

# Chester Alan Arthur 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: Chester Alan Arthur Papers

Span Dates: 1843-1960

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1870-1888)

ID No.: MSS11213

Creator: Arthur, Chester Alan, 1829-1886

Extent: 4,400 items; 31 containers plus 1 oversize; 10.4 linear feet; 10 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: U.S. president. Correspondence, financial papers, scrapbooks, clippings, and other papers chiefly relating to Arthur's presidency, his service as collector or customs for the Port of New York, and the New York Republican State Committee.

## 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

Allen, Campbell--Correspondence.

Arthur, Chester Alan, 1829-1886.

Arthur, Chester Alan, 1864-1937--Correspondence.

Blaine, James Gillespie, 1830-1893--Correspondence.

Bliss, George, 1830-1897--Correspondence.

Brewster, Benjamin Harris, 1816-1888--Correspondence.

Bristow, Benjamin Helm, 1832-1896--Correspondence.

Conkling, Roscoe, 1829-1888--Correspondence.

Dun, Robert Graham, 1826-1900--Correspondence.

Fish, Hamilton, 1808-1893--Correspondence.

Frelinghuysen, Frederick T. (Frederick Theodore), 1817-1885--Correspondence.

Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885--Correspondence.

Guiteau, Charles Julius, 1841-1882--Correspondence.

MacVeagh, Wayne, 1833-1917--Correspondence.

Morgan, Edwin D. (Edwin Denison), 1811-1883--Correspondence.

Phillips, Frederick J.--Correspondence.

Reed, James C.--Correspondence.

Sand, Julia I.--Correspondence.

Sheridan, Philip Henry, 1831-1888--Correspondence.

Sherman, John, 1823-1900--Correspondence.

Sherman, William T. (William Tecumseh), 1820-1891--Correspondence.

Sprague, Kate Chase, 1840-1899--Correspondence.

### Organizations

New York (N.Y.) Collector of the Port of New York.

Republican Party (N.Y.). State Committee--Correspondence.

### Subjects

Customs administration--New York (State)--New York.

### Locations

New York (State)--Politics and government.

United States--Politics and government--1881-1885.

### Occupations

Presidents--United States.

## Administrative Information

### Provenance:

The papers of Chester Alan Arthur, U.S. president, were acquired by the Library of Congress through gift, purchase, bequest, and exchange from various sources, 1902-1979.

### Processing History:

When the Chester Alan Arthur Papers were organized and filmed in 1961, certain items were omitted as not being integral to the papers. These items, subsequent to the completion of the index and microfilm, were added in 1973, 1979, and 1980 as Series 4, Addition. The bulk of this material, a gift of more than two thousand items, came from Vincent F. Assaiante in 1971. The following year another significant addition was received as a bequest from Chester A. Arthur III, grandson of the president. In 1973 Arthur's biographer, Thomas C. Reeves, who was largely responsible for earlier Arthur acquisitions, donated a large body of Arthur family papers from which items of Chester A. Arthur were incorporated into this collection. Smaller additions received by the Library from 1960 to 1974 were also interfiled with this series, and the entire series was microfilmed in 1984. A rehousing of the material in a larger number of containers in 1999 did not affect the organization as reflected in the microfilm edition.

### Additional Guides:

The microfilm edition of these papers (not including Series 4) is indexed in the *Index to the Chester A. Arthur Papers* (Washington, D.C.: 1961) prepared as part of the President's Papers Index Series.

### Copyright Status:

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

### Access and Restrictions:

The papers of Chester Alan Arthur 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 ten 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: Reel number, Chester Alan Arthur Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## History of the Collection

[From *Index to the Chester A. Arthur Papers* (Washington, D.C.: 1961), pp. v-vii]

You may be sure that I am as interested as you are in having the Arthur papers finally come to rest in the Library of Congress. The ones that I have in my possession have travelled a good deal—over to Europe, back to Colorado, California, and now here [New York]. During his lifetime, my father would never

let anyone see them—not even me. When they finally came into my possession, I was amazed that there were so few. At my father's funeral in Albany, or rather at the interment of his ashes which took place several months after his death [July 17, 1934], I enquired of all the cousins there assembled—the nieces and nephews of my grandfather, as to what had happened to the bulk of the papers. Charles E. McElroy, the son of Mary Arthur McElroy who was my grandfather's First Lady, tells me that the day before he died, my grandfather caused to be burned three large garbage cans, each at least four feet high, full of papers which I am sure would have thrown much light on history.

So wrote Chester A. Arthur III to Dr. Thomas P. Martin, then Acting Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, on April 15, 1938. [1]

For many years President Arthur was represented in the Manuscript Division by a single document, a letter he had written during the Civil War and which the Library purchased in 1902. Beginning in 1910 and continuing to the present, successive chiefs of the division have done what they could do to assemble surviving Arthur manuscripts. For the first of these chiefs, Gaillard Hunt, who in that year initiated the search for the main body of the Arthur Papers, there was little but discouragement as a result of his inquiries. However, his persistence and what he was able to learn were to encourage his successors. He wrote first to Col. William G. Rice and learned the address of Mrs. John E. McElroy, Arthur's sister and official hostess during his administration. Mr. Hunt wrote to her and learned from her that Chester A. Arthur, Jr., controlled the papers. After several attempts, Mr. Hunt learned Mr. Arthur's address and wrote to him. The reply—written on March 13, 1915, five years after the search began—provided the first concrete but frustrating evidence:

I beg you will excuse my tardiness in replying to your letter of November 4th [1914]. The question of my father's papers is a very sore subject with me.

These papers were supposed to be in certain chests which were stored on their receipt from Washington, in the cellar of 123 Lexington Avenue. After my father's death, they were removed, I believe, by direction of the executors to a store house recommended by Mr. McElroy at Albany. Several years ago on making my residence in Colorado, I sent for these chests of papers and found in them nothing but custom house records of no particular value or importance. Where the papers they were supposed to contain have vanished, is a mystery.

Three years later, in 1918, the Library acquired, as a loan, its second Arthur document, the draft of his veto message of the Fitz-John Porter bill. Arthur H. Masten, a nephew of the President, had not inherited the document but had received it as a gift from the widow of Adrian H. Joline, in whose autograph collection it had been found. Masten's heirs have given the Library of Congress title to this manuscript.

The Library renewed its inquiries in various quarters from time to time with no significant result until Charles Moore, in 1924, while Acting Chief of the Manuscript Division, wrote a long letter to John H. Finley of the *New York Times*. [2] As a result, Dr. Finley published in the *Times* an editorial plea for Arthur manuscripts, but there was no immediate response. Other inquiries were made to: J. Stanley-Brown, who had been President James A. Garfield's secretary and who had also served Arthur briefly; Charles M. Hendley, a former White House executive clerk, who provided some personal recollections; Rudolph Forster, in 1924 executive clerk at the White House; Elihu Root and Robert T. Lincoln; and the County Clerk of New York County, N.Y., who provided a copy of Arthur's will; and various others.

In June 1925 Louise Reed Mitchell, the daughter of Arthur's secretary, James C. Reed, informed the Librarian of Congress that she had inherited some 50 Arthur manuscripts. She sold these to the Library. The Librarian's *Annual Report* for 1925, p. 56-57, reviewed the search and the results up to that time and assessed the collection as "neither extensive nor are the documents themselves

of high historical importance; but a gap in the records of the presidency has been filled in as satisfactory a manner as is possible."

In 1938 a fresh trail, opened up by a suggestion made by Jeannette P. Nichols, led to President Arthur's grandson, part of whose reply introduces this essay. In the same year, as a result of an exchange of letters with the Library, Mr. Arthur deposited 90 of the more important documents he had in his possession. [3] These manuscripts, together with an additional 470 documents which had remained in his possession, were sold to the Library in 1958.

It was fortunate that the greatly augmented but still small collection reached its present size soon after the Congress authorized and directed the Librarian of Congress to arrange, microfilm, and index the Arthur and 22 other collections of Presidential Papers. Before the filming and indexing had been completed, further additions were received. Twelve letters written by Arthur in the 1850's were given by the noted collector, Charles A. Feinberg.

Another major segment of the Arthur Papers is available because of a friendship that began during the Civil War. Robert G. Dun and Chester A. Arthur were business associates and personal friends in New York City for at least a quarter of a century. Both were members of the Union League Club in New York. Arthur served as counsel for The Mercantile Agency, as Dun's company was called, for two decades. Fortunately for all who may interest themselves in the career of Arthur, Owen A. Sheffield, retired Secretary of Dun & Bradstreet, Inc., presented photocopies or typed copies accompanied by annotations, of all known documents in the files of the company relating to Arthur. The gift was made in 1959 with the consent and the cooperation of J. Wilson Newman, president of Dun & Bradstreet. Many of these documents have particular value. A letter written by Dun to the manager of his Pittsburgh office on June 1, 1870, for example, contains a spirited description of Arthur's character, written long before anyone guessed that he would be the 21st President of the United States.

Also in 1959, Robert S. Macfarlane, president of the Northern Pacific Railway, kindly supplied copies of several telegrams and related material which add to the records concerning Arthur's trip to Yellowstone Park in 1883. A few other documents and copies of documents complete one of the smallest of the 23 groups of Presidential Papers in the Library. The number of items is 1,413 and they are bound in 12 volumes. The microfilm reproduction of these was released to the public in 1960.

There remains the matter of the large number of lost Arthur manuscripts. Letters written by Arthur to others and preserved in their papers, together with copies of their letters to him, offer a sampling of what the Arthur Papers once contained. The photocopies of letters from the files of Dun & Bradstreet (Series 2) are useful for this purpose and so, to a lesser degree, are transcripts and references (Series 3) to Arthur papers in other collections.

An example may be cited of what is known to have existed. Arthur kept journals while on a trip with Henry D. Gardiner in 1857. The two young men spent 4 months touring the West as far as Kansas and Minnesota. Ward Burlingame, a Kansas newspaper reporter, interviewed Arthur 26 years later when he was about to depart for the West again, this time to Yellowstone Park. The published interview records all that has been found with reference to the journals: "The travels of the two extended over some four months, and the president could not recall, without access to his papers, packed away in his New York house, the names of all the places at which they stopped. By the way, it occurs to me that the complete journals of this trip, carefully kept by the principal traveler, would prove a veritable bonanza to the writer fortunate enough to get hold of them." [4]

Inasmuch as many of President Arthur'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. The personal papers or autograph collections in the Library of Congress listed below contain varying numbers of letters by, to, or relating to President Arthur:

- American Academy of Arts and Letters
- Bancroft-Bliss

- Beecher, Henry W.
- [Blaine, James G.](#)
- Bristow, Benjamin H.
- Chandler, William E.
- [Chandler, Zachariah](#)
- [Cleveland, Grover](#)
- Conkling, Roscoe
- Curry, J. L. M., Autograph Collection
- [Davis, J. C. Bancroft](#)
- Evarts, William M.
- Fish, Hamilton
- [Garfield, James A.](#)
- Gresham, Walter Q.
- [Harrison, Benjamin](#)
- McCulloch, Hugh
- Manning, Daniel
- The Players Collection
- [Porter, Fitz-John](#)
- Root, Elihu
- Schofield, John M.
- Schurz, Carl
- [Sheridan, Philip H.](#)
- Sherman, John
- Sherman, William T.
- Taft, William H.
- Toner, Joseph M., Autograph Collection
- Whitney, William C.
- Young, John Russell

Other libraries known to possess one or more Chester A. Arthur manuscripts include the New-York Historical Society in New York City, which has eight letterbooks dating from 1868 to 1878 and other materials dated for the most part prior to 1880; the New York State Library in Albany, which has nearly 200 items, for the most part in the Edwin D. Morgan Papers; the Boston Public Library; the William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.; the Rutherford B. Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio; the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark; the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.; the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia; the United States Naval Academy Museum, Annapolis, Md.; and Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn. *A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States*, edited by Philip M. Hamer (New Haven, 1961), which includes entries indexed under "Presidents, U.S.," may lead a searcher to other Arthur manuscripts. The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections now being assembled at the Library of Congress also may eventually reveal the whereabouts of other Arthur manuscripts.

Note: The Library of Congress acknowledges with gratitude the assistance of Chester A. Arthur III, grandson of the President, and George F. Howe, the latter's biographer, each of whom read a draft of this essay and provided valuable comment and suggestions. Mr. Howe's interest goes back to 1926, when he selected President Arthur as the subject for his doctoral dissertation.

1. Except as specified, letters cited are in the files of the Manuscript Division.
2. June 26, 1924.
3. The Arthur collection, including the deposited documents, was evacuated to Charlottesville, Va., in 1941 and returned to the Library of Congress in 1944. A statement concerning this evacuation appears in *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*, 1945, p. 59. See also the article by Robert

Penn Warren, "The War and the National Muniments," Library of Congress *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, 2 (November 1944), 64-75.

4. *Leavenworth* [Kans.] *Times*, July 29, 1883; a shorter revised story appeared in the *New York Times*, August 1, 1883.

## Scope and Content Note for Additions to the Collection

Series 4, the Addition to the Arthur Papers, spans the period 1846-1960 and is arranged in four subseries: Correspondence, Financial Papers, Scrapbooks, and Miscellany.

The largest portion of Series 4 appears to be part of the correspondence file of the New York Republican State Committee dating from May to November 1880, a period in which Arthur served as committee chairman, and beginning in June, as vice-presidential candidate. There are letters and telegrams to Arthur and other members of the committee as well as draft replies from Arthur, apparently in the handwriting of his secretary, James C. Reed.

Other correspondence includes letters from Arthur to his son, Chester Alan Arthur (1864-1937); letters from Robert Graham Dun, George Bliss, and Roscoe Conkling to Arthur; and letters of resignation submitted by members of James A. Garfield's cabinet after his assassination in 1881.

Also in Series 4 are an account book for the Arthur's presidential years kept by the steward of the Executive Mansion, a scrapbook on Arthur's service as collector of customs for the Port of New York (1871-1877), and correspondence between Owen A. Sheffield and E. T. I. Thygeson in 1960 that illuminates Arthur's relationship with his close friend Robert Graham Dun and discusses the disposition of Arthur's personal papers.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- Series 1, General Correspondence and Related Manuscripts, 1843-1938
- Series 2, Arthur-Dun Manuscripts, 1862-1887
- Series 3, Arthur Transcripts, 1872-1926
- Series 4: Addition, 1846-1960

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
REEL 1-3	<u>Series 1, General Correspondence and Related Manuscripts, 1843-1938</u> Letters received, some letters sent, related original manuscripts, and a few photocopies of original manuscripts. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 3	<u>Series 2, Arthur-Dun Manuscripts, 1862-1887</u> Photocopies and a few typed copies of letters exchanged by Arthur and Robert Graham Dun and of other letters and documents concerning Arthur. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 3	<u>Series 3, Arthur Transcripts, 1872-1926</u> Typed copies of certain letters written by, to, or concerning President Arthur in the papers of other persons in the Library of Congress. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 4:1-12 REEL 1-7	<u>Series 4: Addition, 1846-1960</u>
BOX 4:1-8 REEL 4:1-4	<u>Correspondence, 1846-1887</u> Arranged chronologically.
BOX 4:13-16 REEL 4:4-6	<u>Financial Papers, 1855-1886</u> Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 4:17 REEL 4:6	<u>Scrapbooks, 1871-1884</u> Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 4:18 REEL 4:6-7	<u>Miscellany, circa 1857-1960</u> Arranged alphabetically by type of material or topic.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
REEL 1-3	Series 1, General Correspondence and Related Manuscripts, 1843-1938 Letters received, some letters sent, related original manuscripts, and a few photocopies of original manuscripts. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 1	1843 Aug. 31-1881 Dec.
REEL 2	1882 Jan. 1-1925 Apr. 27
REEL 3	1925 May 1-1938 Mar. 9 and undated
REEL 3	Series 2, Arthur-Dun Manuscripts, 1862-1887 Photocopies and a few typed copies of letters exchanged by Arthur and Robert Graham Dun and of other letters and documents concerning Arthur. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 3	1862 Aug. 6-1887 Feb. 7
REEL 3	Series 3, Arthur Transcripts, 1872-1926 Typed copies of certain letters written by, to, or concerning President Arthur in the papers of other persons in the Library of Congress. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 3	1871 Nov. 23-1926 Jan. 4
BOX 4:1-12 REEL 1-7	Series 4: Addition, 1846-1960
BOX 4:1-8 REEL 4:1-4	Correspondence, 1846-1887  Arranged chronologically. 1846-1879  (4 folders) 1880 May-Aug. 20 (5 folders) Aug. 21-Sept. 13
BOX 4:1 REEL 4:1	
BOX 4:2 REEL 4:1-2	(18 folders)
BOX 4:3 REEL 4:2	Sept. 14-23  (16 folders)

Series 4: Addition, 1846-1960

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 4:4 REEL 4:2	Sept. 24-31  (16 folders)
BOX 4:5 REEL 4:2-3	Oct. 1-7  (16 folders)
BOX 4:6 REEL 4:2-3	Oct. 8-15  (15 folders)
BOX 4:7 REEL 4:2-3	Oct. 16-20  (9 folders)
BOX 4:8 REEL 4:2-3	Oct. 21-24  (19 folders)
BOX 4:9 REEL 4:3-4	Oct. 25-26  (31 folders)
BOX 4:10 REEL 4:4	Oct. 26-28  (23 folders)
BOX 4:11 REEL 4:4	Oct. 29-Nov. 30  (21 folders)
BOX 4:12 REEL 4:4	No day or month  (12 folders) 1881-1887, undated (8 folders)
BOX 4:13 REEL 4:4	Indexes to three vols. of letterbooks, 1880, May-Nov., accompanied by lists in the original arrangement of the letters before they were disbound and filed chronologically in this series (2 folders)
BOX 4:13-16 REEL 4:4-6	Financial Papers, 1855-1886  Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 4:13 REEL 4:4	Account books  Family expense book, 1873-1876, and personal and family expense book, 1881-1882 Presidential, 1882-1885 Checkbooks Arthur family, 1876-1881 Presidential, 1882-1884
BOX 4:13 REEL 4:5	Presidential, 1882-1884
BOX 4:14 REEL 4:5	Checks, 1871-1886  (4 folders) Estate of Chester Alan Arthur and Elizabeth H. Herndon, 1886

Series 4: Addition, 1846-1960

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 4:15 REEL 4:5	Financial affairs of Elizabeth H. Herndon
	Bills and receipts, 1856-1863, undated (6 folders)
BOX 4:16 REEL 4:5	Insurance policies
	Miscellaneous (2 folders)
BOX 4:16 REEL 4:6	Mortgages, deeds, releases, 1855-1863, 1871  (4 folders) Receipts and promissory note, 1873-1886
BOX 4:17 REEL 4:6	Scrapbooks, 1871-1884
	Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 4:17 REEL 4:6	Clippings
	Arthur and the New York Custom House, New York, N.Y., 1871-1877 Political and personal life of Arthur, 1883-1884
BOX 4:18 REEL 4:6-7	Miscellany, circa 1857-1960
	Arranged alphabetically by type of material or topic.
BOX 4:18-19 REEL 4:6	Address books of Arthur's wife, Ellen Herndon Arthur (1838-1880) and daughter, Ellen Herndon Arthur Pinkerton (1871-1915) Address about Arthur by William E. Chandler, 1903 <i>Answer of the Weighers of the Port of New York to the Report of the Commission To Investigate the New York Custom House (1877?)</i> Arthur family Bible, photocopy of pages relating to births, marriages, and deaths, circa 1857-1937 (Bible in Rare book Division) Arthur family genealogy Arthur, Chester Alan, last will and testament, 1886, Mar. 8, and report of the executors of his estate, 1888, July 24 (6 folders)
BOX 4:18 REEL 4:7	Certificates and commission appointing Arthur as custom collector for the Port of New York, 1871-1881 Election and calling cards General
BOX 4:19 REEL 4:7	Hendley, C. M., recollection of Arthur, 1925, Apr. 22
	Memorial to Arthur, by the Military order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Commanders of the District of Columbia, 1886 Nicaraguan canal route proposal Postcard photograph of Arthur, Arthur coat of arms, and seals Record of expressions of sympathy on Arthur's death, 1886 Reproductions of documents by, to, and about Arthur, circa 1853-1886, undated (15 folders)

Series 4: Addition, 1846-1960

*Container*

*Contents*

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*Republican Leaders: Life and Letter of Acceptance of Chester A. Arthur, the Republican Candidate for Vice President* (New York: Cornwell press, Book and Job Printers, 1880)

Sheffield, Owen A., and E. T. I. Thygeson, correspondence regarding Robert Graham Dun and Arthur, 1960  
(2 folders)

Album of photographs, "Journey Through the Yellowstone National Park and Northwestern Wyoming, 1883" (from Prints and Photographs Division)

## Selected Bibliography

- [From *Index to the Chester A. Arthur Papers*. (Washington, D.C.: 1961), p. vii]  
*Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*, 1925, p. 56-57; 1938-39, p. 44-45.
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- Howe, George F., *Chester A. Arthur, A Quarter-Century of Machine Politics* (New York, 1957), p. 292.
- Powell, C. Percy, *List of Manuscript Collections Received in the Library of Congress July 1931 to July 1938* (Washington, 1939), p. 17.
- "The Present Status of Presidential Papers," *Manuscripts*, VIII (Fall 1955), 14.
- Rowland, Buford, "The Papers of the Presidents," *American Archivist*, XIII (July 1950), 206; reprinted in *Autograph Collectors' Journal*, III (Summer 1951), 49.
- Shelley, Fred, "The Chester A. Arthur Papers," *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, 16 (May 1959), 115-22.
- U.S. Library of Congress, *Handbook of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1918), p. 31.