

Martin Van Buren

A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Mary Wolfskill, John McDonough, and David Mathisen

Revised and expanded by Nan Thompson Ernst



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

1996

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Latest revision: 2004-11-04

Collection Summary

Title: Papers of Martin Van Buren

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; 36 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

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

Abstract: U.S. 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.

Names:

Van Buren, Martin, 1782-1862
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
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845--Correspondence
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, Martin, 1782-1862--Homes and haunts
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852
Woodbury, Levi, 1789-1851--Correspondence
Wright, Silas, 1795-1847--Correspondence
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.)
Van Buren, John, 1810-1866. Papers of John Van Buren

Subjects:

Indians of North America--Government relations
Mexican War, 1846-1848
Slavery--United States
Tariff--United States
Dwellings--New York (State)--Kinderhook
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
United States--Boundaries--Canada
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 (1782-1862), 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. The Addenda includes material received by the Library during the period 1960-1992.

Processing History:

The papers of Martin Van Buren were arranged and described in 1980; additional material received was incorporated into the collection in 1985, 1986, and 1996. Series 2, General Correspondence, of the Martin Van Buren Papers is listed and indexed in *Calendar of the Papers of Martin Van Buren* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910).

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.).

Microfilm:

A microfilm edition of Series 1 through Series 7 and part of Series 8 is available on thirty-six reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

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.
ca. 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 Martin Van Buren Papers 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 four 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.

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, n.d.
- 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, n.d.
- Oversize, 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, n.d.

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, n.d.

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 OV1
not filmed

Oversize, 1839

Maritime document, 1839.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-4 REEL 1-3	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 REEL 1	Draft Vol. 1
BOX 2 REEL 1	Vol. 2
BOX 3 REEL 1	Holograph transcript Autobiography Vol. 1 Vol. 2 pp. 1-106
BOX 3 REEL 2	pp. 107-131 Vols. 3-4 Vol. 5 pp. 1-133
BOX 3 REEL 3	pp. 134-214
BOX 4 REEL 3	Vols. 6-7 "History of the Bank" Notes Autobiography (5 folders) "History of the Bank" (6 folders)
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 1 REEL 4	1787-1813
BOX 2 REEL 4	1814
	1815 1 Jan.-14 June

Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 3 REEL 5	15 June-31 Dec.
	1816-1819
	1820
	Jan.-June
BOX 4 REEL 5	July-Dec.
	1821
	1822
	Jan.
BOX 5 REEL 6	Feb.-Dec.
	1823
	1824
	Jan.-Apr.
BOX 6 REEL 6	May-Dec.
	1825-1826
BOX 7 REEL 7	1827
	1828
	Jan.-Oct.
BOX 8 REEL 7	Nov.-Dec.
	1829
	1 Jan.-15 Apr.
BOX 9 REEL 8	16 Apr.-14 Aug.
BOX 10 REEL 8	15 Aug.-31 Dec.
	1830
	1 Jan.-6 Apr.
BOX 11 REEL 9	7 Apr.-11 Oct.
BOX 12 REEL 9	12 Oct.-31 Dec.
	1831
	1 Jan.-6 Mar.
BOX 13 REEL 10	7 Mar.-21 Sept.
BOX 14 REEL 10	22 Sept.-31 Dec.
	1832
	1-28 Jan.
BOX 15 REEL 11	29 Jan.-8 Mar.
BOX 16 REEL 11	9 Mar.-2 Nov.

Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 17 REEL 12	3 Nov.-31 Dec.
	1833
	1-10 Jan.
BOX 18 REEL 12	11 Jan.-15 Sept.
BOX 19 REEL 13	16 Sept.-31 Dec.
	1834
	1 Jan.-24 Mar.
BOX 20 REEL 13	25 Mar.-6 Dec.
BOX 21 REEL 14	7-31 Dec.
	1835
	1 Jan.-6 July
BOX 22 REEL 14	7 July-31 Dec.
	1836
	1 Jan.-1 Feb.
BOX 23 REEL 15	2 Feb.-31 July
BOX 24 REEL 15	1 Aug.-4 Sept.
BOX 25 REEL 16	5 Sept.-31 Dec.
	1837
	1 Jan.-6 Feb.
BOX 26 REEL 16	7 Feb.-7 Apr.
BOX 27 REEL 17	8 Apr.-1 June
BOX 28 REEL 17	2 June-4 Aug.
BOX 29 REEL 18	5 Aug.-17 Oct.
BOX 30 REEL 18	18 Oct.-15 Dec.
BOX 31 REEL 19	16-31 Dec.
	1838
	1 Jan.-27 Feb.
BOX 32 REEL 19	28 Feb.-14 July
BOX 33 REEL 20	15 July-5 Dec.
BOX 34 REEL 20	6-31 Dec.
	1839

Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868*Container**Contents*

1-11 Jan.
BOX 35 12 Jan.-13 Apr.
REEL 21
14 Apr.-30 Sept.
BOX 36
REEL 21
1 Oct.-31 Dec.
BOX 37
REEL 22
1840
1-9 Jan.
BOX 38 10 Jan.-4 May
REEL 22
5 May-31 July
BOX 39
REEL 23
1 Aug.-8 Oct.
BOX 40
REEL 23
9 Oct.-31 Dec.
BOX 41
REEL 24
1841
BOX 42
REEL 24
Jan.-Apr.
BOX 43 May-Dec.
REEL 25
1842
Jan.-Feb.
BOX 44 1 Mar.-23 Dec.
REEL 25
24-31 Dec.
BOX 45
REEL 26
1843
1 Jan.-15 Feb.
BOX 46 16 Feb.-30 June
REEL 26
1 July-9 Nov.
BOX 47
REEL 27
10 Nov.-31 Dec.
BOX 48
REEL 27
1844
1 Jan.-16 Feb.
BOX 49 17 Feb.-22 Apr.
REEL 28
23 Apr.-29 May
BOX 50
REEL 28
30 May-31 Oct.
BOX 51
REEL 29
1 Nov.-31 Dec.
BOX 52
REEL 29
1845
1 Jan.-7 May
BOX 53 8 May-31 Dec.

Series 2, General Correspondence, 1787-1868

Container

Contents

REEL 30

1846

1847

1 Jan.-17 Apr.

BOX 54

18 Apr.-31 Dec.

REEL 30

1848

1 Jan.-8 May

BOX 55

9 May-20 Aug.

REEL 31

BOX 56

21 Aug.-31 Dec.

REEL 31

1849

Jan.-Nov.

BOX 57

Dec.

REEL 32

1850

1851

Jan.-Feb.

BOX 58

Mar.-Dec.

REEL 32

1852

BOX 59

1853-1855

REEL 33

1856

Jan.-Nov.

BOX 60

Dec.

REEL 33

1857-1859

1860

Jan.

BOX 61

Feb.-Dec.

REEL 34

1861-1868

BOX 62

Series 3, Additional Correspondence, 1811-1853, n.d.

REEL 34

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

BOX 62

Originals, 1817-1846, n.d.

REEL 34

(20 folders)

Transcripts, 1811-1853

BOX 63-65

Series 4, Messages, 1837-1838

REEL 35

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

Series 4, Messages, 1837-1838

Container

Contents

BOX 63 Extra session, 1837

REEL 35

BOX 64 Annual, 1838

REEL 35

Vol. 1

BOX 65

Vol. 2

REEL 35

BOX 66

Series 5, Legal Record Book, 1807-1813

REEL 35

Records of legal business conducted by Van Buren.

BOX 66

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

REEL 35

BOX 67

Series 6, Estate Record Book, 1862-1863

REEL 35

Notations concerning Van Buren's estate.

BOX 67

Record book of Martin Van Buren's estate

REEL 35

BOX 68-70

Series 7, Miscellany, 1814-1910

not filmed

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

Typescripts of letters in Series 2, 1814-1845

Not filmed

(5 folders)

BOX 69

Typescript of autobiography

Vols. 1-14

BOX 70

Vols. 15-18

Corrected galley proof of the index to the *Calendar of the Martin Van Buren Papers* (1910) *Biography of Martin Van Buren, Vice President of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: J. Gideon, Jr., 1835. 196 pp.), compiled and edited by William Emmons
Printed matter

BOX 71-72

Series 8, Addenda, 1799-1862, n.d.

REEL 36

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

1980 Addition

REEL 36

Series 8, Addenda, 1799-1862, n.d.

Container

Contents

	Correspondence, certificates, indenture, and other material, 1799-1861, n.d. (99 folders)
BOX 72 Not filmed	1985 Addition Butler, Benjamin F., letter to, with typescript, 1847 Document establishing neutrality for the brig "Lady Adams," 1839 <i>See <u>Oversize</u></i> 1986 Addition John Van Buren file Correspondence, 1838-1839 (3 folders) Travel journal for trip to Europe, 1838-1839 Original (5 folders) Draft transcripts, n.d. (2 folders) 1996 Addition Correspondence Butler, Benjamin F., 1824-1858 Butler, Harriet Allen, 1826-1845, n.d. Mason Brothers, Publishers, 1860 Miller, Stephen Decatur, 1822 Printed material Butler, William Allen, <i>Martin Van Buren: Lawyer, Statesman & Man</i> (New York: D. Appleton & Co.), 1862
BOX OV1 not filmed	Oversize, 1839
BOX OV1	Maritime document, 1839. Series 8, Addenda, 1839 1985 Addition Document establishing neutrality for the brig "Lady Adams," 1839 (Container 72)