

Edward Coles Papers

Edward Coles Papers [typescripts]

1814-1857

Title Statement

Edward Coles Papers Guide to the Edward Coles Papers Mss. 39.2 C68

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Mss. 39.2 C68

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/2469

Unit Date

1814-1857

Language

English

Extent

0.01 Linear Foot

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Biographical Information:

Edward Coles was born in Albemarle County, Va. 15 December 1786. He attended Hampden-Sydney College and the College of William and Mary. He was private secretary to James Madison. He emancipated persons enslaved by him upon his removal to Illinois. Coles was elected governor of Illinois. He moved to Philadelphia and died in 1868.

<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/coles-edward-1786-1868/>

Edward Coles was the second governor of Illinois (1822–1826) and a lifelong opponent of enslavement. Born in Albemarle County, he inherited a dozen of enslaved persons from his father and, against his family's wishes, decided to free them. But Coles was forced to delay his plans because of financial, moral, and practical difficulties. He served as secretary to U.S. president James Madison (1810–1815), traveling to the Northeast on behalf of the president in 1811 and acting as a special envoy to Russia in 1816. In 1814, Coles exchanged letters with Thomas Jefferson, encouraging the former president to support the gradual emancipation of enslaved persons, but Jefferson refused. In 1817, Coles sold his Rockfish plantation to his brother and moved seventeen of persons enslaved by him to Illinois, freeing them along the way. As governor of Illinois, he helped defeat a referendum aimed at calling a pro-slavery constitutional convention. He later moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he corresponded with Jefferson's grandson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, convincing him to oppose slavery in the General Assembly's debate of the issue in 1831. Coles also encouraged Madison to free persons enslaved by him in his will, but the former president did not. He married Sally Logan Roberts in 1833 and the couple had three children. Coles died in Philadelphia in 1868.

Scope and Contents

Typescript copies of letters and extracts, written by Edward Coles (1786-1868), who held the positions of secretary to President James Madison and Governor of Illinois. Subjects covered by the letters include James Madison and the War of 1812; Madison's not emancipating persons enslaved by him at his death; the claiming of public lands by individual states; the estate of James Monroe; Andrew Jackson; Thomas Jefferson's authorship of the Ordinance of 1787; and Jefferson's relationship with John Adams. Typescripts of letters written by Edward Coles to Nicholas Biddle, Joseph C. Cabell, Henry Clay, Albert Gallatin, Thomas Jefferson, Dolley Madison, James Madison, Joel R. Poinsett, Henry S. Randall, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, William Cabell Rives, Charles Sumner, Martin Van Buren and Robert C. Winthrop, among other correspondents.

Related Materials:

These letters are in typescript form, meaning that they are typed copies made from contemporary copies. All these letters have been printed/published in the William and Mary College Quarterly, 2nd Series, v.7, pp. 32-41, 97-113, 158-173.

Keywords

Typescripts

Buckingham County (Va.)--History
Anti-slavery movements
Ordinance of 1787.
United States--History--War of 1812
United States--Politics and Government
Cabell, Joseph C. (Joseph Carrington), 1778-1856
Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826
Madison, Dolley P., 1768-1849
Madison, James, Jr., 1751-1836
Rives, William C. (William Cabell), 1793-1868
Adams, John, 1735-1826
Cabell, Joseph C. (Joseph Carrington), 1778-1856
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852
Gallatin, Albert (1761-1849)
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845
Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826
Madison, James, 1751-1836
Rives, William C. (William Cabell), 1793-1868

Arrangement of Materials:

This collection is arranged chronologically by date.

Description of Subordinate Components

Typescripts

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/269074

Mixed Materials Manuscripts Group 2 Box 5 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English

Scope and Contents

Item 1: Edward Coles, Washington, [D.C.] to Thomas Jefferson,

Item 2: Edward Coles, Washington, [D.C.] to Thomas Jefferson,

Item 3: Edward Coles, Vandalia, [Illinois] to Messrs. Brown & Berry, editors of the,

Item 4: Edward Coles, Vandalia, Illinois to Nicolas Biddle, President of the Bank of the United States,

Item 5: Edward Coles, Vandalia, Illinois, to James Madison, at "Montpelier," Orange Court House, Virginia,

Item 6: Edward Coles, Edwardsville, [Illinois], to Nicholas Biddle, at Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania],

Item 7: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to James Gallatin, at New York, [New York],

Item 8: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to James Madison, at "Montpelier," [Orange County, Virginia],

Item 9: Edward Coles, Edwardsville, [Illinois], to James Madison, at "Montpelier," [Orange County, Virginia],

Item 10: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to Thomas Jefferson Randolph, member of the Virginia legislature,

Item 11: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to James Madison, at "Montpelier," [Orange County, Virginia],

Item 12: Edward Coles, New York, [New York] to D[olley] P[ayne] Madison,

Item 13: Edward Coles, Albemarle County, Virginia to James Madison, at "Montpelier," [Orange County, Virginia],

Item 14: Edward Coles, Newport, [R.I.] to S. C. Stevenson,

Item 15: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to S.C. Stevenson,

Item 16: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to Albert Gallatin, New York, [New York],

Item 17: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to Albert Gallatin, New York, [New York],

Item 18: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to Henry Clay, at Washington, D.C.,
Item 19: Edward Coles, [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania] to Messrs. Gales & Seaton,
Item 20: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to J. R. Poinsett, at Charleston, South Carolina,
Item 21: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to John Van Buren, at New York, [New York],
Item 22: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to [Martin] Van Buren, Lindenwald, [New York],
Item 23: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to Joseph C. Cabell, Warminster, [Nelson County] Virginia,
Item 24: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to William C. Rives, at "Castle Hill," [Albemarle County, Virginia],
Item 25: Edward Coles, Newport, [Rhode Island] to Robert C. Winthrop, Nahant, [Massachusetts],
Item 26: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to Henry S. Randall, Cortland Village, New York,
Item 27: Edward Coles, Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania] to W. C. Rives,
Item 28: Edward Coles to the editors of the National Intelligencer,