

A Guide to the Executive Papers of Governor James L. Kemper, 1874-1877

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1874-1877

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The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

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There are no restrictions.

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Separated Material

Oversized items have been separated to Box 6.

Biographical Information

James Lawson Kemper was born 11 June 1823 at "Mountain Prospect" in Madison County, Virginia, to William Kemper (1776-1853) and Maria E. Allison Kemper (1787-1873). He attended the Locust Dale Academy, then Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in Lexington, Virginia, graduating in 1842. He read law under George W. Summers (1804-1868) of Kanawha County, (West) Virginia, and received a master's degree from Washington College. Admitted to the bar 2 October 1846, Kemper returned to Madison County to practice law. When the Mexican War began, Kemper was appointed captain in the First Virginia Regiment and served until the end of the war. In 1853, Kemper was elected to the House of Delegates and served until 1863. He was Speaker of the House from 1861 to 1863. Kemper also was appointed a general in the Virginia militia in 1858. When the Civil War began, Kemper was appointed colonel of the 7th Virginia Infantry. Due to his performance at the battle of Seven Pines, Kemper was promoted to brigadier general. He was wounded in Pickett's Charge on 3 July 1863, and was captured by Union troops a few days later. Exchanged in September 1863, he returned to his command. Kemper was put in command of the reserve forces of Virginia in 1864.

After the war ended, Kemper returned to his law practice in Madison County and pursued business interests. He was elected governor of Virginia in 1873 and served from 1874 to 1878. Much of his term was spent in dealing with Virginia's debt. On 12 March 1874, Kemper created controversy and angered his Conservative contemporaries by vetoing a bill to transfer control of Petersburg's city government from elected Republican officials to a board of commissioners appointed by a city judge. During his term, Governor Kemper also dedicated John Henry Foley's statue to Stonewall Jackson on Capitol Square and initiated the planning for an equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee.

After he left the governor's office, Kemper returned to Madison County, then moved to Orange County in 1882. Kemper married Cremora Conway Cave (ca. 1837-1870) 4 July 1853 in Madison County, and they had seven children. Kemper died 7 April 1895 in Orange County and buried at the family cemetery at "Walnut Hills" in Madison County.

Scope and Content

Governor James L. Kemper's Executive papers are organized chronologically with undated items arranged at the rear of the collection. These papers consist of incoming correspondence during Kemp's four-year term as governor of Virginia between 1 January 1874 and 1 January 1878. The correspondence primarily relates to the state war debt, prisoners & the Penitentiary, arms & the militia, the Petersburg bill veto, recommendations & appointments, the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, the Stonewall Jackson statue in Capitol Square, the equestrian statue of General Robert E. Lee, Eastern State Lunatic Asylum, and the Virginia Military Institute. In addition to correspondence, there are recommendations, applications, agreements, resolutions, requisitions, appointments, commissions, reports, petitions, and other sundry items.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into the following series:

- Series I. Executive Papers of Governor James L. Kemper, 1874-1877

Contents List

Executive Papers of Governor James L. Kemper, 1874-1877.

Boxes 1-6 (box)

Extent

Extent: 6 boxes.

Scope and Content

Noteworthy correspondence originates from the Federal government, Virginia state government, Governors from other states, and miscellaneous sources. Federal government correspondents include Thomas M. Vincent, Assistant Adjutant General; S.V. Benet, Brig. Gen. Chief of Ordnance, War Dept.; William W. Belknap & J. Donald Cameron, Secretaries of War; John L. Cadwalader, Assistant Dept. of State; Eppa Hunton, House of Representatives; and Rufus Ingalls, Acting Quartermaster General. Significant correspondence from the Federal government includes the following: Thomas M. Vincent, Assistant Adjutant General, Washington, encl. a table showing the organization of regiments & companies showing the number and grade of officers (1874 Feb. 11); S.V. Benet, Brig. Gen. Chief of Ordnance, War Dept., re. the issue of Colt's revolvers to Virginia by the National Armory at Springfield (1874 Dec. 1); William W. Belknap, Secretary of War, re. the organization of a board to advise with the State Harbor Commissioners in order to determine the limiting lines of the harbors of Norfolk & Portsmouth (1875 July 3); John L. Cadwalader, Dept. of State, re. the request of Count A. de Beausacq through the minister of Chile for an introduction to the governor (1875 Oct. 18); Eppa Hunton, House of Representatives, re. the death of George F. Strother, Superintendent of the Penitentiary, and recommending Col. Moreton Marye of Alexandria (1876 Aug. 2); Rufus Ingalls, Acting Quartermaster General, re. the cession of jurisdiction by Virginia over lands occupied by the U.S. as national military cemeteries (1876 Mar. 28 & Oct. 12); and J. Donald Cameron, Secretary of War, requesting a complete set of reports of the Adjutant General for the years 1861-1866 for preparation of the publication of the official records of the War of the Rebellion (1877 Jan. 26).

Significant correspondents from Virginia State government include Raleigh T. Daniel, Attorney General; William H. Richardson, Adjutant General; and Francis H. Smith, Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute.

Attorney General Raleigh T. Daniel provides Governor Kemper with several opinions. Daniel offers his opinion on the act allowing convicts commutation (1874 Jan. 22). In addition, Daniel writes whether under existing laws the right of property in the arms issued for arming the militia of the U.S. is vested in the state authorities with power to dispose of them by sale or otherwise without accounting to the U.S. (1874 Nov. 25). On 17 December 1874, Daniel writes regarding the commission of black officers in the volunteer militia. Additionally, Daniel provides an opinion regarding an affidavit sent with the requisition of the governor of North Carolina (1875 Jan. 12). Another opinion supplied by Daniel relates to the construction of the word "exported" used in section 56, chapter 55 of the Code of Virginia, respecting tobacco inspections (1875 Mar. 19). Finally, Daniel writes regarding the statement by the governor of Maryland concerning the Potomac fishery (1876 May 12).

William H. Richardson, Adjutant General, writes to Governor Kemper concerning the militia. Included is a letter from Richardson to Gen. E.D. Townsend, U.S. Adjutant General, regarding the organization of the militia of the state and the desire to conform to the organization of the U.S. Army (1874 Feb. 7). Similarly, Richardson writes the Governor regarding the organization of the active militia to conform to U.S. regulations (1874 Mar. 30). Richardson also writes regarding arms for the West Augusta Guard (1874 Aug. 3); the resignation of the captain of the Petersburg Grays (1874 Sept. 11); applications for the organization of volunteer companies at Hampton Sidney & Roanoke colleges & reports of the Attorney General (1875 Jan. 29); the organization of a company by Capt. DuPont as part of the regular volunteer force of the state (1875 Feb. 5); the inspection of four African-American militia companies in Richmond & Manchester (1875 May 31); and muskets for the Corps of Cadets (1875 Sept. 24).

Francis H. Smith, Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, writes on the subject of Stonewall Jackson medals to be awarded to the top graduates of the Institute and other topics. Smith writes regarding the following: medals to the 1st & 2nd graduates (1876 May 6 & 8), the Hope's Jackson medals (1876 July 5), funds to send the Corps of Cadets to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia (1876 Aug. 7), the Jackson-Hope Medal fund (1877 May 30), a request for 250 muskets (1877 July 24), and a die for the Jackson-Hope medals by sculptor Ezekiel (1877 Feb. 14).

Governors from other states comprise a significant amount of correspondence received by the governor. This correspondence mostly relates to fugitives, boundary lines, Federal interference in Louisiana, and other subjects. Included are letters from the following governors: John J. Jacob, West Virginia; James B. Groome & John Lee Carroll, Maryland; Charles H. Hardin, Missouri; John P. Cochran, Delaware; Augustus H. Garland, Arkansas; James D. Porter, Tennessee; and Zebulon B. Vance, North Carolina.

Governor John J. Jacob, West Virginia, requests books, papers, and records for the several counties now composing the state of West Virginia (1874 Apr. 29). Governor Jacob also writes regarding the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad (1875 Nov. 24). Governor James B. Groome, Maryland, writes regarding the arbitration for the settlement of the boundary line between Virginia & Maryland (1874 May 14). Groome's successor John Lee Carroll writes regarding the illegal oyster dredging by citizens of Maryland in Virginia waters (1877 Apr. 18). Governor C.H. Hardin, Missouri, transmits a copy of a joint resolution of the General Assembly of Missouri condemning the recent abuse of civil liberty perpetuated by Federal troops in Louisiana (1875 Jan. 22). Governor John P. Cochran, Delaware, also encloses a joint resolution condemning the recent Federal interference (1875 Feb. 2). Governor Augustus H. Garland, Arkansas, encloses a clipping regarding Mr. McKinnon, a financier (1875 May 24). Governor James D. Porter, Tennessee, writes regarding the act of Virginia for making certain coupons receivable for taxes (1876 May 15). Porter also writes regarding the alleged arrest of one Foster (1877 Apr. 9). Lastly, Zebulon B. Vance, North Carolina, writes regarding the arrest & delivery of three escaped black convicts from the North Carolina Penitentiary (1877 July 23).

Miscellaneous correspondents to Governor Kemper include Kemper's fellow Confederate generals Jubal A. Early and George E. Pickett. Jubal A. Early corresponds with Kemper regularly with reference to the statue of Stonewall Jackson in Capitol Square. Early's correspondence relates to the following subjects: an appropriation for the statue (1875 Mar. 21), the shipment of the statue (1875 May 14), the inscription on the pedestal (1875 June 25, July 28, & Oct. 5), the proposed plan for the funeral for Gen. Pickett at the dedication of the Jackson statue (1875 Sept. 29), appropriations for the Lee Equestrian Statue & the Lee Monument Association (1875 Oct. 7), his complaints that black militia companies are allowed in the procession dedicating the statue of Jackson (1875 Oct. 22), the cost of the pedestal (1875 Nov. 10), and the meeting of the Lee Monument Association (1875 Nov. 22).

Another fellow Confederate general George E. Pickett corresponds in his capacity as General Agent for Virginia, North Carolina, & West Virginia for the Washington Life Insurance Company. Pickett writes regarding an account for tents, knapsacks, blankets, & fatigue suits purchased by the state of Virginia from J.W. Frazier, New York (1874 June 23). On 1 August 1874, encloses a letter from Capt. Phillips regarding supplies for the West Augusta Guard (1874 Aug. 1). Pickett also writes the shipping of a four-gun three-inch steel rifle battery and the acquisition of cadet muskets (1875 Jan. 29).

Additional significant correspondence includes: George F. Strother, Superintendent of the Penitentiary, encl. a monthly report of convicts remaining at the Penitentiary (1874 Jan. 2); J. Bell Bigger, Clerk of the House of Delegates & Keeper of the Rolls, re. the joint resolution to incorporate the town of Van Burensville (1874 Jan. 7); P.F. Howard, Governor's Clerk, to R.T. Daniel, Attorney General, encl. a letter of George F. Strother, Superintendent of the Penitentiary, re. the act allowing convicts a commutation of four days per month for good conduct (1874 Jan. 21); Harry Heth, Louisville, KY, re. his approbation of Governor Kemper's veto of the "bill to provide a charter for Petersburg" (1874 Mar. 16); C.R. Boyd, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the University of Virginia, requesting aid to build a gymnasium & a bathing establishment (1874 May 1); Benjamin S. Ewell, College of William & Mary, belatedly congratulating him on his election and requesting his influence on behalf of the college (1874 May 9); Joseph R. Anderson, New York, resigning as visitor of the Agricultural & Mechanical College of Virginia (1874 May 18); Charles S. Venable, University of Virginia, re. his problems with the Superintendent of the University (1874 May 21); Col. W.H. Taylor, Norfolk, accepting his appointment to the Board of Visitors of the Virginia Military Institute (1874 June 1); W.A. Graham, North Carolina, re. his appointment with Jeremiah S. Black of Pennsylvania to ascertain & determine the true line of boundary between Virginia & Maryland (1874 June 8); D.R. Bower, Superintendent of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, re. a resolution of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, etc. (1874 Oct.); D.G. Yuengling, Jr., Champagne Ale Brewery, Harlem, New York, sending bottles of aged stout (1874 Sept. 28); A.T. Goshorn, Director General, U.S. Centennial Commission, Philadelphia, re. the progress & present condition of the International Exhibition of 1876 authorized by the acts of Congress in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the independence of the U.S. (1874 Dec. 18); William Mahone, Mayor of Petersburg, re. a new charter for the city (1875 Jan. 29); J.G. Cabell, President, Board of Directors, Office of the Board of Health, forwarding the resignation of A.B. Venable as director of the Central Lunatic Asylum (1875 Mar. 13); Joseph A. Anderson inviting the governor to his daughter's wedding (1875 Apr. 2); A.J.B. Beresford Hope re. the completion of Gen. Stonewall Jackson's statue and sketches of the pedestal for the statute (1875 May 23); Mathew F. Maury, Charleston, re. the Smithsonian's collection of the mineral resources of the U.S. at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia (1875 July 6); Mann S. Valentine, Richmond, re. sittings by Gen. Pickett in the studio of his brother E.V. Valentine (1875 Aug. 2); Elizabeth L. Van Lew requesting a pardon for Thomas Withers (1875 Aug. 8); Mathew F. Maury, Member of the Co-Operative Committee for the Collection, encl. a circular re. a collection to illustrate the mineral resources of the U.S. for the International

Exhibition of 1876 (1875 Aug.); W.W. Vest, Williamsburg, complaining of the administration of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum and suggesting new directors (1875 Oct. 13); J.S. Cogbill, Philadelphia, Secretary of the U.S. Centennial Commission, encl. a resolution of the Commission for each state to chose representatives to deliver an address on the history & growth of their state (1876 Feb. 21); James B. Green & Hardin Littlepage re. taxes assessed on the Pamunkey & Mattaponi Indians (1876 May 6); W.H. Taylor, Norfolk, re. a shield to be exhibited at Independence Hall (1876 May 27); W.H. Taylor, Norfolk, encl. a copy of Frank M. Etting's resignation as chief of the Historical Dept. of the Centennial Commission (1876 May 23); William Smith, Warrenton, recommending A.D. Payne as a visitor to the Virginia Military Institute (1876 June 12); C.P. Cross, 1st Assistant Superintendent, Virginia Penitentiary, re. an attack made upon H.B. Smith, the guard in the dining room of the Penitentiary by a convict and recommending the commutation of sentence for three convicts for coming to his assistance (1876 July 10); J.E. Peyton, U.S. Centennial, re. reception for the citizens of the original thirteen states during the Centennial Exhibition (1876 Aug. 7); J.E. Peyton, U.S. Centennial, re. Virginia Day at the Exhibition on October 19 (1876 Oct. 11); W.C. Carrington, Mayor of Richmond, re. responsibility of the grounds outside of the railings around the Capitol Square (1877 Jan. 6); Fitzhugh Lee, Richland, presenting a portrait of J.E.B. Stuart (1877 Jan. 15); John Bradby & Delawar Bradby, Pamunkey Indians, requesting a teacher and complaining of the failure of their hunting grounds (1877 Feb. 9); Elstan Major, Chief Elect of the Mattaponi Tribe, complaining of trespasses on tribal lands (1877 June 25); Peter B. Simons, President of the Exhibitors Association, inviting the governor to a special convocation of the governors of all states to be held in Philadelphia (1877 July 14); Henry Bohmer re. his appointment as consul for the state of Virginia by the Emperor of Germany (1877 Oct. 9); M.H. Mosman re. a model in bronze submitted to him by the Lee Monument Association (1877 Nov. 12); and Sarah N. Randolph, secretary of the Ladies Lee Monument Committee, declining an invitation to the meeting of the board to decide which model to use for the equestrian statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee (1877 Nov. 13).

Other noteworthy items include the following: applications for Superintendent of Public Buildings (1874 January); memo of agreement between the governor & Mason, Gooch, & Hoge, railroad contractors, to hire all the able-bodied black state convicts not hired on the quarry business (1874 June 19); applications for the office of storekeeper of the Penitentiary (1874 July); protest of W.H. Ruffner, Superintendent of Public Instruction, against the action of the board that Blackburn & McDonald's Grammar School History of the U.S. be placed upon the list of licenses books (1874 July 22); recommendations for inspector of tobacco at Seabrooke's Warehouse (1875 Dec.); recommendations for inspector of fish (1875 Mar.); joint & concurrent resolution of Missouri in regard to the sale of leaf tobacco as affected by the provisions of the revenue law of the U.S. (1875 Mar. 23); recommendations for immigration agents (1875 Mar.); recommendations for appointments to the Board of Directors of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum (1875 Oct. 29); applications for position of flour inspector in Richmond City (1876 Feb.); appointment of visitors to the Virginia Military Institute (1876 June); applications for office of Superintendent of the Penitentiary (1876 Aug.); applications for office of Adjutant General to replace William H. Richardson (1876 Sept.); recommendations for quarantine office for the port of Norfolk & Portsmouth (1877 Jan.-Feb.); applications for flour inspector of the city of Norfolk (1877 May & June); and applications to the office of Attorney General to supply the vacancy occasioned by the death of R.I. Daniel (1877 Aug.).

Arrangement

Arranged in chronological order.

1874

January

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Folder 1

February

Box 1

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March

Box 1

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October

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November

Box 5

Folder 1

December

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Folder 2

Undated

Box 5

Folder 3

Oversized, 1874-1877.

Box 6

Folder 1