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DONELSON, ANDREW JACKSON
(1799-1871)
PAPERS
1799-1898

(THS COLLECTION)

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INTRODUCTION

The Andrew Jackson Donelson Papers, 1799-1898, are centered around Andrew Jackson Donelson (1799-1871), U. S. Army Officer (aide-de-camp to Andrew Jackson), Tennessee lawyer, confidential secretary to Jackson (1824-1836), representative of the United States in negotiations with the Republic of Texas (1845), Minister to Prussia and the German Confederation (1846-1849), editor of the Washington *Union* (1851-1852), Vice-Presidential nominee on the Fillmore ticket (1856), and planter. The materials in this finding aid measure .42 linear feet.

The Andrew Jackson Donelson Papers are the property of the Tennessee Historical Society. Single photocopies may be made for purposes of scholarly research, but reproduction on a large scale is restricted.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Andrew Jackson Donelson Papers, containing approximately 150 items, span the period 1799-1898. The collection consists of accounts, correspondence, legal documents, land records, school records, and slave deeds.

The accounts include bills and receipts for sales and loans, and I. O. U. (1844) from A. J. Donelson to U. S. Representative Cave Johnson of Tennessee, and claims against the government for damage done by Federal troops to the property of William Alexander Donelson.

The land records contain entries, indentures, surveys, tax receipts, a power-of-attorney, and a record of sale due to tax payment failure. These concern A. J. Donelson, James G. Martin, Elizabeth Donelson, John Donelson, Lemuel Donelson, and Stockly Donelson.

Also in the collection are legal papers of William Alexander Donelson, school records of Martin Donelson, slave deeds of William Donelson, and an engraving for the *Dollar Magazine* entitled "Inauguration of William Henry Harrison, President of the United States, March 4, 1841."

Most of the collection is correspondence, the majority being the incoming and outgoing (1824-1870) of Andrew Jackson Donelson. His chief correspondents included: Donelson's daughter, Mary Emily (Donelson) Wilcox; his son-in-law, John A. Wilcox; and his sons, Andrew Jackson Donelson, Jr., Daniel S. Donelson, and Martin Donelson. In addition to the correspondence of family members, there is one letter of Samuel H. Laughlin and one from A. J. Donelson to Martin Van Buren, both regarding politics and worthy of note. The most prominent topic dealt with in the correspondence is United States politics, ranging in subject from political favors to the Bank of the United States. Mary Emily Wilcox, in her letters, related her interesting impressions during her trip to Italy, and also commented on the possibilities of Sam Houston's running for President of the United States. In addition to the letters of Andrew Jackson Donelson are those of Andrew Jackson Donelson, Jr. and Martin Donelson. Description of routine and life at Washington University (in St. Louis) and St. Louis University, as well as problems later encountered in farming (such as finding reliable and efficient laborers), are discussed by Martin in his letters.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Andrew Jackson Donelson

- 1799 Born August 25, grandson of Colonel John Donelson, one of the founders of Nashville, Tennessee; nephew of Andrew Jackson's wife; son of Samuel Donelson (d. 1802) and Mary (Smith) Donelson, only daughter of General Daniel Smith (1748-1818)
- 1804 Taken by Andrew Jackson to "The Hermitage" to be reared when A. J. Donelson's father had died and his mother had married a second time
- Attended Cumberland College, Nashville, Tennessee
- 1817 Appointed a cadet at West Point by President James Monroe
- 1820 Graduated second in his class at U. S. Military Academy although he completed the four-year course in three years; appointed aide-de-camp to General Andrew Jackson and served in Florida; attained rank of major
- 1822 Resigned from the U. S. Army
- 1822 Began studying law at Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky
- 1823 Admitted to the bar and commenced practice in Nashville
- 1824 Married his first cousin, Emily Tennessee Donelson (1807-1836), daughter of Captain John Donelson (1755-1830) and Mary (Purnell) Donelson, and granddaughter of Colonel John Donelson, pioneer
- 1824 Became confidential secretary to Jackson in his first bid for the presidency
- 1828 Again secretary to Jackson in his second and successful campaign for the Presidency; accompanied Jackson to Washington as his secretary
- 1831 Left Washington with his wife, Emily, when she, presiding as mistress of the "White House," refused to accept socially the wife of Cabinet member, John Henry Eaton, Mrs. Margaret "Peggy" (O'Neal) Timberlake Eaton; returned to Washington with his wife after about six months

- 1835 Made his home at “Tulip Grove” (built for him by Jackson, located near “The Hermitage”)
- 1836 His wife, Emily, died
- 1841 Married another cousin, Emily’s sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Martin (Donelson) Randolph, who was the widow of Lewis P. Randolph
- 1844 Appointed by President John Tyler to negotiate with Republic of Texas for the Lone Star’s admittance to the Union
- 1845 Continued in this post by President James K. Polk
- 1846-1849 Minister to Prussia, and later to the German Confederation; two sons were born abroad: Martin and William Alexander
- 1851-1852 Editor of the *Union* (Washington, D. C.)
- 1856 Vice-presidential nominee on the American Party’s Fillmore ticket
- 1871 Died at Memphis, Tennessee

Sources:

1. Manuscripts in the collection
2. *Dictionary of American Biography*
3. *Appleton’s Cyclopaedia of American Biography*
4. *Lamb’s Biographical Dictionary of the United States*

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

1. Accounts, notes, receipts, etc. – A. J. Donelson, 1827-1866
2. Accounts, receipts, etc. (including U. S. loyalty certificate issued after Civil War) – William Alexander Donelson, 1843-1871
3. Correspondence – Incoming – A. J. Donelson; Banks-Yeatman, 1827-1870
4. Correspondence – Outgoing – A. J. Donelson to his son, A. J. Donelson, Jr., 1848-1857
5. Correspondence – Outgoing – A. J. Donelson to brother, D. S. Donelson, 1845 and to his sons, Daniel and Martin, 1851-1857
6. Correspondence – Outgoing – A. J. Donelson to John Donelson, 1859
7. Correspondence – Outgoing – A. J. Donelson to persons other than family, 1824-1869
8. Correspondence – Incoming -- A . J. Donelson, Jr., 1849-1854
9. Correspondence – Outgoing – Martin Donelson, 1863-1869
10. Correspondence – Miscellaneous
11. Land records – Arkansas lands (tax receipts, power-of-attorney, sale for taxes) – A. J. Donelson, James G. Martin, Elizabeth Donelson, 1842-1852
12. Land records – Entries, indentures, surveys, etc. – John, Lemuel, and Stockly Donelson, and James G. Martin, 1799-1823
13. Legal Papers – Note, power-of-attorney, will – William Alexander Donelson, 1871-1898
14. Miscellaneous
15. School records – Martin Donelson (at Washington University, St. Louis), 1864
16. Slave deeds of William Donelson, 1822-1849

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