

A Guide to the Papers of General Joel Leftwich

Papers of General Joel Leftwich 1780-1890

1780-1890



A Collection in the Special Collections Department 38-32

Special Collections, University of Virginia Library

2008

History

Processed by: Special Collections Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Papers of General Joel Leftwich

Subtitle: Leftwich, Joel, Papers

Collection: 38-32

Author: Processed by Special Collections Dept. staff; machine-readable finding aid created by Elizabeth Slomba

Publication Statement

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Publisher: Special Collections, University of Virginia Library

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from WordPerfect. [Date of source: 1997.]

Language Usage: Description is in English.

Revision Description

Feb 17, 2004 PUBLIC "-//University of Virginia::Library::Special Collections Dept.//TEXT (US::ViU::00666::General Joel Leftwich Papers)//EN" "ViU00666.sgm" converted from EAD 1.0 to 2002 by v1to02.xsl (sy2003-10-15).

Feb 27, 2004 converted to conform to eadVIVA.dtd by vivastrict.xsl

Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

38-32

Language

English

Extent

ca. 2500

Repository

Special Collections, University of Virginia Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions

Acquisition Information

The Leftwich Papers were placed on loan in the Library by Mr. William A. Irvine of Evington, Virginia, through W. E. Leftwich on March 29, 1934.

Funding Note

Funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities

Preferred Citation

Papers of General Joel Leftwich, #38-32, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

Scope and Content

The Leftwich Papers consist of ca. 2500 items (4 Hollinger boxes, ca. 1.3 linear shelf feet), 1780-1890, and reflect the military, business and personal activities of Joel Leftwich (1759-1846). The collection contains correspondence, financial and legal papers, printed material, and miscellaneous related papers. Correspondence and business papers comprise the bulk of the collection but there is a significant amount of material relating to the operations of the Twelfth Virginia Militia Brigade from 1790 to 1842. A genealogy of the Leftwich family may be found in *Campbell Chronicles and Family Sketches: Embracing the History of Campbell County, Virginia 1782-1926* by Ruth H. Early.

Leftwich was the son of Augustine Leftwich (?-1795) and was born in Bedford County, Virginia. His brothers included James Leftwich, Jesse Leftwich, Augustine Leftwich Jr., and Jabez Leftwich . His own son, Jack Leftwich, and five grandchildren are mentioned in the family correspondence: Joel B. Leftwich, Sarah A. Leftwich, Mary L. Leftwich (Fuqua), Ann Leftwich (Goode) and Ethelinda Leftwich . Most of the correspondence concerns local and family events. There is an interesting group of letters between Joel B. Leftwich and his friends concerning college life at Randolph-Macon College during the 1840's and their perceptions of the women they were courting.

Correspondence concerning Virginia politics during the early nineteenth century in Richmond (principally letters from Jabez to Joel Leftwich) begins in the year 1806. One letter of interest concerns the itinerary for the visit by the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824. Leftwich, as were many of his Bedford neighbors, was a supporter of the old Whig Party; his correspondents include House of Delegates member William Campbell, Senator Isaac Otey, P. M. Goggin, Walter Taylor, and General Joseph Martin who discusses President Thomas Jefferson 's opinion concerning the maintaining of a standing army (April 17, 1803). Leftwich himself served as a member of the Virginia General Assembly and a few of his letters pertain to his legislative career as represented by an April 4, 1841 letter to President John Tyler recommending the appointment of William Norvell as U.S. consul at Rio de Janeiro.

Also present are several writings and speeches by Leftwich on a variety of subjects including the Revolutionary War, and the need for religious conversion of Indians. Joel B. Leftwich was a member of a debating society and his speeches on temperance, good memory, and other topics are present in these papers. Leftwich himself subscribed to *Niles Weekly Register* and several issues from 1815 to 1839 are present in this collection. Of special interest are manuscript notes on the Virginia Convention called for the purpose of ratifying the Federal Constitution in June 1788; these notes consist of remarks made by such participants as Patrick Henry and James Madison.

The financial and legal aspects of Leftwich's life had two major components: as a gentleman farmer and horse breeder and as a justice of the peace for Bedford County. Bills and receipts from 1789 to 1843 are in the collection along with tax statements for several members of his family regarding horses and slaves. Horses were of great concern to the family and there are numerous mentions in the correspondence on their trade, breeding, and racing. There are several items pertaining to a stud horse named "Pilgrim" which had been purchased in 1795 from Daniel Nance of Lincoln County, North Carolina for the sum of five hundred dollars. Other papers include a bill of sale as to the horse's pedigree and a broadside attesting to his value and price.

Tax statements for the year 1802 depict Joel Leftwich as the owner of seven slaves for which he paid a tax of \$13.90 (the tax for "Pilgrim" was ten dollars). Other documents pertain to the hiring of his slaves, and legal

dispensations of them for the payment of debts, 1796-1826. Among these is a complaint against a slave named Bill who was owned by Jesse Leftwich. The slave had shot a dog belonging to his owner's brother Augustine and Joel Leftwich, as justice of the peace, issued a warrant for his arrest. Legal documents including wills, indentures, subpoenas, arrest warrants and other related materials are in this group of papers. One group of letters described the apprehension of a man believed to have been be insane and of his transfer to a lunatic asylum. The remaining items are primarily concerned with Leftwich's routine duties as a justice of the peace.

Leftwich's military service is represented by militia returns, muster rolls, general and brigade orders, drill parade memorandum, and courts-martial papers. His brother, Jabez, who later became a member of Congress, served with him as a brigade inspector. Notable correspondents include William Henry Harrison, William Barbour, Claiborne W. Gooch, and Richard Crooks . Leftwich began his military career during the Revolutionary War when he enlisted as an ensign and fought at the battles of Germantown, Camden, and Guilford Court House where he was wounded. During the War of 1812 the Virginia militia was called to the defense of Richmond following the burning of Washington, D.C. on August 24, 1814. Upon the death of General Joseph Martin, Leftwich was elected by the Virginia General Assembly as a brigadier general of the Twelfth Brigade of militia which consisted of the 4th, 10th, 18th, 43rd, 53rd, 64th, 91st, and 110th regiments. He commanded a force of militia under William Henry Harrison, commander of the Army of the Northwest during the war. A group of letters between the two men provides information on a little-known event. Harrison apparently ordered Leftwich to continue the building of an eight-acre stockade on the Maumee River at Fort Meigs, Ohio. He disobeyed orders by departing for home before Harrison's arrival and the fort's completion. As a result, American forces were defeated near the area but Leftwich's military career was undamaged.

In the correspondence for the 1820's and 1830's are numerous invitations to Leftwich requesting his presence at military dinners, barbecues, and honorary functions. In later years Leftwich, a major general of militia, sought to have his federal military pension increased and William Leftwich Goggin, a Whig who represented a district in Bedford County in Congress, presented a petition on his behalf to that body. General Leftwich died on April 20, 1846, in Bedford County.

The collection is arranged chronologically in three series: I. Military Papers, II. Legal and Business, and, III. Correspondence and Miscellaneous.

Container List

Series I: Military Papers

Militia: General and Brigade Orders, Dismissals, Pay Rosters, Requisition Orders

Unit Date 1794-1828, n.d.

Container Box 1

Militia: Muster Rolls, Drills, Officer's Lists, Brigade Details

Unit Date 1790-1820, n.d.

Container Box 1

Militia Returns

Unit Date 1790-1820, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent (3 folders)

Military Correspondence

Unit Date 1796-1842, n.d.

Container Box 1

Extent (5 folders)

Series II: Legal and Business Papers

Business Correspondence and Related Papers

Unit Date 1788-1844, n.d.

Container Box 2
Extent (3 folders)

Horsebreeding, Sales, and Races

Unit Date 1791, 1800-1828, n.d.

Container Box 2

Materials re: Horse "Pilgrim"

Unit Date 1795-1801

Container Box 2

Horse Race Broadside

Unit Date 1837

Container Box 2

Slave Transactions

Unit Date 1796-1826

Container Box 2

Legal Papers

Unit Date 1791-1843, n.d.

Container Box 2

Extent (2 folders)

Fragments

Unit Date n.d.

Container Box 2

Bills and Receipts

Unit Date 1780-1843, n.d.

Container Box 3

Extent (8 folders)

Series III: Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers

Correspondence of Joel Leftwich

Unit Date 1798-1846, n.d.

Container Box 4

Extent (5 folders)

Leftwich Family Correspondence

Unit Date 1817-1890, n.d.

Container Box 4

Speeches of Joel & Joel B. Leftwich

Unit Date n.d.

Container Box 4

Compositions of Joel B. Leftwich

Unit Date n.d.

Container Box 4

Magazines and Newspaper Fragments

Unit Date 1815-1839, n.d.

Container Box 4

Bound and Miscellaneous Volumes

Unit Date 1786-1840

Container Box 4

Virginia Constitutional Convention Notes

Unit Date ca. 1788

Container Box 4

Broadside re: Horse "Comet"

Unit Date 1808 March 20

Container Oversize (box)

The Virginian...Extra-Newspaper

Unit Date ca. 1840 Feb.

Container Oversize (box)

"Cash Sales Book," Lynchburg

Unit Date 1852 Jan.-1854 March 25

Container 2M Ledgers (box)