

Henry Clay Collection, 1818-1842 (1 folder)

Processed by Chuck Hill, February 2005

Restrictions

The original documents will not be paged until the researcher has consulted the photocopies and transcripts, and has demonstrated a legitimate research need to consult the original material.

Historical Sketch

Many published biographies of Henry Clay are available, therefore, the biographical sketch presented here is simply to highlight some important dates in Clay's life to serve as a reference point for researchers. We suggest that researchers consult the more extensive biographies or other published sources for a more comprehensive biography.

The American political leader and secretary of state Henry Clay (1777-1852) was born on April 12, 1777, in Hanover County, VA, the seventh of nine children of the Reverend John Clay and Elizabeth Hudson Clay. Henry's father died in 1781, the year British and loyalist soldiers raided the area and looted the Clay home. Ten years later his mother remarried and his stepfather moved the family to Richmond, VA, where he worked as a clerk in a store and then, from 1793 to 1797, as secretary to George Wythe, chancellor of the High Court of Chancery. He moved to Lexington, KY., in November 1797 and quickly gained wide reputation as a lawyer and orator. He married Lucretia Hart in 1799. The Clays had eleven children, five sons and six daughters, seven of whom reached adulthood.

Henry Clay served in the Kentucky legislature, was professor of law at Transylvania University and spent the short session of 1806–1807 in the U.S. Senate. Clay then returned to the state legislature, became speaker, and remained there until he was again elected to the U.S. Senate to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Buckner Thruston, and served from 1810-1811. From 1811 until his death in 1852, Clay served in a variety of capacities as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of the commissioners to negotiate the treaty of peace with Great Britain ending the War of 1812, Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams, and as a U.S. Senator. Clay also has the distinction of being an unsuccessful presidential candidate three times, for three political parties; the Democratic Republican Party in 1824; the National Republican Party in 1832; and the Whig Party in 1844. He died in Washington, DC, on June 29, 1852 and is buried in Lexington Cemetery, Lexington, KY.

Scope and Content Note

The Henry Clay Collection is an artificial collection that consists of six original and one facsimile document that had no provenance associated with them, and which may have been weeded or separated from other collections (and we have not been able to determine their original donor) or may have been purchased (at least one item contains what appear to be dealer notations). The original items in the collection include several checks, two letters (one relating to the production of hemp and the other regarding "the discussion of the Missouri question"), a power of attorney and a mourning envelope containing a lock of hair.

Donor Information

Unknown (0010-008).

Folder List

- 1818 Oct 9 ADS Henry Clay. Power of Attorney given to John Hart of Lexington. [found - Townsend Collection - transcript follows]
- 1820 Jan 9 ALS Henry Clay to Sidney P. Clay. Discusses the fact that the debate on the Missouri question will be taking place in Congress and will probably last for several weeks. [found - Townsend Collection - transcript follows]
- 1820 Jan 29 ADS Henry Clay. Check for \$59 to Sidney P. Clay drawn on the Bank of the U.S., Philadelphia, PA. [found - Townsend Collection]
- 1833 Mar 13 ADS Henry Clay. Check for \$32.81 to Gates & Seaton drawn on the Bank of the United States, Washington, DC. [found - Townsend Collection]
- 1833 May 31 ALS Henry Clay to Samuel C. Wead. Reply to Wead regarding the possible purchase of a "hemp and flax breaker." He is not interested in buying the machine but goes on to discuss the hemp growing industry in that part of Kentucky. [found - University Archives - transcript follows]
- 1835 Dec Mourning envelope containing a lock of Anne Clay Erwin's hair. [This item was originally located in the Autograph Collection where it had been misidentified as Anne's signature. However, closer examination revealed that it is a mourning envelope that probably came from a scrapbook with other items in the Autograph Collection, and the name "Anne" is probably in Henry Clay's hand. Someone later typed "Clay" after her name.]
- Anne Brown Clay, daughter of Henry Clay and Lucretia Hart, was born in Lexington, KY on April 15, 1807 and she died December 10, 1835 Lexington, KY. She is buried in Lexington Cemetery. She married James Erwin in Fayette Co., KY on October 21, 1823. James was born in Wilkesboro, NC on October 21, 1796, the son of Andrew Erwin and Jane Patton. James died on June 1, 1851 in Lexington, KY, at 54 years of age and he is also buried in Lexington Cemetery.
- 1842 Sep 13 ALS Henry Clay to Jacob Strattan. Facsimile of a letter discussing his views on the purpose of the Whig Party. This copy has been removed from a book entitled... [found - Townsend Collection]

Henry Clay Collection Transcripts

1818 Oct 9 ADS Henry Clay:

I do hereby nominate and constitute John Hart of Lexington my true and lawful attorney with full powers to collect from time to time any rents that are now due or may hereafter accrue to me upon any houses or other property which I own in the town of Lexington or elsewhere in the State of Kentucky; and to rent out, from time to time, any of the said property for any term of years that he may think proper, and on such occasions as he may approve. Hereby ratifying and confirming whatever my said attorney may do in the premises. Witness my hand and seal this 9th. Oct. 1818.

H.Clay (Seal)

1820 Jan 9 ALS Henry Clay to Sidney P. Clay:

Washn. Jan. 9th 1820

Dr Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 7th. I have to say that the discussion of the Missouri question will probably begin tomorrow or next day; and unless some unexpected turn should arise in the affair; the debate as it will probably last six days or a fortnight. If your object in coming here should be to attend the two houses of Congress there is every reason to believe that you shall have opportunities enough to attend the debates.

I transmit you enclosed a check on the Bank of the U. States at Philadelphia for \$200.

S.P. Clay. Esq.

Yrs.
H. Clay

1833 May 31 ALS Henry Clay to Samuel C. Wead:

Ashland 31st May 1833

Sir,

I have rec'd. Your favor of the 20th inst. and am obliged by your kind offer to sell Mess. Hines and Bains Hemp and flax breaker. At present I have no wish to purchase it. Nor could you sell it in this State, without a practical demonstration here of it being capable of answering its purpose, and of materially saving labor. We have met with such repeated disappointments in all the substitutes which have been heretofore tried for manual labor that no body wd. Buy on representations or certificates, however strong.

This part of K. is a fine hemp country. The article is more extensively grown here than any other part of the U.S. and a machine for breaking which should be really successful could not fail to do well. But one farmer must see it and judge for themselves, and must see it in operation for a considerable. So great is their want of confidence.

We almost invariably dew rot hemp; hence probably is the cause of the difference in price noticed by you. Hemp so prepared answers all the purposes of Cotton Bagging and Bale ropes, the principal objects to which it is applied with us.

If the machine is too expensive for one farm, or is too heavy to admit of its easy transportation from farm to farm, it would be a great objection to it. For the hauling of Hemp to be broken would be a serious labor.

A Mr. Tebbetts of Cincinnati says he has invented a perfect hemp breaker; but no one will purchase until satisfied fully that it will answer.

Saml. C. Wead, Esq.

I am respectfully
Your ob. Servnt.
H. Clay