

Charles James Faulkner (1806-1884) Papers, 1786-1892 A&M 0934

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Abstract

Papers of Charles J. Faulkner (1806-1884) and family. Charles J. Faulkner was a Martinsburg attorney, Virginia legislator, member of Congress, and ambassador to France during the James Buchanan administration. Includes business and land papers of James Faulkner of Baltimore, 1804-1811; letters to and papers of Charles J. Faulkner; a colored plat of a survey made for William McMurtrie [1786, Harrison, now Upshur County] along French Creek; and a Thomas Haymond survey plat in Harrison County, May 1844. For more information about Faulkner, see the Historical Note.

Creator

Faulkner, Charles James, 1806-1884

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Administrative Information

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Biographical / Historical

From the West Virginia Encyclopedia article on Charles James Faulkner (see link in External Documents):

Statesman Charles James Faulkner (July 6, 1806 - November 1, 1884) was born in Martinsburg, the son of an Irish immigrant. Faulkner attended Georgetown College (now Georgetown University) in Washington and studied law in Winchester, Virginia. He entered the Virginia General Assembly at age 22 in 1829, his first political race. In 1833, Faulkner married Mary W. Boyd, the youngest daughter of Gen. Elisha Boyd, and through her acquired the plantation of Boydville and other properties. Faulkner served also in the West Virginia legislature, U.S. Congress (1851-1859), and as U.S. minister to France.

In 1832, Faulkner spoke publicly for the gradual elimination of slavery. He advocated Western Virginia interests, such as voting rights for all white males regardless of property, when Virginia rewrote its constitution in 1850-1851.

Faulkner was U.S. minister to France for 14 months before the Civil War. In 1861, he delivered his last report to Secretary of State William Seward. As Faulkner headed home to Martinsburg, Seward had him arrested as a suspected Southern sympathizer. He was never formally charged. Seward offered to release Faulkner if he would swear an oath of allegiance. Faulkner refused and was eventually traded for another prisoner. During the Civil War, Faulkner served on Stonewall Jackson's staff.

After the war and the creation of West Virginia, Faulkner again refused an oath of allegiance to the United States and recovered his law license only with difficulty. Nonetheless, when Virginia sued to regain the counties of Berkeley and Jefferson, West Virginia called on Faulkner to represent the new state's interests at the U.S. Supreme Court. He was a voice of restraint as a delegate to West Virginia's Constitutional Convention of 1872, in which ex-Confederates set out to undo much of the 1863 Constitution, which they considered too Northern.

Faulkner died in Martinsburg. Son Charles James Faulkner Jr. served West Virginia as a U.S. senator (1887-1899), while his great-nephew, U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd, ruled Virginia politics for many years in the 20th century. Boydville, the Boyd-Faulkner home, a Martinsburg landmark, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Related A&M Collections

912, 934, 993, 1681

Keywords

Harrison County (W. Va.)

Upshur County (W. Va.)

Labor disputes -- West Virginia -- 20th century -- History

Land - Plats and surveys.

Land records - surveys.

Faulkner, Charles James, 1806-1884

Faulkner, James, 1776-1817

Haymond, Thomas.