Subseries A, Pamphlets, Including Addresses by Harrison, 1815-1892 Pamphlets, including two addresses by Harrison. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 4:1 REEL 3	Subseries B, Pamphlets Concerning Harrison, 1836-1896 (3 folders) (2 folders)
BOX 4:2 REEL 3	Arranged chronologically. Only the title pages of the pamphlets in Subseries B are available on microfilm.
BOX 4:2 not filmed	Subseries C, Newspaper Clippings and Other Printed Matter, 1818-1922 Printed matter, newspaper clippings, typescripts, including several letters by Harrison, military balance sheets, and a photocopy of a document declaring Harrison as president. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 4:2 not filmed	Military pay balance sheets, 1818 Printed matter

Series 4, Printed Matter, 1815-1922

Container

Contents

Broadsides
Miscellany
Newspaper clippings, 1840-1922, undated
Political songs
Typescripts

BOX 5:3
not filmed

Series 5, Addition, 1793-1841

Original correspondence and negative photocopies duplicating items filed
as part of Series 1.

Grouped as originals and photocopies and arranged thereunder
chronologically.

BOX 5:3
not filmed

Correspondence

Originals, 1817-1840

Photocopies, mainly negative copies of correspondence in the main body
of the papers, 1793-1841, undated

Selected Bibliography

- [From *Index to the William Henry Harrison Papers* (Washington, D.C.: 1960), p. vi]
Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress, 1929, p. 50; 1933, p. 27; 1934, p. 3; 1935, p. 3.
Garrison, Curtis W., *List of Manuscript Collections in the Library of Congress to July 1931*
(Washington, 1932), pp. 165, 184.
"Manuscript Collections" in Dorothy B. Goebel, *William Henry Harrison, A Political Biography*
(Indianapolis, 1926), pp. 383-88.
"Manuscripts," *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, 12 (May 1955), 133.
Powell, C. Percy, *List of Manuscript Collections Received in the Library of Congress, July 1931 to July 1938* (Washington, 1939), pp. 6, 8.
"The Present Status of Presidential Papers," *Manuscripts*, VIII (Fall 1955), 11.
Rowland, Buford, "The Papers of the Presidents," *American Archivist*, XIII (July 1950), 200;
reprinted in *Autograph Collectors' Journal*, III (Summer 1951), 46.
Sioussat, St. George L., "The John Cleves Short Collection of Papers of the Short, Harrison,
Symmes, and Allied Families," in *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*,
2 (November 1944), 76-85.
U.S. Library of Congress, *Handbook of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1918),
pp. 163-64.