Guide to the General Joseph W. Brown Papers

MS 106

compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

May 1983

Yale University Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8240
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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 106

CREATOR: Brown, Joseph W., 1792-1880

TITLE: General Joseph W. Brown papers

DATES: 1773–1882

BULK DATES: 1818–1882

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.25 linear feet (1 box, 1 folio)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: General in the Michigan militia. Correspondence, military orders and documents, and a marriage certificate. Most of the papers relate to the Black Hawk War of 1832 waged between the United States and the Fox and the Sauk Indians. The correspondence describes the war in Michigan and Illinois and a council with the Potawatomi Indians who were allies of the militia. There were also letters on contemporary politics and the Toledo War (1835) in which Brown participated. Principal correspondents are Lewis Cass, William Henry Harrison, Stevens Thomson Mason and Winfield Scott.

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Requesting Instructions
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To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder
Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Conditions Governing Access
The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
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Preferred Citation
General Joseph W. Brown Papers. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical
Joseph W. Brown, who was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, held positions in the New York State Militia by signed appointment of Governor DeWitt Clinton from 1818-1824. In 1826, he was appointed Chief Justice of Lenawee County, Michigan Territory, by Lewis Cass, followed by his appointment as a colonel in the Michigan Militia in 1829. He held several other positions during the 1830s, the chief one of which was Brigadier General of the 3rd Brigade, Michigan Militia, having been appointed by Andrew Jackson. General Brown was in charge of this brigade during the Black Hawk War of 1832. Although the conflict was limited to Illinois and Wisconsin, Brown issued many orders, including some which seemed contradictory. As a result, his troops were weary and unwilling to serve due to excessive marching and countermarching for no real purpose. At least one other general wanted him courtmartialed for incompetence. However, his associations with the “boy wonder” Governor Stevens Thomson Mason (1811-1843) undoubtedly prevented any action from being taken. Mason also appointed Brown Major General of the Fifth Division of the Michigan Militia (1838), Brigadier General of the Michigan State Guard (1838), and a Regent of the University of Michigan (1839). These positions followed Brown’s leadership of Michigan forces in the so-called Toledo War, a boundary dispute with Ohio, of 1835-1836. The later years of Brown’s life were spent in retirement.

Scope and Contents
The General Joseph W. Brown Papers consist of about 220 items removed from four bound volumes, covering the period 1818-1882. The items are divided into correspondence and other papers, each group being arranged chronologically. An alphabetical index to the correspondents is provided. Among the correspondents are Lewis Cass, William Henry Harrison, Stevens Thomson Mason, and Winfield Scott.

The bulk of the material dates from 1832 during and following the Black Hawk War. The letters and orders together present a picture of Indian attacks in Michigan and Illinois and answering military measures (see letters of 1832 May 18-30, Jun 4, 6, 9, Jul 24), including a council with the Potawatomis confirming
their status as allies of the militia (for the proceedings of the council, see folder 17, 1832 May 27). Brown was much concerned with problems of raising troops (letters of 1832 May 30, Jun 10) and finding arms and other supplies. The government was not always willing to issue him equipment, and when arms were forthcoming, they were not always fit for use (1830 Jan 15, 26, 1832 May 22-23, 28, 30, Jun 1). Brown felt that he received less cooperation than might be expected both from his troops and from his superiors, justifying his own actions as the result of conflicting orders from above (1832 May 23, Jun 17, 19-20, Aug 13, 1833 Sep 28, n.d.). Also active in the Toledo War, Brown discusses troop movements and the loyalty of his men in letters of March 26, June 17, and December 15, 1835.

There are in addition several personal letters in the collection. William Henry Harrison writes on December 5, 1835, about the death of Brown’s brother, and Brown replies on December 15, writing again on March 31, 1840. That Brown was a Harrison supporter is shown by an invitation to speak before the Tippecanoe Club of Kalamazoo, June 27, 1840. A letter of March 6, 1833, from Robert Newlin discusses family matters and the activities of Andrew Jackson. Other personal letters of the 1860s and 1870s concern Brown’s friends, family, and genealogy, and letters of the 1880s deal with Supreme Court Justice M. R. Waite’s interest in a colonial powder horn.

Aside from correspondence, there are a variety of orders to subordinate officers in the militia, as well as military commissions and other certificates. Included are documents with the signatures of Lewis Cass, DeWitt Clinton, Andrew Jackson, Stevens Thomson Mason, and George B. Porter. There are also several items relating to Brown’s family, such as a marriage certificate of 1773.

These papers were donated to Yale University by Charles Eberstadt in 1963.

**Arrangement**

Arranged by correspondent.
### Collection Contents

#### Inventory

2.5 linear feet (1 box, 1 folio)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correspondence</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 1</td>
<td>1826, 1829–1830</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 2</td>
<td>1831–1832 May 19</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 3</td>
<td>1832 May 20–23</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 4</td>
<td>1832 May 24–27</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 5</td>
<td>1832 May 28–31</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 6</td>
<td>1832 June 1–6</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 7</td>
<td>1832 June 9–17</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 8</td>
<td>1832 June 18–23</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 9</td>
<td>1832 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 10</td>
<td>1832 August–1833 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 11</td>
<td>1833 September–1835 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 12</td>
<td>1835 March–September</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 13</td>
<td>1835 December–1860</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 14</td>
<td>1866–1882</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 15</td>
<td>undated</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Other papers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 16</td>
<td>1824–1832 May 23</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 17</td>
<td>1832 May 26–29</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 18</td>
<td>1832 May 30–31</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 19</td>
<td>1832 June 1–11</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 20</td>
<td>1832 June 12–July</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 21</td>
<td>1833–1836, 1858–1859</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings and genealogical papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Marriage certificate of Samuel Brown and Abi White</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>N.Y. State Infantry captain’s commission, signed by DeWitt Clinton</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>N.Y. State Infantry colonel’s commission, signed by DeWitt Clinton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Appointment as Chief Justice in Michigan, signed by Lewis Cass</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Commission in Michigan Militia, signed by Lewis Cass</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Commission to locate the seat of justice for the County of Hillsdale, Michigan, signed by Lewis Cass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Michigan Militia brigadier general’s commission, signed by Andrew Jackson and Lewis Cass</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Commission to locate the seat of justice for the County of Derrien, Michigan, signed by Stevens T. Mason and George B. Porter</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Commission as registrar of land office, signed by Andrew Jackson</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Michigan Militia major general’s commission, signed by Stevens T. Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Michigan Militia brigadier general’s commission, signed by Stevens T. Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>Appointment as regent of the University of Michigan, signed by Stevens T. Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>David Brown, commission as colonel in the Michigan Militia, signed by J. Wright Gordon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index of Correspondents

Anderson, John H. 1832 May 25; 1833 Jan 1
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Winder, Col. John 1829 Nov 12; 1830 Jul 27, Sep 30
Winslow, Erasmus 1832 May 18
Winter, E. C. 1832 Jun 21
Winthrop, Robert 1881 Nov 3
unidentified 1832 Jun 1; 1851 Feb 24
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.

Subjects
Armed Forces
Black Hawk War, 1832
Fox Indians
Indians of North America -- Wars -- 1815-1875
Potawatomi Indians
Sauk Indians

Geographic Names
Michigan -- History -- To 1837

Occupations
Soldiers

Names
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Cass, Lewis, 1782-1866
Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841
Mason, Stevens Thomson, 1760-1803
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866