

Guide to the General Joseph W. Brown Papers

MS 106



compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Charles Eberstadt, 1963.

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 courtmartialled 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 Tippicanoe 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, 1773, 1818-1882

2.5 linear feet (1 box, 1 folio)

Correspondence		
b. 1, f. 1	1826, 1829-1830	1826, 1829-1830
b. 1, f. 2	1831-1832 May 19	1831-1832 May 19
b. 1, f. 3	1832 May 20-23	1832 May 20-23
b. 1, f. 4	1832 May 24-27	1832 May 24-27
b. 1, f. 5	1832 May 28-31	1832 May 28-31
b. 1, f. 6	1832 June 1-6	1832 June 1-6
b. 1, f. 7	1832 June 9-17	1832 June 9-17
b. 1, f. 8	1832 June 18-23	1832 June 18-23
b. 1, f. 9	1832 July	1832 July
b. 1, f. 10	1832 August-1833 August	1832 August-1833 August
b. 1, f. 11	1833 September-1835 February	1833 September-1835 February
b. 1, f. 12	1835 March-September	1835 March-September
b. 1, f. 13	1835 December-1860	1835 December-1860
b. 1, f. 14	1866-1882	1866-1882
b. 1, f. 15	undated	undated
Other papers		
b. 1, f. 16	1824-1832 May 23	1824-1832 May 23
b. 1, f. 17	1832 May 26-29	1832 May 26-29
b. 1, f. 18	1832 May 30-31	1832 May 30-31
b. 1, f. 19	1832 June 1-11	1832 June 1-11
b. 1, f. 20	1832 June 12-July	1832 June 12-July

Other papers (continued)

b. 1, f. 21	1833-1836, 1858-1859	1833-1836, 1858-1859
b. 1, f. 22	Newspaper clippings and genealogical papers	undated

Oversize

b. 2	Marriage certificate of Samuel Brown and Abi White	1773 March 10
b. 2	N.Y. State Infantry captain's commission, signed by DeWitt Clinton	1818 April 24
b. 2	N.Y. State Infantry colonel's commission, signed by DeWitt Clinton	1819 March 27
b. 2	Appointment as Chief Justice in Michigan, signed by Lewis Cass	1826 November 23
b. 2	Commission in Michigan Militia, signed by Lewis Cass	1829 November 8
b. 2	Commission to locate the seat of justice for the County of Hillsdale, Michigan, signed by Lewis Cass	1830 October 25
b. 2	Michigan Militia brigadier general's commission, signed by Andrew Jackson and Lewis Cass	1832 May 10
b. 2	Commission to locate the seat of justice for the County of Derrien, Michigan, signed by Stevens T. Mason and George B. Porter	1832 June 12
b. 2	Commission as registrar of land office, signed by Andrew Jackson	1836 July 5
b. 2	Michigan Militia major general's commission, signed by Stevens T. Mason	1838 March 30
b. 2	Michigan Militia brigadier general's commission, signed by Stevens T. Mason	1839 April 16
b. 2	Appointment as regent of the University of Michigan, signed by Stevens T. Mason	1839 July 12
b. 2	David Brown, commission as colonel in the Michigan Militia, signed by J. Wright Gordon	1841 August 25

Index of Correspondents

Anderson, John H. 1832 May 25; 1833 Jan 1
Bacon, Daniel S. 1832 Jul 21, 29; 1860 Jun 19
Bacon, Marshall J. 1835 Sep 4
Baldwin, H. N. 1832 Jun 17
Beeson, Jacob 1832 Jun 18, 23, Dec 1
Biddle, John 1830 Jan 15, 26
Boardman, W. E. 1835 Mar 23
Bowford, G. W. 1830 Jan 9
Brooks, E. 1835 Sep 4
Brounson, Amos 1840 Jun 27
Brown, Isaac B. 1835 Dec 15; 1870 Nov 3
Brown, Joseph W. 1831 Mar 21; 1832 May 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, Jun 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, Jul 5, 20, 24, 30 Aug 1, 13; 1835 Feb 23, Mar 26; 1840 Mar 31; n.d.
Cass, Lewis 1826 Dec 6; 1830 Aug 13; 1831 Apr 6
Clark, E. 1833 Jul 24
Clybourne, A. 1832 May 18
Comstock, A. J. 1832 Jun 19
Corbus, Richard W. 1831 Jun 1
Curtenius, F. W. 1840 Jun 27
Dunham, Seth 1834 Jul 7
Edwards, T. A. W. 1832 Apr 3; 1833 Sep 1, 12
Ellis, Edward 1832 Jun 19
Eustis, Abraham 1832 Jul 15
Evans, S. B. 1835 Feb 27
Gale, George L. 1840 Jun 27
Harrison, William Henry 1835 Dec 5
Heald, Alva 1832 May 18
Hoffman, George W. 1833 Sep 13, 28
Howard, Joshua 1833 Mar 13
Huston, Gen. A., 1832 May 19, 23, Jun 18; 1833 Feb 1
Jackson, John, 1832 May 24, 28
Jones, Benwick 1831 Jun 1; 1832 Jun 11
Jones, Edmund 1831 Jun 1
Kirby, Maj. E.
Knight, George T. 1866 Dec 29; 1869 Jun 15, Oct 14; 1870 Mar 14; 1872 Feb 27
McBride, Jonathan H. 1840 Jun 27
McGaffey, T. 1833 Aug 22
McNair, Col. W. 1832 May 28; 1835 Jun 17
Mason, Stevens Thomson 1832 May 22, Jun 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 19
Mower, Hon. 1840 Jun 27
Newberry, Walter L. 1830 Mar 4, 11
Newlin, Robert 1833 Mar 6
Noble, Thas. 1835 Mar 4
O'Brien, A. 1840 Jun 27
Owen, Th. J. V. 1832 May 18, 21, 24
Poinsett, J. R. 1840 May 12
Porter, George B. 1832 Jun 15, Jul 21, 24
Schwarz, J. E. 1831 Nov 7; 1835 Mar 28
Scott, Gen. Winfield 1832 Jul 24; 1839 Dec 24
Stewart, J. 1832 May 19, 28, 29
Stewart, Col. H. L. 1832 May 20, 23, 28, Jun 23
Tilghman, Lench n.d.
Tyler, John 1843 Jan 8
Ullman, J. J. 1831 Jun 18; 1832 Dec 30; 1835 Feb 21, Mar 9

Waite, M. R. 1882 Oct 13
Webster, D. B. 1840 Jun 27
Williams, In. R. 1832 May 22, Jun 17, 20
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

Brown, Joseph W., 1792-1880
Cass, Lewis, 1782-1866
Harrison, William Henry, 1773-1841
Mason, Stevens Thomson, 1760-1803
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866