

# John B. Minor papersMSS.79.8

John B. Minor papers  
1845-1893



## Title Statement

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**Sponsor:** Web version of the finding aid funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Arthur J. Morris Law Library Special Collections

Arthur J. Morris Law Library  
580 Massie Road  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903  
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URL: <http://archives.law.virginia.edu/>



## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-04-29 11:05:50 +0000.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

**Descriptive Rules:** Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## Descriptive Summary

**Unit ID**

MSS.79.8

**Unit ID**

[Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID**

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID**

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

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[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID**

/repositories/4/resources/99

**Unit Date**

1845-1893

**Language**

English

**Creator**

Minor, John B., 1813-1895

**Extent**

.3 Linear Feet 1 archival box of 50 items

**Repository**

Arthur J. Morris Law Library Special Collections

## Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Use**

There are no restrictions.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

The items in this collection have been collected by the law library over a number of years. Some were found in books, and some were probably given by family members or alumni. The bulk of Minor's papers were donated to Alderman Library by his family and remain there.

In 2014, John N. Jacob, archivist and special collections law librarian at Washington and Lee School of Law donated the 1877 Minor letter, the last item added to these papers.

## Biographical / Historical

John B. Minor was born in 1813 in Louisa County, Virginia, and educated by his well-read family at home. At age seventeen, he went off to Kenyon College in Ohio to study moral and natural philosophy. Dissatisfied there, he left after a year and enrolled at the University of Virginia in 1831 where, over the next three years, he studied ancient and modern languages, mathematics, chemistry, and law. His parents and older brother were strongly supportive of his studies, and encouraged him to be a disciplined and serious-minded student.

He, like only eight other law students from a total of forty-four, passed the final examinations and graduated in 1834. During his college years Minor also found time to tutor Professor Davis's children and to fall in love with his future wife, Davis's sister, Martha.

After graduation, Minor practiced law in Botetourt County and Charlottesville, but he was quite eager to give up practice and try teaching when he learned, in 1845, that the University's Board of Visitors was searching for a law professor. Their first choice turned them down, and on 29 July, the Board appointed thirty-two year old Minor to the professorship.

In October, Minor began teaching and rigorously followed the traditional curriculum. Student notes indicate that his Blackstone lectures followed Davis's in plan and emphasis. His first innovation was the moot court, which provided students a structured introduction to local, state, and federal practice. Enrollment in Minor's classes was low at first, dropping to eighteen his second year, and then rising to sixty-one by 1850. In the spring of 1851, Minor received a letter from James P. Holcombe, a legal scholar from Cincinnati, who wrote Minor that he had a great interest in teaching at the University if an adjunct professorship could be created for him. Minor explained to the Board of Visitors that he found the current teaching arrangement "far short of satisfying my own ideas of what is to be desired," since he felt the curriculum was too wide for one person to cover. Holcombe accepted the light teaching load and low salary initially offered by the University, and began teaching in October 1851. Within a year, the two men had revised the curriculum and the number of students enrolled in law steadily climbed through the 1850s. As he had proposed, Holcombe enhanced the curriculum by offering expanded lectures in commercial and civil law, as well as equity. Minor concentrated on common and statute law.

By 1860, Minor and Holcombe had 142 students. The following year Holcombe, an outspoken advocate of secession, resigned to run for the state legislature, and Minor carried on alone during the war with just five or six students per year. In 1866, Stephen O. Southall, who had studied law under John A.G. Davis and practiced ever since in Prince Edward County, was hired to replace Holcombe. By 1867, there were over one hundred law students once again, a post-war boost in enrollment the Law School would also experience in the twentieth century. After the war the number of graduates also rose. Soon after the war, Minor worked closely with officials in Richmond to set up the state's first free public education system. His dedication to this long overdue legislation testifies to Minor's commitment to the widest possible education. We may assume that these efforts grew in part from his concern over University students' lack of preparation.

In 1875 Minor published the first two volumes of the *Institutes of Common and Statute Law*, followed quickly by volumes three and four. The publication of the *Institutes* was certainly one of the high points of Minor's career and established him as the leading legal scholar in the South. Always enterprising, Minor in his late fifties started a private summer law course designed as an introduction for novices and a refresher for practicing lawyers. Immensely popular, this course attracted scores of students each summer. After the post-war boom, the number of regular law students dropped slightly, but then steadied to an average of 83 per class between 1875 and 1895. About 30% of those students were awarded LL.B. degrees.

Stephen Southall died suddenly in 1884 and was succeeded by James H. Gilmore the following year. By this time, Minor was in his seventies. Although he would continue to teach year-round until the end, he was slowing down. As soon as his sons, John B., Jr., and Raleigh, passed their law exams in the early 1890s, they were hired to assist their father in his classes. Minor's fiftieth year at the University was celebrated in early July of 1895, and he died later that same month.

## Scope and Contents

The collection includes lectures and other teaching materials, correspondence, clippings and other printed matter, legal documents, an appraisal of enslaved people, a commonplace book, and a recipe for making indelible ink.

## Keywords

University of Virginia. School of Law -- History

Slavery--United States--History--19th Century

Chancellorsville, Battle of, Chancellorsville, Va., 1863

Commonplace books

clippings (information artifacts)

Appleton, Daniel, 1785-1849

Colston, Raleigh E., 1825-1896

Minor, Raleigh C., 1869-1923

Mosby, Charles L., 1807-1879

Pierpoint, Francis F., 1814-1899

Stanton, Edwin M., 1814-1869

Minor, John B., 1813-1895

## Description of Subordinate Components

### Papers of John B. Minor, MSS 79-8

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/215192

#### **Lawyers' Commonplace Book and 25 loose pages of handwritten notes on cases**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14702

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

#### **"The idea expressed in the extract from the Staunton Spectator"**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14701

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

#### **Liability of Transferor of Negotiable Papers without Endorsement, case stated by Chas. M. Blackford, Esq. of Lynchburg, Nov. 5, 1857**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14700

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

#### **Topics for the Board [of Visitors]**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14699

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

#### **"A bill has been presented to both branches of the General Assembly..."**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14698

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

#### **Drafts of three letters of recommendation for former students**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14697

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

#### **Topic of Enquiry suggested by Dr. Geo. Potts of New York in a letter addressed to Dr. McGuffey touching the University of Virginia**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14696

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**"Plan of battles of Chancellorsville from Thursday, April 30 to Monday May 4**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14695

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**Copy of a poem or ballad sent to JBM**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14694

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**Page [from a copybook?] on which are copied two passages about religion**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14693

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**"The University in Court" by Raleigh C. Minor**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14692

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**List of Cases**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14691

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**Recipe for "Indelible Black Writing Ink"**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14690

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**Statement for the Faculty of JBM's ideas**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14689

Unit Date n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**Letter from JBM to John Manning with note to "Dear Judge" from Manning**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14688

Unit Date 1893 Feb. 18

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

**Letter from JBM to A.T. Browning, with receipt and envelope**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14687

Unit Date 1893 Jan. 31

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

### **Draft of letter to Stephen O. Southall**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14686

Unit Date 1888 Mar. 10

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

### **Autographed photograph of JBM**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14685

Unit Date 1884 Oct. 1

### **[JBM] to Mr. McGowan**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14684

Unit Date 1878

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

### **Letter from [?] Flannagan to JBM**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14683

Unit Date 1877 Aug. 20

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

### **Letter from Baker, Voorhis and Co. [law booksellers] to JBM**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14682

Unit Date 1877 Aug. 14

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

### **Review of Minor's Institutes of Common and Statute Law, Vol. I, 2nd ed., and Vol. II from The Central Law Journal**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14681

Unit Date 1877 May 4

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

### **Copy of and correspondence and notes regarding Maria A. Wise's will**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14680

Unit Date 1974

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

### **Letter from E.R. Watson to [John B.] Minor, with Minor's comments on the back**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14679

Unit Date 1870 Sep. 7

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

## **Correspondence, notes, brochures**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14678

Unit Date 1867-1868

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Letter from Raleigh Colston to JBM**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14677

Unit Date 1891 Mar. 20

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Letter from Charles L. Mosby to Governor F.H. Pierpoint**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14676

Unit Date 1866 Apr. 25

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Miscellany**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14675

Unit Date 1865, n.d.

## **"Some Consideration Tending to Show the Propriety and Necessity of the Continued Support of the University of Virginia by the State"**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14674

Unit Date 1865

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Amnesty oath sworn by JBM**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14673

Unit Date 1865-05-18

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Draft of a letter by Minor to his former classmate, Edward Stanton, Secretary of War**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14672

Unit Date 1865-05-06

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Bill and receipt for the Albermarle Committee for the Wounded, JBM Treasurer**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14671

Unit Date 1864

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Appraisal of slaves for the estate of C[harles] Minor upon the request of Franklin and JBM**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14670

Unit Date 1861 Dec. 12

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Draft of letter in Minor's hand; addressee unknown**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14669

Unit Date 1861-01-30

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **"Proposed Law Course, with estimate of time allowed to each subject"**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14668

Unit Date 1851

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Printed sheet describing course of law as taught by JBM and J.P. Holcombe; includes reading lists and costs of tuition, room and board**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14667

Unit Date 1851 July 11

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Resolution [by Board of Visitors] to hire James P. Holcombe, Adjunct Professor of Law**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14666

Unit Date 1851 June

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Legal Cases with Minor's comments probably used in his teaching**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14665

Unit Date 1850-1860

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Newspaper clippings; advertisement for law books**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14664

Unit Date 1850, 1880

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Lists of Books**

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14663

Unit Date 1849-50, n.d.

Mixed Materials [35007008142527] 1 (box)

## **Letter from D. Appleton to John B. Minor (JBM)**

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14662

**Unit Date** 1848-08-11

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

## **Inaugural Lecture: "Gentleman of the School of Law..."**

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14661

**Unit Date** 1845 Oct.

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

## **Addendum to the Papers of John B. Minor, MSS 79-8a**

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival\_objects/215189

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Transferred to Law Library in 1973 by R. McLean Whittet, Sr. of Whittet & Shepperson [printers] in Richmond, VA. See correspondence with Frances Farmer in accession folder.

### **Scope and Contents**

Two documents: JBM letter and contract concerning Minor's Institutes, 1877

## **JBM to Robert Whittet, Esq.**

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival\_objects/14703

**Unit Date** 1877 May 31

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

## **Contract between Whittet Shepperson and JBM**

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival\_objects/215190

**Unit Date** 1881-11-04

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)

## **Addendum to the Papers of John B. Minor, MSS 79-8b**

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival\_objects/215194

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

This letter was a gift of John N. Jacob, archivist and special collections librarian at Washington and Lee School of Law in November 2014.

## **JBM to R. H. Wood Esq. in Bolivar, Ten. : "Hints about Books."**

**Unit ID** [Archival Resource Key](#)

**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival\_objects/215195

**Unit Date** 1877-10-10

**Mixed Materials [35007008142527]** 1 (box)