



## Correspondence

<https://collections.lancasterhistory.org/en/permalink/b6c78084-609f-47e8-a2fb-576145443340>

**Description Level:** Series  
**Collection:** James Buchanan Family Papers

### Description:

The James Buchanan Family Papers, Part 1, Papers of James Buchanan, Series 1 Correspondence, Subseries 1 contains letters to James Buchanan and Subseries 2 contains letters from James Buchanan. Within these subseries, the letters are arranged chronologically, dating from 1819-1868.

This collection contains letters, both to and from James Buchanan. The letters from Buchanan range from the different periods of his life-as a private citizen and lawyer, senator, and ambassador to Russia and Britain; his Presidential term from 1857 to 1861; and his later years until his death in 1868. The earlier letters include details of his travels, political matters and the military, social engagements and responsibilities, his responsibilities as a political figure, and accounts of family chatter and gossip. He also discusses at length, in his letters to and about Harriet Lane, his opinions of whom she should marry, his opinions about her social encounters and interactions, her living situations, and her livelihood. Buchanan also often wrote about his Christian beliefs, especially during the later years of his life. Letters from his later years detail the day-to-day life at home in Wheatland, including some of his guests, his servants, and his illnesses as the end of his life neared.

The letters that are addressed to James Buchanan range in different topics, concerning military affairs, political and legal information, and family chatter. Other letters include details of Buchanan's financial matters that are in reference to loans, Buchanan's investments and purchases, deeds and bonds. There are also a number of thank-you letters and notes of recommendation.

Many of the letters are to his niece, Harriet Lane and nephew, James Buchanan Henry. Other correspondents are H. B. Swarr, Henry A. Muhlenberg, family members, Francis Scott Key, Riggs & Co., James L. Reynolds, and many political colleagues.

### Admin/Biographical History:

James Buchanan was born on April 23, 1791 to James Buchanan and Elizabeth Speer. He was the second child born out of ten children, and he would go on to outlive all but one of his siblings. Most popularly remembered as Pennsylvania's only President and as a lifelong bachelor, Buchanan committed a lifetime to politics. In 1821, he left his law practice and embarked on his political career after having been voted into the U.S. House of Representatives. He would remain in the House for five consecutive terms before serving as the U.S. Minister to Russia, a Senator in the U.S. Senate, the U.S. Secretary of State, the U.S. Minister to Great Britain, and finally, the 15th President of the United States. He died in his bedchamber at Wheatland at 8:30 AM on June 1, 1868. He was 77 years old.  
[<https://www.lancasterhistory.org/about-wheatland>, accessed 10/24/2019]

**Custodial History:** The James Buchanan Family Papers were collected by the James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland. This collection was relocated from the Wheatland mansion to the LancasterHistory archives in the Spring of 2009. Digitization of the James Buchanan Family Papers was funded by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, PHMC Appl ID # 201808013051, 2019-2020.

**System of Arrangement:** JBFP Part 1 Series 1 Correspondence  
Subseries 1 Letters from James Buchanan  
Subseries 2 Letters to James Buchanan

**Year Range From:** 1819  
**Year Range To:** 1868

**Creator:** Buchanan, James, 1791-1868

**People:** Buchanan, James  
Johnston, Harriet Lane  
Henry, James Buchanan  
Swarr, Hiram Behm

**Other Creators:** James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland (Lancaster, Pa.)

**Subjects:** Letters  
Personal correspondence  
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868  
Johnston, Harriet Lane, 1830-1903

**Search Terms:** Letters  
Correspondence, Personal  
James Buchanan  
Harriet Lane Johnston  
Buchanan Collections  
James Buchanan Presidential Library

**Extent:** 4 boxes, 365 folders, 2 cubic ft.

**Object Name:** Correspondence

**Language:** English, French

**Object ID:** JBFP Part 1 Series 1

**Location:** LancasterHistory

**Room:** Archives South

**Wall:** Side 18

**Associated Material:** James Buchanan Papers, Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections <http://archives.dickinson.edu/collection-descriptions/james-buchanan-papers>  
James Buchanan and Harriet Lane Johnston Papers, Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/collections/james-buchanan-and-harriet-lane-johnston-papers/>  
James Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, <http://www2.hsp.org/collections/manuscripts/b/Buchanan0091.html>  
James Buchanan Papers, Penn State University Libraries, <https://libraries.psu.edu/findingaids/1458.htm>

**Related Item Notes:** James Buchanan Family Papers  
James Buchanan Collection, MG0096  
Historical Society of Pennsylvania microfilm in the  
LancasterHistory Research Library  
Photograph collections  
Curatorial collections  
Wheatland Mansion

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