

Martin Van Buren Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



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**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.**

2014

Revised 2016 May

Contact information:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Additional search options available at:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms001044>

LC Online Catalog record:

<http://lcn.loc.gov/mm78043828>

Prepared by Mary Wolfskill, John McDonough, David Mathisen, Nan Ernst, and Karen Linn Femia

Collection Summary

Title: Martin Van Buren Papers

Span Dates: 1787-1910

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1820-1850)

ID No.: MSS43828

Creator: Van Buren, Martin, 1782-1862

Extent: 6,000 items ; 72 containers plus 1 oversize ; 18 linear feet ; 37 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Summary: United States president, vice president, secretary of state, and senator from New York. Correspondence, drafts of writings, speeches, and messages to Congress, autobiographical material, notes, legal record book, estate record book, and other papers pertaining to slavery and the antislavery movement, banking and the Second Bank of the United States, party politics in New York State and at the national level relating to the Federalist, National Republican, Whig, and Democratic parties, particularly during the Jackson and Van Buren administrations.

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.

People

Bancroft, George, 1800-1891--Correspondence.
Benton, Thomas Hart, 1782-1858--Correspondence.
Blair, Francis Preston, 1791-1876--Correspondence.
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868--Correspondence.
Butler, Benjamin F. (Benjamin Franklin), 1795-1858--Correspondence.
Butler, Harriet Allen--Correspondence.
Calhoun, John C. (John Caldwell), 1782-1850.
Cambreleng, Churchill Caldorn, 1786-1862--Correspondence.
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852.
Clinton, DeWitt, 1769-1828.
Dix, John A. (John Adams), 1798-1879--Correspondence.
Fairfield, John, 1797-1847--Correspondence.
Flagg, Azariah C. (Azariah Cutting), 1790-1873--Correspondence.
Gilpin, Henry D. (Henry Dilworth), 1801-1860--Correspondence.
Hamilton, James, 1786-1857--Correspondence.
Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841.
Hoyt, Jesse--Correspondence.
Ingersoll, Charles Jared, 1782-1862--Correspondence.
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845--Correspondence.
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845.
Kendall, Amos, 1789-1869--Correspondence.
Marcy, William L. (William Learned), 1786-1857--Correspondence.
McLane, Louis, 1786-1857--Correspondence.
Parker, Richard Elliot, 1783-1840--Correspondence.
Paulding, James Kirke, 1778-1860--Correspondence.
Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851--Correspondence.
Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849--Correspondence.
Ritchie, Thomas, 1778-1854--Correspondence.
Rives, William C. (William Cabell), 1793-1868--Correspondence.
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866.
Stevenson, Andrew, 1784-1857--Correspondence.
Taylor, Zachary, 1784-1850.

Tyler, John, 1790-1862.
Van Buren, John, 1810-1866. John Van Buren papers.
Van Buren, Martin, 1782-1862--Homes and haunts.
Van Buren, Martin, 1782-1862.
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852.
Woodbury, Levi, 1789-1851--Correspondence.
Wright, Silas, 1795-1847--Correspondence.

Organizations

Bank of the United States (1816-1836)
Democratic Party (U.S.)
Federal Party (U.S.)
Free Soil Party (U.S.)
National Republican Party (U.S.)
Whig Party (U.S.)

Subjects

Dwellings--New York (State)--Kinderhook.
Indians of North America--Government relations.
Mexican War, 1846-1848.
Slavery--United States.
Tariff--United States.

Places

Canada--Boundaries--United States.
England--Description and travel.
Europe--Description and travel.
France--Foreign relations--United States.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
New York (State)--Politics and government--1775-1865.
Northeast boundary of the United States.
Texas--Annexation to the United States.
United States--Boundaries--Canada.
United States--Boundaries.
United States--Foreign relations--France.
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--History--1815-1861.
United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.

Occupations

Cabinet officers.
Presidents--United States.
Senators, U.S. Congress--New York (State)
Vice-Presidents--United States.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Martin Van Buren, attorney, senator from New York, secretary of state, and vice president and president of the United States, were acquired by the Library of Congress through gift and purchase beginning in 1902. The largest group of papers was given to the Library in 1904-1905 by Mrs. Smith Thompson Van Buren and Stuyvesant Fish Morris. There have been numerous additions to the collection since 1906, most of which were acquired through purchase.

Processing History

The papers of Martin Van Buren were arranged and described in 1980. Additional material was incorporated into the collection in 1985, 1986, 1996, and 2014. The finding aid was revised in 2009 and 2014.

Additional Guides

Series 2, General Correspondence, of the collection is listed and indexed in *Calendar of the Papers of Martin Van Buren* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910); this publication is available online in [PDF](#) and [page view](#) versions.

Related Material

An edition of fifty-five reels of positive microfilm reproducing the papers of Martin Van Buren from the originals in the Library of Congress and in over 260 other repositories and private collections was produced in 1987 by Chadwyck-Healey, Inc. It is available for consultation in the Manuscript Division Reading Room with accompanying reel notes and item index.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The Van Buren Papers 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 thirty-seven 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.

Online Content

The papers of Martin Van Buren are available on the Library of Congress Web site at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/collmss.ms000042>.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Martin Van Buren Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1782, Dec. 5	Born, Kinderhook, near Albany, N.Y.
circa 1796	Concluded education in village schools of Kinderhook, N.Y.; became law clerk in office of Francis Silvester
1801	Clerk, law office of William P. Van Ness, New York, N.Y.
1803	Licensed to practice law Returned to Kinderhook, N.Y.; became law partner of James I. Van Alen, his half-brother
1807	Married Hannah Hoes (died 1819)
1808	Appointed surrogate of Columbia County, N.Y.

1809	Moved to Hudson, N.Y.
1812-1820	Served in New York State Senate
1815	Appointed regent of the University of the State of New York
1815-1819	Attorney general of New York
1816	Moved to Albany, N.Y.; formed law partnership with Benjamin F. Butler
1821-1828	Member from New York, United States Senate
1829	Governor of New York Appointed secretary of state
1831	Appointed United States Minister to Great Britain; nomination rejected by the Senate, 1832
1833-1837	Vice president, United States
1837-1841	President, United States
1840	Defeated in presidential election
1841	Returned to Kinderhook, N.Y.; rebuilt home there, naming it "Lindenwald"
1844	Unsuccessful candidate for Democratic party presidential nomination
1848	Unsuccessful candidate for presidency, Free Soil party; retired to Kinderhook, N.Y.
1853-1855	Traveled and lived abroad
1862, July 24	Died, Kinderhook, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Martin Van Buren (1782-1862) extend from 1787 to 1910, although they principally relate to the period from 1820 to 1850. The papers are organized in eight series: [Autobiography](#), [General Correspondence](#), [Additional Correspondence](#), [Messages](#), [Legal Record Book](#), [Estate Record Book](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Addenda](#). Letters received by Van Buren constitute the bulk of his papers, but many drafts, contemporary copies, and original letters sent are also preserved, as well as transcripts and photocopies of letters written by Van Buren. The collection includes notes, drafts, and typescripts for some of Van Buren's writings, notably his autobiography; drafts of his messages to Congress, 1837-1838; drafts and notes for other addresses and speeches; a legal record book, 1807-1813, relating to matters handled by Van Buren; and an estate record book, 1862-1863, containing a copy of his will and entries relating to the settlement of his estate. The [Addenda](#) includes correspondence and a travel journal kept by John Van Buren during his trip to England and the European continent in 1838-1839.

Correspondence in [Series 2- 3](#) and [Series 8](#) covers a wide range of subjects related to Martin Van Buren and his close associates. Among these subjects are slavery, the abolitionist and antislavery movements, banking and the Second Bank of the United States, party politics in New York state and on the national level involving the Federalist, National Republican, Whig, and Democratic parties, and the policies and programs of such opposition figures as John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, DeWitt Clinton, William Henry Harrison, Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor, John Tyler, and Daniel Webster. Other topics

represented in the Van Buren Papers are Indian affairs, internal improvements, the annexation of Texas and the war with Mexico, the Free Soil movement, tariff questions, the affairs of the *Washington Globe*, foreign relations particularly with France and England, the Northeast Boundary Question, and Van Buren's home, "Lindenwald," in Kinderhook, New York. Preeminently, however, Van Buren's papers relate to the politics and policies of his own administration and to the presidency of Andrew Jackson.

Correspondents include George Bancroft, Thomas Hart Benton, Francis P. Blair, James Buchanan, Benjamin F. Butler (1795-1858), Churchill C. Cambreleng, John A. Dix, John Fairfield, Azariah Cutting Flagg, Henry D. Gilpin, James Hamilton, Jr., Jesse Hoyt, Charles Jared Ingersoll, Andrew Jackson (more than 130 letters), Amos Kendall, William L. Marcy, Louis McLane, Richard Elliot Parker, James Kirke Paulding, Joel R. Poinsett, James K. Polk, Thomas Ritchie, William Cabell Rives, Andrew Stevenson, Levi Woodbury, and Silas Wright.

A Calendar of the Papers of Martin Van Buren (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910) provides a list and index for [Series 2, General Correspondence](#), except for the one hundred and forty-eight letters received by the Library after 1910 that have been interfiled within the series. Typescripts of selected letters in Series 2 are included in [Series 7, Miscellany](#).

[Series 8, Addenda](#), formerly designated as Series 8 through Series 10, includes small additions in five separate subseries grouped according to the year the material was added to the Van Buren Papers. The 1980 Addition, consisting of correspondence, certificates, an indenture, and other material dated 1799-1861, has been microfilmed. Subsequent additions are not microfilmed.

The 1985 Addition, formerly designated as Series 9, includes a letter from Van Buren to Benjamin F. Butler, 1847, and a maritime document dated 1839.

The 1986 Addition, formerly designated as Series 10, contains correspondence and a travel journal dated 1838-1839 of the president's son, John Van Buren.

The 1996 Addition includes correspondence, principally letters from Van Buren to Benjamin F. Butler and wife, Harriet Allen Butler. Butler was an early law partner of Van Buren's who served as attorney general and secretary of war for Andrew Jackson and was appointed United States attorney for southern New York by Van Buren and James K. Polk. His son, William Allen Butler, an attorney in New York known for legal treatises and light verse, published a eulogy of Van Buren which is included in the 1996 Addition. Also included is a letter dated 1822 from Van Buren to Stephen Decatur Miller concerning an act for the reduction of the army and other matters before Congress.

The 2014 Addition contains a letter to Samuel Milroy, an autograph and two land grants from Alabama.

An edition of fifty-five reels of positive microfilm reproducing the papers of Martin Van Buren from the originals in the Library of Congress and in over 260 other repositories and private collections was produced in 1987 by Chadwyck-Healey, Inc. It is available for consultation in the Manuscript Division Reading Room with accompanying reel notes and item index.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in nine series:

- [Series 1, Autobiography, 1854-1862](#)
- [Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868](#)
- [Series 3, Additional Correspondence, 1811-1853](#)
- [Series 4, Messages, 1837-1838](#)
- [Series 5, Legal Record Book, 1807-1813](#)
- [Series 6, Estate Record Book, 1862-1863](#)
- [Series 7, Miscellany, 1814-1910](#)
- [Series 8, Addenda, 1799-1862](#)
- [Oversize, 1837-1839](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-4
REEL 1-3

Series

Series 1, Autobiography, 1854-1862

Draft and holograph transcripts with notes of Van Buren's autobiography and history of the United States Bank.
Arranged by type of material.

BOX 1-61
REEL 4-34

Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

Letters sent and received by Van Buren and related items.
Arranged chronologically.

BOX 62
REEL 34

Series 3, Additional Correspondence, 1811-1853

Letters sent and received by Van Buren, transcripts of letters, and related items.
Originals and transcripts are arranged chronologically in separate subseries.

BOX 63-65
REEL 35

Series 4, Messages, 1837-1838

Drafts of Van Buren's messages to Congress for an extra session in 1837 and the annual presidential message of 1838.

BOX 66
REEL 35

Series 5, Legal Record Book, 1807-1813

Records of legal business conducted by Van Buren.

BOX 67
REEL 35

Series 6, Estate Record Book, 1862-1863

Notations concerning Van Buren's estate.

BOX 68-70
Not filmed

Series 7, Miscellany, 1814-1910

Typewritten copies of selected letters from Series 2, typewritten copy of Van Buren's autobiography, corrected galley proof of the index to the *Calendar of the Papers of Martin Van Buren*, a copy of William Emmons' *Biography of Martin Van Buren*, and miscellaneous printed matter.

BOX 71-72
REEL 36

Series 8, Addenda, 1799-1862

Correspondence, travel journal, certificates, indenture, and printed matter.
Arranged in subseries according to the year the addition was processed.
Only the 1980 Addition has been microfilmed. Reel 36 includes the 1980 edition of the register and the *Calendar of the Papers of Martin Van Buren*.

BOX OV 1
Not filmed

Oversize, 1837-1839

Maritime document and Alabama land grants.

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<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
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BOX 3 REEL 1	Holograph transcript Autobiography Vol. 1 Digital content available Vol. 2 pp. 1-106 Digital content available pp. 107-131
BOX 3 REEL 2	Digital content available Vols. 3-4 Digital content available Vol. 5 pp. 1-133 Digital content available pp. 134-214
BOX 3 REEL 3	Digital content available
BOX 4 REEL 3	Vols. 6-7 Digital content available "History of the Bank" Digital content available Notes Autobiography 3 vols. of notes Digital content available pp. 20-22, 26-29 Digital content available

Series 1, Autobiography, 1854-1862

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"History of the Bank"

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Notes and memoranda re: Bank, miscellaneous historical memoranda

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BOX 1-61
REEL 4-34

Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

Letters sent and received by Van Buren and related items.
Arranged chronologically.

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1787-1813

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1815, Jan. 1 - June 14

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1815, June 15 - Dec. 31

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Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

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Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

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BOX 31 REEL 19	1837, Dec. 16 - 31 Digital content available
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	1844 1844, Jan. 1 - Feb. 16 Digital content available
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Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

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1848, Jan. 2 - May 8

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BOX 62
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Series 3, Additional Correspondence, 1811-1853

Letters sent and received by Van Buren, transcripts of letters, and related items. Originals and transcripts are arranged chronologically in separate subseries.

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Originals

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[Digital content available](#)

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Series 3, Additional Correspondence, 1811-1853

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Undated
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Transcripts, 1811-1853
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BOX 63-65
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Series 4, Messages, 1837-1838

Drafts of Van Buren's messages to Congress for an extra session in 1837 and the annual presidential message of 1838.

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REEL 35

Extra session, 1837

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Annual, 1838

Vol. 1

[Digital content available](#)

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Vol. 2

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BOX 66
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Series 5, Legal Record Book, 1807-1813

Records of legal business conducted by Van Buren.

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REEL 35

1807, Sept. 1 - 1813, Sept. 8 (mostly 1807-1810)

[Digital content available](#)

BOX 67
REEL 35

Series 6, Estate Record Book, 1862-1863

Notations concerning Van Buren's estate.

BOX 67

Record book of Martin Van Buren's estate

Series 6, Estate Record Book, 1862-1863

Container

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[Digital content available](#)

BOX 68-70
Not filmed

Series 7, Miscellany, 1814-1910

Typewritten copies of selected letters from Series 2, typewritten copy of Van Buren's autobiography, corrected galley proof of the index to the *Calendar of the Papers of Martin Van Buren*, a copy of William Emmons' *Biography of Martin Van Buren*, and miscellaneous printed matter.

BOX 68
Not filmed

Typescripts of letters in Series 2, 1814-1845

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[Digital content available](#)

1821-1822

[Digital content available](#)

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[Digital content available](#)

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Series 7, Miscellany, 1814-1910

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	<i>Biography of Martin Van Buren, Vice President of the United States</i> (Washington, D.C.: J. Gideon, Jr., 1835. 196 pp.), compiled and edited by William Emmons
	Digital content available
	Printed matter, 1836 , 1960-1862 , 1882, undated
	Digital content available

BOX 71-72
REEL 36

Series 8, Addenda, 1799-1862

Correspondence, travel journal, certificates, indenture, and printed matter. Arranged in subseries according to the year the addition was processed. Only the 1980 Addition has been microfilmed. Reel 36 includes the 1980 edition of the register and the *Calendar of the Papers of Martin Van Buren*.

BOX 71
REEL 36

1980 Addition

Correspondence, certificates, indenture, and other material, 1799-1861, undated (99 folders)

BOX 72

Not filmed

- [Digital content available](#)
1985 Addition
- Butler, Benjamin F., letter to, with typescript, 1799-1847
[Digital content available](#)
Document establishing neutrality for the *Lady Adams* (brig), 1839 [See Oversize](#)
- 1986 Addition
- John Van Buren file
- Correspondence
- 1838, May 29
[Digital content available](#)
- 1838, Sept. 4
[Digital content available](#)
- 1839, Apr. 19
[Digital content available](#)
- Travel journal for trip to Europe, 1838-1839
- Original
- 1838, May 25 - July 3
[Digital content available](#)
- 1838, July 14 - Aug. 26
[Digital content available](#)
- 1838, Aug. 27 - Nov. 2
[Digital content available](#)
- 1838, Nov. 5 - Dec. 16
[Digital content available](#)
- 1838, Dec. 17 - 1839, May 18
[Digital content available](#)
- Draft typed transcript, undated
[Digital content available](#)
- Partial typed transcript, undated
[Digital content available](#)
- 1996 Addition
- Correspondence
- Butler, Benjamin F., 1824-1858
[Digital content available](#)
- Butler, Harriet Allen, 1826-1845, undated
[Digital content available](#)
- Mason Brothers, Publishers, 1860
[Digital content available](#)
- Miller, Stephen Decatur, 1822
[Digital content available](#)
- Printed material, William Allen Butler, *Martin Van Buren: Lawyer, Statesman & Man* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.), 1862
[Digital content available](#)
- 2014 Addition
- Alabama land grants, 1837 [See Oversize](#)

Series 8, Addenda, 1799-1862

Container

Contents

Letter to Samuel Milroy and autograph, 1844, undated

[Digital content available](#)

BOX OV 1
Not filmed

Oversize, 1837-1839

Maritime document and Alabama land grants.

BOX OV 1

Series 8, Addenda, 1837-1839

1985 Addition

Document establishing neutrality for the *Lady Adams* (brig), 1839 (Container 72)

2014 Addition

Alabama land grants, 1837 (Container 72)

[Digital content available](#)