

**BENJAMIN BUTLER PAPERS
1796-1910****SC12417**

QUANTITY: 10 boxes (4 cu. ft.)
ACCESS: Open to Research
ACQUISITION: Gift of Elizabeth and Mary Kirkbridge, 1965
PROCESSED BY: Allison Trent, Student Intern, University at Albany, October 1991

Biographical Note:

Benjamin F. Butler (1795-1858), lawyer and politician, is probably best known for his work in 1825 as a member of the commission for the revision of the statutes of the State of New York, in which he was associated with John Duer and John C. Spencer. His lifelong friendship with Martin Van Buren was also noteworthy. Born in Kinderhook, he studied law in Albany, was admitted to the bar in 1817, and for four years thereafter was a partner at Albany in Van Buren's office. From 1827 to 1833 he was a member of the State Legislature, and during the next five years was attorney general in President Andrew Jackson's cabinet. With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 he left the Democratic ranks and joined the newly-formed Republican Party. He refused cabinet appointments under Presidents Van Buren and Polk, preferring the practice of his chosen profession.

Scope and Content Note:

The bulk of the papers consist of letters Mr. Butler wrote between 1815 and 1858 to Mrs. Butler, the former Harriet Allen of Hudson, whom he married in 1818. They are long and detailed, the handwriting small and the lines compact. They abound in apt phrases and vivid descriptions of natural scenery and personalities. They reflect the character of the man and his varied interests – law, politics and public affairs, close friendships, education of youth, temperance, religion.

His life in Albany as a young lawyer, earnestly studying, caring for his partner's private business while Van Buren was attorney general of New York, and embarking on his own legal career, forms the chief subject of the earlier letters. Those written from Washington, where throughout his professional life he argued cases before the United States Supreme Court and where he spent the years 1833-1838 as attorney general of the United States, would well repay careful perusal by the student of the political and economic history of the times. He wrote at length to Mrs. Butler about presidential appointments, resignations, and controversial issues, in a number of instances making such marginal annotations as "All secret" or "This is a secret."

Changes in travel conditions with the advent, extension, and improvements of railroads are commented on as he reports details of his trips between Albany and Washington. Presidential elections, the annexation of Texas, the extension of slavery, trouble in Mexico, the South Sea exploring expedition of 1836 are a few of the national subjects he discusses. In 1844 he made a western tour, the highlight of which was a visit of several days with former President Jackson at the Hermitage in Tennessee – the fulfillment of a lifelong ambition. Jackson's displays of temper in his differences with General Scott over the handling of affairs in Mexico failed to shake Butler's admiration for Old Hickory. These papers contain correspondence between Butler and

other prominent personalities – John A. Dix, John C. Spencer, Chancellor James Kent, Thomas Hart Benton, etc., as well as Martin Van Buren, whose invitation to stay at the White House Butler accepted, since he would be allowed to “hermitize” there. In addition to correspondence, these papers contain legal briefs and opinions related to Butler's law practice and other assorted personal ephemera.

Box and Folder List

Box	Folder	Description
		Correspondence - Family
		Benjamin Butler to Harriet Allen (later Mrs. Benjamin Butler)
1	1	5 July 1815 - 16 August 1816
1	2	27 August 1816 - 9 October 1816
1	3	15 October 1816 - 12 November 1816
1	4	8 November 1816 - 30 December 1816
1	5	6 January 1817 - 25 January 1817
1	6	29 January 1817 to 7 March 1817
1	7	14 March 1817 - 11 April 1817
1	8	13 April 1817 - 29 May 1817
1	9	3 June 1817 - 25 July 1817
1	10	29 July 1817 - 13 September 1817
1	11	15 September 1817 - 18 November 1817
1	12	21 November 1817 - 22 December 1817
1	13	2 January 1818 - 7 February 1818
1	14	10 February 1818 - 4 March 1818
1	15	7 March 1818 - 15 April 1818
1	16	10 April 1818 - 6 May 1818
		Letters from Benjamin Butler to Mrs. Benjamin Butler
2	1	No date
2	2	No date
2	3	21 June 1818 - 16 March 1820
2	4	18 March 1820 - 5 August 1820
2	5	6 June 1821 - 16 August 1823
2	6	2 July 1825 - 27 October 1829
2	7	8 May 1830 - 1 March 1832
2	8	2 March 1832 - 16 May 1832
2	9	13 July 1833 - 16 June 1834
2	10	17 June 1834 - 25 November 1834
2	11	20 April 1835 - 18 August 1835
2	12	21 August 1835 - 30 November 1835
3	1	22 June 1836 - 14 March 1837
3	2	15 November 1837 - 28 January 1838
3	3	13 February 1838 - 14 January 1839
3	4	19 January 1839 - 29 August 1839
3	5	11 May 1841 - 6 April 1844
3	6	8 April 1844 - 31 August 1844

Box	Folder	Description
3	7	9 October 1844 - 23 September 1845
3	8	23 February 1846 - 14 February 1853
3	9	Letters from Benjamin Butler to his children (1831-1856)
		Letters from Mrs. Benjamin Butler to Benjamin Butler
4	1	n.d. - 29 February 1832
4	2	14 May 1833 - 14 November 1833
4	3	5 June 1834 - 25 November 1835
4	4	26 November 1835 - 8 September 1836
4	5	23 May 1837 - 7 March 1838
4	6	12 March 1838 - 16 March 1853
4	7	Letters from Charles Butler to Benjamin Butler (1858)
4	8	Letters from Charles Butler to Benjamin Butler (1858)
4	9	Letters to Benjamin Butler from sister (n.d., 11 April 1834 - 10 October 1858)
4	10	Letters to Benjamin Butler from various relatives (1835-1858)
5	1	Letters to Mr. and Mrs. Butler from their children (1826-1857)
5	2	Letters to Mr. and Mrs. Butler from their children (1826-1857)
5	3	Letters to Benjamin Butler from William Butler (1838-1884)
5	4	Letters to Benjamin Butler from William Butler (1838-1884)
5	5	Letters to William Butler (1848)
5	6	Letters to Harriet Butler (1833)
5	7	Letters to Harriet Butler (1833)
5	8	Letters to Benjamin Butler from B. Franklin Butler (1851-1856)
5	9	Letters from Harriet Butler (1837)
5	10	Letters from Harriet Butler (1837)
5	11	Letters from Benjamin Butler (1849-1857)
5	12	Letters to Charles Butler and Allen butler (1833-1857)
5	13	Letters of Introduction (1858)
5	14	Letters of Introduction (1858)
5	15	Correspondence (1858)
5	16	Letters from Benjamin Butler to his father (1844-1858). 1844 letter is a typed copy.
		Letters to William H. Allen
6	1	6 October 1817 - 9 May 1818
6	2	13 June 1818 - 27 October 1818
6	3	16 November 1818 - 23 April 1819
6	4	25 April 1819 - 7 November 1822
6		Letters from William H. Allen
6	5	12 January 1812 - 26 March 1818
6	6	3 December 1818 - 20 November 1819
6	7	29 July 1822 - 14 June 1822
6	8	12 July 1822 - 6 September 1822
6	9	Letters dealing with ship
6	10	Letters pertaining to death of William Allen
6		Letters from Edmund Dwight to his parents

Box	Folder	Description
6	11	20 July 1853 - 8 May 1856
6	12	14 May 1856 - 13 May 1859
6		Letters to Edmund Dwight from his parents
6	13	30 June 1836 - 6 March 1855
6	14	7 July 1855 - 15 February 1856
6	15	Letters concerning Dwight Family (1844-1850)
6	16	Deed (1832) - Henry Dwight
6	17	Estate papers of Henry Dwight
6	18	Estate papers of Henry Dwight
6	19	Agreement between Edmund Dwight and George Megrath (1849)
6	20	Family correspondence (1846-1866)
6	21	Estate papers of Henry Dwight
6	22	Dwight family records
		Correspondence - General
7	1	Letters from Benjamin Butler (1816-1858)
7	2	Letters from Benjamin Butler to Martin Van Buren (1815-1836)
7	3	Letters from Benjamin Butler to Martin Van Buren (1841-1858)
7	4	Letters from Martin Van Buren to Benjamin Butler (1824-1857)
7	5	Letters to Benjamin Butler (1825 - 2 September 1836)
7	6	Letters to Benjamin Butler (7 September 1836-1858)
7	7	Letters to Mrs. Benjamin Butler (1834-1850)
7	8	Letters to Benjamin Butler 1850-1856
7	9	Letters to Benjamin Butler 1856-1857
7	10	Letters to Benjamin Butler 1857-1858
8	1	Letters to Benjamin Butler (n.d.)
8	2	Letters to Benjamin Butler - pertaining to legal matters
8	3	Letters to Mrs. Benjamin Butler (1836-1837)
8	4	Letters to Mrs. Benjamin Butler (1837-1845)
8	5	Letters from Jacob Barker concerning banking matters (1817-February 1818)
8	6	Letters from Jacob Barker concerning banking matters (March 1818)
8	7	Letters from Jacob Barker concerning banking matters (April 1818)
8	8	Letters from Jacob Barker concerning banking matters (May 1818-1857)
8	9	Letters from Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, W.C. Bryant
8	10	Letters in reference to Benjamin Butler (1833-1859)
		Legal Papers
8	11	Ezekial Byam vs. Michael Lacourand John Stevens (1837-1845)
8	12	Ezekial Byam vs. Michael Lacourand John Stevens (1837-1845)
8	13	Ezekial Byam vs. Michael Lacourand John Stevens (1837-1845)
8	14	Lewis H. Sanford vs. John Coondit Halsey
8	15	Letters pertaining to will of Ralph Clark (1852)
8	16	Opinion in case of will of Dr. Williams Barthorp (1838)
8	17	Opinion in Ludlow will case
8	18	Opinion of land title
8	19	Letters from Treasury Department (1833-1838)

Box	Folder	Description
8	20	East River Bank Case
8	21	Benjamin Butler bond to Thomas Suffan concerning Ohio lands (1836-1837)
8	22	John Trow in agreement with Clara Davenport for him to furnish stereotype plates for her book
9	1	Composite of laws regarding dower rights
9	2	Agreement between Benjamin Butler and William Churchill for rent of house in New York (1838)
9	3	Receipts for accounts with Howard Allen (1833-1837)
9	4	Papers relating to New York Historical Society
9	5	Letter from James Rivington to Benjamin Walker (1796)
9	6	Letter to Martin Van Buren (1832)
9	7	Return of absentees (1780)
9	8	Political writings
9	9	Miscellaneous
		Printed Material
10	1	Printed material (1839)
10	2	Newspaper clippings
10	3	Newspaper clippings
10	4	Printed material, broadsides
10	5	Printed material, card
10	6	20th Century printed material
10	7	20th Century printed material
10	8	20th Century printed material
10	9	Family lineage

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