

University of Chicago Library

# Guide to the Reuben T. Durrett Collection of George Rogers Clark Papers 1776-1896



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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	6
Subject Headings	9
INVENTORY	10

## **Descriptive Summary**

<b>Identifier</b>	ICU.SPCL.CLARKGR
<b>Title</b>	Durrett, Reuben T. Collection. George Rogers Clark Papers
<b>Date</b>	1776-1896
<b>Size</b>	2 linear feet (2 boxes)
<b>Repository</b>	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. This collection contains materials associated with soldier and surveyor George Rogers Clark (1752-1818). Clark is perhaps best known for his contributions as an officer in the Virginia Militia during the revolutionary war. The collection principally covers the period of Clark's life between 1776 and 1818 and contains materials related to a broad range of his professional activities. These include military records, land surveys, receipts, and letters.

## **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. George Rogers Clark 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**

George Rogers Clark was born in Albemarle County, Virginia on November 19, 1752. Clark was taught surveying by his grandfather and as a young man Clark made several surveying expeditions into the Ohio River Valley.

Clark's military career began as a captain in the Virginia militia during Lord Dunmore's War in 1774. Clark continued soldiering with the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Commissioned as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Virginia Militia, he led an expedition to capture British outposts in the Ohio River Valley with the aim of ending British efforts to mobilize native peoples against American colonists. Clark's successful campaign culminated in the capture of Vincennes and the surrender of the British garrisoned there under Henry Hamilton. In 1781 Clark was promoted to

Brigadier General amidst preparations for a new campaign to wrest Detroit from British control. However, he was unable to muster the manpower and resources to carry out the plan. For the remainder of the war Clark was charged with defending the Northwest Territory from British and native groups in the region.

Clark's military adventures left him impoverished at the conclusion of the war. Clark failed to receive recompense from Virginia for the cost of munitions and supplies due to a dispute over the validity of records and receipts. Saddled with the debt incurred during his campaigns, Clark joined his friend William Croghan as a surveyor for the Virginia state line and related land grants for veterans. Clark himself received land as recompense for his work, however he continued to be dogged by debt. Clark repeatedly sought a way to improve his situation, however success continually eluded him. In 1788 Clark asked the Spanish Government for permission to settle a colony in Spanish territory on the west bank of the Mississippi. The proposal was rejected. In 1793, Clark secretly joined a military venture to take control of Spanish territories in the Mississippi river valley with French Support. The campaign was aborted the following year due to a proclamation forbidding violations of US neutrality and backed by threat of military intervention by President George Washington. Clark's debt deepened as he was, once again, unable to recoup funds spent in preparation for this latest campaign.

In 1809 Clark suffered a stroke and collapsed into a fireplace. His leg was amputated due to the severity of his burns. Unable to continue working, he moved to live out his final years with his sister, Lucy, and William Croghan at their home near Louisville, Kentucky. He died at Locust Grove on 13 February 1818.

### **Scope Note**

The collection is organized chronologically and primarily covers the period of Clark's life between 1776 and 1818. Materials include transcripts of military records and documents, surveying records, receipts, correspondence, and two transcripts of Clark's memoir.

### **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**

- Durrett, Reuben T. (Reuben Thomas), 1824-1913
- Clark, George Rogers, 1752-1818
- Generals -- United States -- Biography

- Kentucky -- History -- To 1792
- Indians of North America -- Kentucky
- Clark's Expedition to the Illinois, 1778-1779
- Court records -- Kentucky -- Jefferson County
- Ohio River Valley -- History
- Ohio -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783
- Northwest, Old -- History -- 1775-1865

## INVENTORY

### Box 1

#### Folder 1

Clark, George Rogers – Diary – December 25, 1776 to March 30, 1778 – Typed Copy 4 p. (Copy made by Minnie G. Cook)

### Box 1

#### Folder 2

Clark, George Rogers, "Memorandum for George R. Clark" – Memorandum – 1776-1778 – Codex manuscript transcript. 18 p.

- Cdx45

### Box 1

#### Folder 3

Todd, John, Harrodsburg, Kentucky to Patrick Lockhart, Botetourt [County, Virginia] – Letter – June 29, 1778 – Typed copy of L.S. 1 p. (Colonel Clark has arrived and is preparing the Cascasky attack)

### Box 1

#### Folder 4

Clark, George Rogers – Correspondence – 1778-1779 – Codex Manuscript transcript. 12 p.

- Cdx41; Originals in: Canadian Archives, Haldimand Papers, series B, vol. 122 and the Colonial Office Records, series Q, vol.16.

### Box 1

#### Folder 5

Clark, George Rogers – Receipted Account – March 4, 1779 – A.D.S. 2 p. (Account of Captain Edward Worthington with John Gerault)

### Box 1

#### Folder 6

Clark, George Rogers, "Gen. G. R. Clark's General Orders" – Military orders – August 5 1779 – Codex typescript transcript. 3 p.

- Cdx42

### Box 1

#### Folder 7

Clark, George Rogers, Falls of the Ohio, [Kentucky] – Commission – October 20, 1779 – Copy of A.D.S. 1 p. (Appointing John Donne deputy conductor of the stores)

### Box 1

#### Folder 8

George Rogers Clark, with Mason, [George] – Correspondence – November 14, 1779 – Codex manuscript transcript. 110 p.

- Cdx43

**Box 1**

**Folder 9**

Clark, George Rogers – Land Warrant – January 29, 1780 – A.D.S. 1 p. (From the Virginia land office; Granting 560 acres of land)

**Box 1**

**Folder 10**

Clark, George Rogers to John Clark – Letter – August 23, 1780 – Copy of A.L.S. 1 p.  
• (Returns from expedition against Shawanese; Partisans urge him to head them as Governor-General)

**Box 1**

**Folder 11**

Thompson, James - Land Survey – June 7, 1784 – A.D. 1 p. (Land surveyed for George Rogers Clark)

**Box 1**

**Folder 12**

Clark, George Rogers, Jefferson County, Kentucky – Contract – October 18, 1784 – A.D.S. 4 p. (Contract between George Rogers Clark, Alexander Skinner and John Sanders for hunting and sending meat to the Falls of the Ohio)

**Box 1**

**Folder 13**

Henry, Patrick, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia to George R. Clark – Land Grant – April 1 1785 - Copy of D.S. 1 p.

**Box 1**

**Folder 14**

Bevan, James to George Rogers Clark – Statement of Account – August 6, 1786 – A.D.S. 2 p

**Box 1**

**Folder 15**

Dalton, Valentine Thomas, Post St. Vincent to George Rogers Clark – Note – March 20, 1787 – A.D.S. 2 p. (Order to pay money to John Porter)

**Box 1**

**Folder 16**

George Rogers Clark to Don Diego de Gardoqui – Letter – March 25 1788 – Copy of A.L.S.

**Box 1**

**Folder 17**

Clark, George Rogers to Henry Lindsay – Commission – January 11, 1794 - A.D.S. 1 p.  
• Appointing Lindsay Captain in Citizen Genet's army

**Box 1**

**Folder 18**

Clark, George Rogers to unidentified man – Letter – June 1798 – Codex manuscript transcript. 6 p.  
• Cdx39

**Box 1**

**Folder 19**

Clark, William – Power of Attorney – September 13, 1803 – A.D.S. 2 p.

- Appointing Stephen Ormsby for George Rogers Clark. Endorsed by George Rogers Clark, May 8, 1805

**Box 1**

**Folder 20**

Ferguson, Richard, Louisville, Kentucky – Statement – December 2, 1809 – A.D.S. 2 p.  
(Regarding the health of George Rogers Clark)

**Box 1**

**Folder 21**

Clark, George Rogers, Jefferson County, Kentucky – November 15, 1815 – Will – A.D. 3 p.

**Box 1**

**Folder 22**

Clark, George Rogers – Obituary – February 16, 1818 – Typed Copy 2 p. (From the 'Western Courier')

**Box 1**

**Folder 23**

Clark, George Rogers – Obituary – February 25, 1818 – Typed Copy 2 p. (From the 'Kentucky Reporter')

**Box 1**

**Folder 24**

Clark, George Rogers, "Address to the surviving officers and soldiers who served under General George Rogers Clark on a campaign against the Indians in the year 1782" – Address – 1832 – Codex typescript transcript. 2 p.

- Cdx 40

**Box 1**

**Folder 25**

Mills, Howard – "George Rogers Clark" (Poem) – March 2, 1896 – Typed D.S. 1 p.

**Box 1**

**Folder 26**

Clark, George Rogers, "Memoir of George Rogers Clark" – Memoir – [18--] – Codex manuscript transcript. 306 p.

- Cdx44A; Original in the Draper Collection, Manuscripts 47 J, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

**Box 1**

**Folder 27**

Clark, George Rogers, "Memoir of George Rogers Clark" – Memoir – [18--] – Codex typescript transcript. 108 p.

- Cdx44B; Original in the Draper Collection, Manuscripts 47 J, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

**Box 2**

**Folder 1**

Asturgus, James and Kenner Seaton, Commissioners – Appraisal – September 8, 1786 – A.D.S. 1 p. (Articles for use of an expedition commanded by General Clark, against the Wabash Indians)