

University of Chicago Library

Guide to the Reuben T. Durrett Collection of Mann Butler Papers. 1816-1874



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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Citation	3
Acquisition Information	3
Biographical Note	5
Scope Note	6
Related Resources	7
Subject Headings	10
INVENTORY	10
Series I: Correspondence	10
Series II: Justice of the Peace, St. Louis, Missouri	11
Series III: Research	12
Series IV: Writings	13
Subseries I: Sermons and Lectures	13
Subseries II: Manuscripts	13

Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.BUTLERM
Title	Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Mann Butler Papers
Date	1816-1874
Size	0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Reuben Thomas Durrett (1824-1913), lawyer, manuscript and book collector, and Kentucky historian. Edward Mann Butler (1784-1855) was a prominent author and educator. Butler wrote on the early history of Kentucky and the Ohio River Valley, headed the grammar department of the first public school in Kentucky and was the president of the Jefferson Seminary. The Reuben T. Durrett Collection of the Mann Butler Papers contains correspondence, research notes, manuscripts of sermons and lectures on historical and non-historical subjects, and a variety of manuscripts connected with Butler's study of the history of Kentucky and the Ohio River Valley.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Mann Butler Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Acquisition Information

The existence of the Durrett library first came to the attention of the University of Chicago through William E. Dodd, a professor of American history at the University who had consulted the library as a student. Like other faculty members of the Division of the Social Sciences early in the century, Dodd was concerned about the University's lack of extensive research materials for history and related subjects, and since he was aware of Durrett's advanced age, he persuaded A. C. McLaughlin, also of the history department, to accompany him to Louisville in June, 1910, to see the collection and to make discreet inquiries about plans for its disposition. The two found Durrett himself uncertain about his plans, but learned that the Durrett family opposed making a

donation of the collection, and that they were in communication with Princeton University and the University of Illinois about selling the library.

Dodd himself was very enthusiastic about the research potential which Durrett's library represented, and won the support of many of his colleagues on the social science faculties in his efforts to persuade President Judson to consider the purchase by the University of the entire library, numbering some 30,000 volumes. Convinced that the collection would be a valuable addition to the University's holdings, but wary of the expense involved, Judson agreed cautiously to investigate the idea. Although Dodd and his colleagues were anxious to conclude the agreement quickly, fearing competition from other would-be purchasers or the dispersal of the collection upon Durrett's apparently imminent death, the task of deciding upon a fair offer was made difficult by the fact that the collection had never been adequately catalogued.

Durrett's own suggestion made in December, 1912 of \$45,000 seemed high, so in February 1913, the University engaged Walter Lichtenstein, a Northwestern University librarian who had previously acted as purchasing agent for the University of Chicago libraries, to assess the value of the Durrett collection. Lichtenstein's report was submitted to President Judson on February 21, 1913, following a trip to Louisville to sample the collection.

The assessment, made on terms of commercial market value rather than scholarly significance, divided Durrett's library into four parts. Some 20,000 bound volumes (including 500 volumes of Kentuckiana) he estimated at \$7,200. Two hundred fifty file folders of pamphlet material had no apparent commercial value. Numerous manuscripts and newspapers were difficult to assess but Lichtenstein thought they could be fairly purchased for \$15,000. A collection of maps was estimated to have a value around \$50. Lichtenstein's estimate, therefore, totaled \$22,000-\$22,500, considerably less than Durrett's own. When the University authorized Lichtenstein to make this offer to the Durrett family, however, they accepted it, apparently favoring Chicago as the repository of their collection. The purchase sum, which was too high to be taken from the University's ordinary budget, was raised among outside donors, and under Lichtenstein's supervision, the library was dismantled and shipped to Chicago by early May. It filled 287 large packing crates. Its arrival provoked considerable comment in the Louisville and Chicago press, and almost immediately the University began to receive research inquiries from scholars and requests from several libraries for copies of some of the Durrett material to add to their own collections.

In his report Lichtenstein had warned President Judson that considerable effort and expense would be required to process the collection once it was at the University. His warning proved to be justified. Aside from the massive undertaking of unpacking, sorting, and cataloguing the collection, much of the material was found to be in poor condition, requiring cleaning, repair, and binding or rebinding. To facilitate the efficient processing of the Durrett acquisition, the entire operation was assigned to Edward A. Henry of the library staff, who, with the help of his assistants, was to devote most of his attention to the Durrett project for some seven years. It was decided that duplicates should be disposed of, that a number of Filson Club possessions in Durrett's library should be returned to the Club, and that most of the non-manuscript material in the collection would be distributed according to subject matter among the University's various departmental libraries. On several occasions between 1913 and 1937, items of an official

character were returned to Kentucky upon request, including records of Jefferson County, journals of Kentucky constitutional conventions, and certain manuscripts and photographs of the Filson Club identified by the club's president, R. C. Ballard Thurston. Most of Henry's time seems to have been devoted to preparing the material for this dispersal. His assignment was expanded in 1914 when the University purchased a collection totaling 436 volumes of Kentucky newspapers and miscellaneous books from Mrs. Joel R. Lyle, sister of Robert C. Boggs of Lexington, Kentucky. It was deemed appropriate to merge the Boggs-Lyle acquisition with the Durrett, and the two were processed together.

By the end of the 1915-16 academic year, about 9,000 of the Durrett and Boggs-Lyle volumes had been processed and distributed to the departmental libraries. It was then that Henry and his staff turned some of their attention to the manuscripts--that is, to the material comprising the Durrett Collection as described in this guide. At that time the Durrett manuscripts were apparently divided into four large groups--the Joel Tanner Hart Papers, the Joshua Lacy Wilson Papers, miscellaneous manuscripts, and miscellaneous separately bound items--either mounted in scrapbooks or bound together. A card catalog was compiled for at least the first three of these groups.

The Durrett Collection remained in this state until the mid-1950s. By then it had been incorporated within the holdings of the Department of Special Collections (1951), and it became clear that reorganization of the manuscripts was necessary. Paul Angle, a member of the staff of the Chicago Historical Society, who had surveyed the University of Chicago's manuscript collection as a consultant in 1944, had pointed out that the Durrett miscellaneous bound manuscripts in particular were of little use to scholars as they were then arranged and described. Moreover, the Special Collections staff had observed that the mountings and bindings done by Henry's staff were detrimental to the lives of the manuscripts, and that the existing catalog and descriptions provided inadequate access to the documents. The manuscripts, therefore, were removed from their bindings and divided into smaller and more coherent sub-collections.

In the 1970s, an effort was undertaken to edit the 1956 guide, to enhance the descriptions of the Durrett codices for greater detail and accuracy, and to differentiate between transcripts and original manuscript material bound together in the codices. Manuscript material also received conservation treatment. In 1983, another attempt was made to write a comprehensive guide to the entire collection. This guide remained in use until 2015. The current guide was completed in 2016.

Biographical Note

Edward Mann Butler was born in Baltimore in July 1784 but spent most of his childhood living with his grandfather in Chelsea, England. He returned to the United States in his late teens and went on to receive a medical degree from St. Mary's College, Georgetown, District of Columbia. He practiced medicine briefly before abandoning it in distaste. Returning to St. Mary's, he obtained a second degree in law and was admitted to the bar in both Washington and Baltimore. He practiced law briefly in Lexington, Kentucky, but in 1806 Butler abandoned this career as well, discouraged at his lack of oratorical talent. He married Martha Dedman in August, 1806,

with whom he would have one son and turned to education. He established an academy at Versailles and later taught in Maysville.

His life seems to have been one of perpetual motion. In 1811, he moved to Louisville, Kentucky to work as a journalist and serve as the first principal of the Jefferson Seminary. In 1817 he moved to Frankfort, and taught at the Kentucky Seminary, moving again in 1822, this time to head the grammar school at Transylvania University in Lexington. Five years later, in 1827, he returned to Louisville, and the Jefferson Seminary, and after its closure he was the head of the grammar department at the first tax funded school in Louisville.

He resigned from the Louisville public school in 1834, due to a dispute concerning instructional methods. After this, his activities are less clear. It is possible that while in Louisville he worked as co-editor of the Louisville Correspondent: a document dated March 18, 1816 in the Durrett Collection Miscellaneous Manuscripts is signed by a Butler and Wood, co-proprietors of that news-paper (no first names), and this Butler has been tentatively identified by early cataloguers of the collection as Mann. The Collinses' biographical sketch, however, would lead one to believe that Mann Butler had little connection with Louisville until about 1831.

In his historical research, Butler was fortunate to be granted special privileges of access to state archives by the Kentucky legislature. The first edition of his History of the Commonwealth of Kentucky appeared in 1834 and was revised in a second edition two years later. He also published a number of shorter works (see National Union Catalog), and at the time of his death had prepared a second lengthy manuscript for a book on the history of the Ohio River Valley. Portions of the latter had originally appeared as a series of articles in the Western Journal and Civilian, but any attempt at posthumous publication in book form was made impossible by the destruction of parts of the finished manuscript by Federal troops during the Civil War.

He seems to have served as Justice of the Peace in 1855 in St. Louis, Missouri.

He was killed in a train accident in St. Louis, in November, 1855.

Scope Note

The Mann Butler Papers are split into four series.

Series I, Correspondence, contains a small collection of personal correspondence, mostly concerning historical events. The letters span the period 1816-1855 and are arranged chronologically.

Series II, Justice of the Peace, St. Louis, Missouri, contains a small selection of notes signed by Butler in his role of Justice of the Peace and a copy of a deposition made by Richard Cooney. Materials are arranged chronologically.

Series III, Research, contains Butler's notes on the history of the Ohio River Valley, the settlement of the 'Western Country', and early U.S. history. These notes and note fragments take the form of chronologies and narratives composed by Butler, as well as transcripts of records or accounts from primary sources. Also included are railway clippings, from 1874, found among the notes. Materials are arranged by type (notes, note fragments, transcripts, or clippings).

Series IV, Writings, is arranged alphabetically, and split into two subseries:

Subseries I, Sermons and Lectures, contains drafts and transcripts of various addresses delivered by Butler on religious, scientific, and historical subjects. The bulk of this subseries relates to a lecture series titled "The General History of the West".

Subseries II, Manuscripts, contains several partial drafts of a volume on the history of the settlement and development of the Ohio Valley. In addition, it contains three bound manuscripts, written by Butler, on subjects relating to the early history of Kentucky.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/>

Researchers interested in topics represented in the Durrett Collection should check the author, title, or subject headings relevant to their interests in the Library catalog for potentially useful books and pamphlets from the Durrett Library, which were dispersed among the existing departmental libraries at the time of acquisition. Some of these items have since been transferred to the Rare Books collection and to the Reuben T. Durrett Collection of Broadsides, Pamphlets, and Leaflets, in the Special Collections Research Center.

The Durrett rare book collections include works of literature, travel and description, early histories of Kentucky such as Mann Butler's, biographies, legislative acts, and other legal documents.

Examples include Henry McMurtrie's *Sketches of Louisville and Its Environs* (1819); a collection of humorous verses, *The Kentucky Miscellany*, by Thomas Johnson, Jr. (1821), one

of two known copies of the fourth edition, the first known to survive; and *The Confession of Jereboam O. Beauchamp ...* (1826).

Among the newspapers are 135 titles published in Kentucky, beginning in 1788 with the *Kentucky Gazette*, the first newspaper established in the state. Other important titles include the *Mirror*, the *Palladium*, the *Guardian of Freedom*, the *Farmer's Library or Ohio Intelligencer*, and numerous campaign newspapers such as *The Patriot* and *The Spirit of '76* from 1826.

Included in the American Paper Currency Collection in the Special Collections Research Center is Durrett's collection of confederate currency, among which are many examples of notes issued by the Bank of Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Correspondence, reports, and clippings concerning the acquisition of the Reuben T. Durrett Collection for the University of Chicago are found in the University of Chicago Library Records Addenda.

In addition, the following collections contain material related in subject matter to various portions of the Durrett Collection:

Codex MS 798 *Lettres de Mr. Cahusac, Américain, juge de paix à Fleurance, 1806-1836*

Church History Documents Collection

Codex MS 790, *Letters to Virgil David, 1828-1838*

Douglas, Stephan A. Papers

English, William H. Papers

Ethno-History Collection

Lafayette Manuscripts

Lafayette-Bonaventure. Collection

Lane, Ebenezer, Family. Papers

Lewis, Fielding. Papers

Robertson, Wyndham. Papers

All Durrett sub-collections are as follows:

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Boggs Family. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Boone Family. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Broadsides, Broadsheets, Pamphlets, and Leaflets

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Christopher Columbus Graham. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. George and William Croghan. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. George Nicholas. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. George Rogers Clark. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Government Records

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Edmund Lyne Estate. Records

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. James Wilkinson. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Joel Tanner Hart. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Joshua Lacey Wilson. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Lewis Family. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Louisville, Kentucky Board of Trustees. Records

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Mann Butler. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Michael Walsh Cluskey. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Miscellaneous Manuscripts and Codices

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Portraits, Illustrations, and Cartographic Material

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Reuben T. Durrett. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Richard H. Collins. Papers

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Richard Jouett Menefee Collection on Matthew Harris Jouett

Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. Shelby Family. Papers

Subject Headings

- Butler, Mann, 1784-1852
- Durrett, Reuben T. (Reuben Thomas), 1824-1913
- Kentucky -- History -- 1792-1865
- Kentucky -- Politics and government -- To 1792
- Kentucky -- Politics and government -- 1792-1865
- Ohio River Valley -- History
- Ohio -- History -- 1787-1865

INVENTORY

Series I: Correspondence

Box 1

Folder 1

Butler, Mann and Wood, Louisville, Kentucky – March 18, 1816 – A.L.S. 1p.

- Notice certifying that the attached advertisement (a court order that defendants appear in the case of Patrick Joyce, deceased, vs. the unknown heirs of Samuel Watkins, deceased) appeared in the Louisville Correspondent

Box 1

Folder 2

Alice (Butler's niece), St. Louis, to Mann Butler – January 8, 1843 – A.L.S. 2 p.

Box 1

Folder 3

Peck, J.M., Rock Spring, IL, to Mann Butler, St. Louis – December 14, 1854 – A.L.S. 4 p.

- Questions statement regarding General George Rogers Clark; suggests that there be created a Central Historical Association for the Mississippi Valley.

Box 1

Folder 4

Peck, J.M., Rock Spring, IL, to Mann Butler, St. Louis – January 12, 1855 – A.L.S. 4 p.

- Error in Peck's "Life of Boone"; McGary responsible for the defeat at Blue Licks; facts concerning Boone, Clark, the Todds, Logan and Cooper.

Box 1

Folder 5

Peck, J.M., Rock Spring, IL, to Mann Butler, St. Louis – February 10, 1855 – A.L.S. 4 p.

- Explains designation of Todd as "Lieutenant Government"; Helm's defense of Vincennes (1778); massacre of Moravian Indians.

Box 1

Folder 6

Sawyer, Sharp S., Lexington, Kentucky, to E.R. Violett Co. – August 22, 1855 – A.L.S. 2 p.

- With notes, possibly in Butler's hand, on the reverse, on Indian population in the United States and its territories.

Box 1

Folder 7

Woods, Harvey, to [Mann Butler] – undated – A.N.S. 1 p.

Series II: Justice of the Peace, St. Louis, Missouri

Box 1

Folder 8

Butler, Mann, Justice of the Peace, to Constables of St. Louis Township – Justice of the Peace Note – June 14, 1855 – D.S. 1 p.

- Seth King vs Silas Reed

Box 1

Folder 9

Butler, Mann, Justice of the Peace, to Constables of St. Louis Township – Justice of the Peace Note – July 15, 1855 – A.D.S. 1 p.

- Julia Desmoulin vs. Sylvester [Chouteau]; with historical note on reverse, apparently in Butler's hand: "Valley of the Ohio Note `A'"

Box 1

Folder 10

Butler, Mann, Justice of the Peace – Justice of the Peace Note and Deposition Transcript – July 15, 1855 – A.D.S. 4 p.

- Deposition of Richard Cooney

Box 1

Folder 11

Butler, Mann, Justice of the Peace - Justice of the Peace Note – [circa 1855] – A.D. 1 p.

- Regarding re-appraisal of estate of Sullivan Blood.

Series III: Research

Box 1

Folder 12

Notes – "American Era, 1713-1784" - undated

Box 1

Folder 13

Notes – "British America" – undated

Box 1

Folder 14

Notes – "Origins of Tennessee" - undated

Box 1

Folder 15

Notes – "Western Country" – undated

Box 1

Folder 16

Notes – "Western History" - undated

Box 1

Folder 17

Note Fragments – undated [1/2]

Box 1

Folder 18

Note Fragments – undated [2/2]

Box 1

Folder 19

Transcript - "The Expedition of Major David Rogers from Pittsburgh to New Orleans in 1778" – September 11, 1833 – Typed transcript 11 p.

- Copied from the Louisville Daily Herald and Commercial Gazette; with undated introductory letter from Butler to "Mr. Tannehill".

Box 1

Folder 20

Transcript - "Sketches of the First Settlement in Kentucky" – July 14, 1841 – Manuscript Transcript 20 p.

- Copied from Hazard's US Commercial and Statistical Register, no. 30, 356.

Box 1

Folder 21

Transcript - "Extracts from the Records of the New Providence Church, 1773" – August 28, 1833 – Manuscript Transcript 16 p.

Box 1

Folder 22

Railroad Clippings – June to July, 1874

Series IV: Writings

Subseries I: Sermons and Lectures

Box 2

Folder 1

"Address on the Value of Physical Sciences" – October 31, 1831 – Printed Document 12 p.

Box 2

Folder 2

"Apprentices to the Various Mechanical Arts..." – undated – A.D. 4 p.

Box 2

Folder 3

"General History of the West from 1779 to 1803" – circa March 24, 1844

- Contains "Prospectus of a Course of Lectures upon the History of the Western Country of the United States, by Mann Butler", and drafts of the fourth, fifth and sixth lectures.

Box 2

Folder 4

"Introduction to the lecture on Burr's Conspiracy" – undated – A.D. 2 p.

Box 2

Folder 5

"On Penitentiary Punishment" – undated – A.D. 8 p.

Box 2

Folder 6

"On the Influence of Capital and Labor-Saving Machinery on the Interests of Working Men" – undated – A.D. 4 p.

Box 2

Folder 7

"On the Moral and [Biblical] Effects of Machinery" – undated – A.D. 16 p.

Box 2

Folder 8

"To the Mechanical Institute of Louisville" – August 20, 1829 – A.D. 4 p.

Box 2

Folder 9

Sermon Drafts – undated

Subseries II: Manuscripts

Box 2

Folder 10

"An Historical Sketch of the Natchez, or District of Natchez in the State of Mississippi from 1763-1798" – undated – 113 p.

- Includes references to: Joliet; Marquette; La Salle; Iberville; Bienville; Countess de Pontchartrain; West Florida; Governor Chester; Calvin Smith; William Dunbar.

Box 2

Folder 11

"Braddock' Defeat – undated – 18 p.

Box 2

Folder 12

"Manners and Habits of the Western Pioneers" – undated - 64 p.

Box 2

Folder 13

"The Life and Times of General George Rogers Clark, Extending from 1770-1795" – undated – 28 p.

- Includes references to: General Wayne; Fort Du Quesne; Daniel Boone; Lee Croghan's Journal; Colonel Harrod; Colonel Logan.

Box 2

Folder 14

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [1/9]

Box 2

Folder 15

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [2/9]

Box 2

Folder 16

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [3/9]

Box 2

Folder 17

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [4/9]

Box 3

Folder 1

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [5/9]

Box 3

Folder 2

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [6/9]

Box 3

Folder 3

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [7/9]

Box 3

Folder 4

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [8/9]

Box 3

Folder 5

Manuscript – "The Settlement of the Ohio Valley" – undated [9/9]