

Zachary Taylor 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: Zachary Taylor Papers

Span Dates: 1814-1931

ID No.: MSS42440

Creator: Taylor, Zachary, 1784-1850

Extent: 650 items; 9 containers; 1.6 linear feet; 2 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: U.S. president and army officer. Correspondence, autobiographical account, military papers, estate records, printed matter, map, and other papers relating chiefly to Taylor's presidency, his military service, and the management of his Louisiana plantation by his son.

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

Clayton, John M. (John Middleton), 1796-1856--Correspondence.

Crawford, George Washington, 1798-1872--Correspondence.

Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889--Correspondence.

Jesup, Thomas Sidney, 1788-1860--Correspondence.

Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849--Correspondence.

Ringgold, Thomas W.--Correspondence.

Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866--Correspondence.

Taylor family.

Taylor, Richard, 1826-1879.

Taylor, Zachary, 1784-1850.

Organizations

United States. Army.

Subjects

Indians of North America--Wars--1815-1875.

Plantations--Louisiana--Saint Charles Parish.

Seminole War, 2nd, 1835-1842.

Locations

United States--Politics and government--1849-1853.

Occupations

Army officers.

Presidents--United States.

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of Zachary Taylor, U.S. president and army officer, were acquired by the Library of Congress through various gifts and purchases, 1904-1980.

Processing History:

The collection was prepared for indexing and microfilming in 1960 and revised and expanded in 1979 and 1984. The finding aid was revised in 2009.

Additional Guides:

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

Copyright Status:

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Zachary Taylor in these papers has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions:

The papers of Zachary Taylor 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 two 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, Zachary Taylor Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

History of the Collection

[From *Index to the Zachary Taylor Papers* (Washington, D.C.: 1960), pp. v-vii]

President Zachary Taylor's personal papers were largely destroyed or dispersed in 1862 when "Fashion," the plantation of his son Richard in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, was confiscated by the United States Army. A sensitive Union soldier from Vermont who was there described the devastation dealt the property of Richard Taylor, then a major general in the service of the Confederate Army: [\[1\]](#)

"It is one of the most splendid plantations that I ever saw. There are on it 700 acres of sugar-cane, which must rot upon the ground if the Government does not harvest it. I wish you could have seen the soldiers plunder this plantation. After the stock was driven off, the boys began by ordering the slaves to bring out everything there was to eat and drink. They brought out hundreds of bottles of wines, eggs, preserved figs and peaches, turkeys, chickens, and honey in any quantity. I brought away a large camp-kettle and frying pans that belonged to old General Taylor, and also many of his private papers. I have one letter of his own hand-writing, and many from Secretary Marcy—some from General Scott, and some from the traitor Floyd. . . . The camp-kettle and pans I intend to send home. . . . I think I will send home the private papers by mail, if I do not let any one have them. The camp is loaded down with plunder—all kinds of clothing, rings, watches, guns, pistols, swords, and some of General Taylor's old hats and coats, belt swords—and, in fact, every old relic he had is worn about the camp."

In this fashion the trophies and artifacts as well as the manuscripts representing President Taylor's long and honorable career were destroyed and scattered. Richard Taylor had purchased "Fashion" in 1851. His mother, the President's widow, "came to Fashion Plantation to live with my Father of course bringing with her her husband's papers, belongings—trophies of the Mexican War etc.," Richard Taylor's daughter wrote many years later. [2] ". . . the Yankees burned the sugar house—dwelling house and contents—and I cannot imagine how the few things we have were ever rescued . . ."

The Library of Congress began to build its collection of Presidential papers early in the 20th century. By 1909, when Gaillard Hunt became Chief of the Manuscript Division, the George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, James K. Polk, Franklin Pierce, and Andrew Johnson Papers had been garnered. Mr. Hunt addressed himself to the task of acquiring for the Library the Zachary Taylor Papers. Well he might, for he was born in New Orleans, and his father, William H. Hunt, had been prominent there before his appointments as Secretary of the Navy and Minister to Russia. He was unaware of the soldier's letter which had been printed in *De Bow's Review* for he wrote to Betty Taylor Bliss Dandridge, the President's daughter. She replied to Mr. Hunt's inquiry saying, "All his papers, both public and private, were stored at my brother General Richard Taylor's Plantation, near New Orleans, and were destroyed when the house was sacked and burned [in 1862] by the Federal troops during the War." [3] Mr. Hunt's efforts seemed completely frustrated at this point. He wrote to friends and knowledgeable persons in Louisiana whose antecedents might have received letters from President Taylor. These efforts met no success.

Captain John R. M. Taylor had given some items in 1906 and a few other manuscripts had been purchased at intervals, beginning in 1904. [4] These manuscripts were so small in number that they could be bound in a single volume in 1919. This was the Taylor collection for many years. To it, in 1922, Betty Taylor (Mrs. Walter R.) Stauffer, daughter of Richard Taylor, added two items as a gift and eleven others as a deposit.

In 1944 the Library purchased 64 letters written by Zachary Taylor to Thomas S. Jesup and eight related items which were incorporated in the papers. These items, while dated 1818-1840, relate largely to the Seminole Indian campaign in 1837 and 1838. [5]

The Stauffer family of New Orleans was approached by the Library of Congress in 1952 about converting the deposit made by Mrs. Stauffer to a gift. In a most public-spirited gesture, the family not only agreed but added nearly 500 documents of and relating to the President and to Richard Taylor, their great-grandfather and grandfather, respectively. These documents added significantly to the information available about the President's administration, to the management of his plantations, to the settling of the President's estate, and to Richard Taylor's plantation.

Several other small, but welcome, additions have completed the papers as they now exist. The number of items in the Taylor Papers is 631. The whole collection is now in two manuscript boxes and a large memorial volume.

The Library began in 1940 to formulate plans which would ensure the safety of its unique and particularly prized materials. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, and the declaration of war on the United States by Germany a few days later, Archibald MacLeish, then Librarian, directed the evacuation of the specially selected materials according to plan.

The Taylor Papers, as then constituted, with other materials, were evacuated from the Library on December 29, 1941, under the supervision of Alvin W. Kremer, Keeper of the Collections, to the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. On August 14, 1944, they were returned to the Library of Congress Annex. No item was lost or damaged in the vast evacuation program. The evacuation proved unnecessary but demonstrated that the Library of Congress in 1941 was prepared for eventualities as it had not been prepared in 1814. [6]

Since 1944 the Taylor 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. Original Taylor materials or copies of them continue to come to the Manuscript Division. Those which are received without restriction 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 the bulk of President Taylor's papers were 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 time. The personal papers and sets of records which follow are in the Library of Congress and contain a varying number of letters written by President Taylor, retained copies of letters written to him, and letters or other documents referring to him.

- Aztec Club of 1847 Collection
- [Clay, Henry](#)
- Clayton, John M.
- Conner, David
- Crittenden, J. J.
- [Ewing, Thomas](#)
- Fish, Hamilton
- Holmes, George F.
- Jackson, Andrew
- Jesup, Thomas S.
- Johnson, Reverdy
- Mangum, Willie P.
- Marcy, William L.
- Saunders, John L.
- Smith, Caleb
- [Webster, Daniel](#)

Many libraries and autograph collectors possess one or more Taylor documents. The Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, possesses the Bixby collection. These original letters were printed in *Letters of Zachary Taylor, from the Battle-Fields of the Mexican War* (Rochester, 1908). The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, has Taylor items in the William M. Meredith Papers. (Meredith was Secretary of the Treasury in Taylor's Cabinet.) Zachary Taylor materials are known to be in the William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, the Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Department of Archives and Manuscripts of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, and the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections when completed may reveal the whereabouts of other Taylor papers.

1. *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, September 26, 1862, vol. 56, no. 47; also quoted in *De Bow's Review*, new series, II (November, 1866), 538.
2. Betty Taylor Stauffer to Gaillard Hunt, June 30, 1922, copy in Manuscript Division files.
3. January 19, 1909, Manuscript Division files. Mr. Hunt's letter is dated January 18.
4. A list of Taylor accessions appears on page 8.
5. "Review of the Quarter," Library of Congress *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, 2 (November, 1944), 101.
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.

Scope and Content Note for the Addition to the Collection

The Addition to the papers of Zachary Taylor spans the years 1820-1850. With the exception of a letter written by Judah P. Benjamin to Taylor's son, Robert, correspondence in this portion contains letters written by Zachary Taylor to John Jordan Crittenden, Jefferson Davis, General D. Parker, E. P. Prentice, John Canfield Spencer, Elizabeth L. Taylor, and Hancock Taylor. A typescript of Taylor's letter accepting the Whig Party's presidential nomination, January 23, 1848, is also included. The Addition also contains photocopies of Taylor's will and testament.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- Series 1, Autobiographical Account, circa 1826
- Series 2, General Correspondence, 1814-1850
- Series 3, Family Papers, 1837-1887
- Series 4, Miscellany, 1820-1931
- Series 5, Memorial Volume, 1850
- Series 6, Addition, 1820-1850

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
REEL 1	<u>Series 1, Autobiographical Account, circa 1826</u> Fifteen-page account of Taylor's life, holograph.
REEL 1	<u>Series 2, General Correspondence, 1814-1850</u> Letters and copies of letters by or to Taylor and other documents. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 2	<u>Series 3, Family Papers, 1837-1887</u> Letters, receipts, and other documents reflecting the settlement of Taylor's estate, the life of Richard Taylor (1826-1879), Taylor's son, and his management of a plantation in Louisiana. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 2	<u>Series 4, Miscellany, 1820-1931</u> Newspaper clippings, a map, pamphlets, and other miscellaneous material.
REEL 2	<u>Series 5, Memorial Volume, 1850</u> Volume in memory of Taylor.
BOX. 1 not filmed	<u>Series 6, Addition, 1820-1850</u> Correspondence and photocopies of a lithograph and Taylor's will and testament. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
REEL 1	Series 1, Autobiographical Account, circa 1826 Fifteen-page account of Taylor's life, holograph.
REEL 1	circa 1826
REEL 1	Series 2, General Correspondence, 1814-1850 Letters and copies of letters by or to Taylor and other documents. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 1	1814-1850
REEL 2	Series 3, Family Papers, 1837-1887 Letters, receipts, and other documents reflecting the settlement of Taylor's estate, the life of Richard Taylor (1826-1879), Taylor's son, and his management of a plantation in Louisiana. Arranged chronologically.
REEL 2	1837-1887
REEL 2	Series 4, Miscellany, 1820-1931 Newspaper clippings, a map, pamphlets, and other miscellaneous material.
REEL 2	1820-1931
REEL 2	Series 5, Memorial Volume, 1850 Volume in memory of Taylor.
REEL 2	1850
BOX. 1 not filmed	Series 6, Addition, 1820-1850 Correspondence and photocopies of a lithograph and Taylor's will and testament. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1820-1850, undated Lithograph, photocopy Will and testament, photocopies

Selected Bibliography

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- Dyer, Brainerd, "Critical Essay on Authorities" in *Zachary Taylor* (Baton Rouge, 1946), pp. 420-433.
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- Hamilton, Holman, "Manuscript Sources" in *Zachary Taylor, Soldier in the White House* (Indianapolis, 1951), pp. 458-460.
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- "Manuscripts," *ibid.*, 10 (May, 1953), 160.
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- Powell, C. Percy, *List of Manuscript Collections Received in the Library of Congress, July, 1931, to July, 1938* (Washington, 1939), p. 10.
- "Review of the Quarter," *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, 2 (November, 1944), 101.
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- U.S. Library of Congress, *Handbook of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1918), pp. 405-406.