

**James Buchanan Family Papers, Part 7 Papers of Jonathan Messersmith Foltz, Series 1 Correspondence**

**Call Number: JBFP Part 7 Series 1**

1 box 49 folders, 58 items, 185 pages .5 cubic feet

Repository: LancasterHistory (Organization); PV7

Shelving Location: Archives South

Scope and Content Note: James Buchanan Family Papers, Part 7 Papers of Jonathan Messersmith Foltz, Series 1 contains the correspondence of Jonathan Messersmith Foltz, from 1831 to 1858.

This collection contains correspondence from Dr. Jonathan M. Foltz—the majority of which are addressed to James Buchanan. There are no items from Foltz’s childhood or later years (after retirement), nor materials from the early parts of his Naval career. The collection documents two of Foltz’s deployments in some detail—his time on the Mexico-Texas border and the three years spent in South America. When writing to Buchanan, Foltz focused more on the political details he observed, rather than military activities. Some letters in the years and months leading up to the 1848 election document Foltz’s involvement in the selection of a Democratic candidate for President. The materials do not include much about Foltz’s family life, other than a few mentions of his wife and their wedding.

Dates: 1831-1858, bulk 1848-1858

Creators: Foltz, Jonathan Messersmith, 1810-1877.  
James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland (Lancaster, Pa.)

System of Arrangement: James Buchanan Family Papers, Part 7 Papers of Jonathan Messersmith Foltz is arranged in one series. The series and subseries have been used to keep the consistency with cataloging throughout the James Buchanan Family Papers.

**Series 1** Correspondence

**Subseries 1** Letters from Jonathan Messersmith Foltz

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Language: English

#### Biographical and Historical Note:

Jonathan Messersmith Foltz was born in Lancaster in 1810, the son of Jonathan and Elizabeth Messersmith Foltz. He studied medicine with Dr. William Thompson in Lancaster before attending Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. He was commissioned as an assistant naval surgeon in 1831. He reached the rank of surgeon in 1838.

As Naval Surgeon, Dr. Foltz served on the *Raritan* at the beginning of the Mexican-American War, where he witnessed battles at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. About five years later, Foltz was deployed again—this time to South America aboard the *Jamestown*. He arrived in South America during the second half of the Platine War, fought by Brazil and Uruguay against the Argentine Confederation, from August 1851-February 1852. He also watched as the United States and Great Britain exerted their influence on the new nations and their often corrupt and ineffective governments. Through his service in the Navy and his trips to remote places (at that time), Foltz became an expert on exotic diseases. He published a number of articles on the subject. Prior to his service in Mexico and South America, Foltz also spent time in Asia, Europe and Northern Africa. Foltz served during the Civil War, participating in a number of campaigns and battles. Specifically, he served as Fleet Surgeon under Admiral David Farragut. He continued to serve in the Navy, eventually rising to the positions of Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and Surgeon General of the Navy. In 1872, Foltz was put on the retired list, but continued to serve as Inspector General of Hospitals and Fleets, as well as Chief Surgeon of the Philadelphia Naval Hospital. Officially, he retired in 1873, after serving for forty-two years. He had reached the rank of Commodore.



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Foltz married Rebecca Steinman (1830-1904), also from Lancaster, in 1854. They had three sons: Frederick Steinman (born Frederick Buchanan), Charles Steinman, and Jonathan Clinton Foltz. He lived with his family in Philadelphia. Foltz died at the age of 66 in 1877.

Not much is known about Foltz's relationship with James Buchanan, especially its origin. However, Foltz often called Buchanan his best friend and seemed to be a constant support of Buchanan for President, campaigning heavily for him leading up to the 1848 and 1856 elections (Foltz was stationed in South America in 1852).

**Works Cited:**

Franklin and Marshall College Archives and Special Collections. *Jonathan Messersmith Foltz Papers, MS 21 Finding Aid*. Lancaster, PA: Franklin and Marshall College, 2013. Accessed June 9, 2015. <http://library.fandm.edu/archives/mscoll/jmfoltz.pdf>.

Foltz, Charles S. *Surgeon of the Seas: The Adventurous Life of Surgeon General Jonathan M. Foltz In the Days of Wooden Ships, Told from His Notes of the Moment* Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1931.

"Foltz, Jonathan Messersmith." In *Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography*, edited by James Grant Wilson and John Fiske. New York: D. Appleton, 1900. Accessed June 9, 2015.  
[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Appletons%27\\_Cyclop%C3%A6dia\\_of\\_American\\_Biography/Foltz,\\_Jonathan\\_Messersmith](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Appletons%27_Cyclop%C3%A6dia_of_American_Biography/Foltz,_Jonathan_Messersmith).

Source of Acquisition: Unknown.

Custodial History (Provenance): These documents were collected by the James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland. This collection was relocated from the Wheatland mansion to Lancaster County's Historical Society archives in the Spring of 2009.

Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

Preferred Citation: James Buchanan Family Papers, Object ID, LancasterHistory, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

People:

Foltz, Jonathan Messersmith  
Buchanan, James

Subject Headings:

Buchanan, James, 1791-1868 (LHo-LOC n 78095586)



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Foltz, Jonathan Messersmith, 1810-1877 (LHo-LOC n 2006065090)

Ship physicians

United States -- Navy -- Surgeons

United States -- Politics and government -- 19th century

Mexican War, 1846-1848

South America -- Politics and government -- 19<sup>th</sup> century

Search Terms:

James Buchanan

Buchanan collections

Mexican War

Politics

United States Navy

Ship physicians

Surgeons

South America

Finding aids

Manuscript groups

Related Materials at LancasterHistory:

James Buchanan Family Papers

James Buchanan Collection, MG0096

Historical Society of Pennsylvania microfilm

Photograph collections

Curatorial collections

Wheatland Mansion

Coleman Papers Collection, MG0275 Series 1

Andrew J. Steinman Collection, MG0066

Charles S. Foltz, *Surgeon of the Seas: The Adventurous Life of Surgeon General Jonathan M. Foltz In the Days of Wooden Ships, Told from His Notes of the Moment*. Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1931. Call # 923.5 F671f

Related Material in Other Repositories:

Jonathan Messersmith Foltz Papers (MS 21), Archives and Special Collections, Franklin and Marshall College

<http://library.fandm.edu/archives/mscoll/jmfoltz.html>

[J. M. Foltz Medical lecture notes, 1825-1829], Health Sciences Library Historical Collections, Health Sciences Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. <http://search.lib.unc.edu/search?R=UNCb1976055>

Jonathan Messersmith Foltz papers, 1829-1871, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, DC.

<http://library.fandm.edu/archives/mscoll/jmfoltz.html>



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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>

Processing History: Processed and finding aid prepared by SM, May-June 2015. This collection has been documented, preserved and managed according to professional museum and archives standards. The collection was cataloged using DACS conventions.



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**Series 1**  
**Subseries 1**

**Folder 1** Philadelphia, 9 March 1831

Letter to James Buchanan describing Foltz's examination to qualify as a Naval Surgeon. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 2** Bedford Springs, 17 August 1841

Letter to James Buchanan regarding his absence at the springs and reactions toward Governor Porter's veto. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 3** Camp Isabel—near the Mouth of the Rio Brava, 10 May 1846

Letter to James Buchanan describing the events of the Mexican-American war that Foltz witnessed. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 4** Fort Polk—Point Isabel Texas, 14 May 1846

Letter to James Buchanan which goes into more detail about the current situation in Texas and Mexico, including Foltz's departure from the area.

Sketch of the location of various military positions in Mexico and Texas during the Mexican-American War, by J.M. Foltz. Shows General Taylor's position, the Road to Point Isabel, Matamoros on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, and Fort Polk on Point Isabel. Foltz also makes notations of the batteries, specific battlegrounds and squadrons. (2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 5** U.S. Ship Raritan off Vera Cruz, 30 May 1846

Letter to James Buchanan describing Mr. Diamond, a mutual acquaintance, who has been involved in some capacity with the Mexican-American War. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 6** U.S. Ship Raritan off Vera Cruz, 11 June 1846

Letter to James Buchanan recounting and describing the current political climate in Mexico, much of the information comes from British soldiers Foltz meets. He describes a recent meeting of the Mexican Congress, support for Santa Anna, and the current state of certain Mexican ports. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 7** U.S.S. Raritan off Vera Cruz, 25 September 1846

Letter to James Buchanan relates how some Mexican troops want to prolong the war and how easily a number of coast towns could be captured. (2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 8** Washington, [D.C.], 22 April 1847

Letter to James Buchanan reminding him that Foltz would be willing to accompany him on any future visits to Mexico. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 9** U.S. Hotel Philadelphia, 29 May 1847



Letter to James Buchanan recounting a letter Foltz heard about, from a captain stationed in Mexico City, which describes the current state of Mexican politics—especially regarding Santa Anna. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 10** Lancaster, 14 November 1847

Letter to James Buchanan recapping recent conversations with or opinions from other potential candidates to the Baltimore convention. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 11** Lancaster, 15 November 1847

Letter to James Buchanan providing more information about potential candidates and their stances or opinions, specifically the establishment of a Taylor-focused paper. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 12** Philadelphia, 23 November 1847

Letter to James Buchanan updates him even further on candidate matters including a recent meeting of his Democrat supporters. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 13** [December 1847]

Letter to James Buchanan describing a meeting held by his supporters the previous night. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 14** Markoe House, Philadelphia, 5 January 1848

Letter to James Buchanan provides him with results from the elections and reiterates Foltz's optimism for Buchanan. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 15** Lancaster, 28 February 1848

Letter to James Buchanan reporting news on his popularity and supporters, and Foltz mentions an upcoming meeting of supporters in Harrisburg. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 16** Harrisburg, 2 March [1848]

Letter to James Buchanan detailing the progress of the meetings in Harrisburg, including how many delegates will support him and other delegates Foltz wants to speak with. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 17** Harrisburg, 3 March 1848

Letter to James Buchanan describing the convention taking place in which will describe the choice of nominee for the Baltimore Convention (the 1848 Democratic National Convention. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 18** Barnums, Baltimore, 12 May 1848

Letter to James Buchanan communicating more information about the upcoming Convention and Foltz's sentiments about the war in Mexico. (2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 19** Barnums, [19 May 1848]



Letter to James Buchanan further informs him of the situation at the Baltimore Convention, the type of speech that should be given in support of a candidate from Pennsylvania. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 20** Bedford Springs, 22 August 1848

Letter [to James Buchanan] describing Foltz's visit to the springs at Bedford and updating him on the President, who is also visiting. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 21** Navy Yard, Washington, 12 December 1849

Letter to James Buchanan discusses his recent surgery, as well as Foltz's recent injury and more political news. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 22** Lancaster, 28 January 1851

Letter to James Buchanan updating him of Foltz's reassignment to a ship based in Brazil. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 23** Barnums, Baltimore, 4 February 1851

Letter to James Buchanan further describing his dissatisfaction at being assigned to a new position in Brazil. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 24** Norfolk, Virginia, 19 March 1851

Letter to James Buchanan informing him of payments made to him for a bond, as well as the current political climate in Norfolk. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 25** Norfolk, Virginia, 25 March 1851

Letter to James Buchanan relaying messages about and from his friends and why Foltz's ship has not sailed yet.

Newspaper clipping (written by Foltz) entitled: "Steam Navigation to Rio," which describes potential trading in South and Central American.

(2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 26** U.S. Ship Jamestown, Norfolk, 19 April 1851

Letter to James Buchanan enclosing an article written about him in a Norfolk newspaper (in reference to a letter he sent to the paper) and telling him that Foltz's ship has finally been commissioned.

Newspaper clipping describing Buchanan's qualities for President and supporting him as a potential candidate. It references a letter the paper received from Buchanan.

(2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 27** U.S. Ship, Jamestown, Norfolk, 5 May 1851





Letter to James Buchanan to enclosing an allotment note from Foltz's Navy salary to pay off a bond and to make some investments in Foltz's name. Foltz also writes about the political climate he has observed in Virginia and the Carolinas. (2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 28** U.S. Ship Jamestown, Norfolk, 29 May 1851

Letter to James Buchanan asks for his guidance on establishing a household once he is married. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 29** U.S. Ship Jamestown, Buenos Aires 4 October 1851

Letter to James Buchanan describes, in detail, the current political and military events in South America during Foltz's deployment with the Navy.

Second, partial letter [to James Buchanan] describes more of the situation in South America and the current politics back home in Pennsylvania.

(2 items, 3 pieces)

**Folder 30** Rio de Janeiro, U.S.S. Jamestown, 23 October 1851

Letter to James Buchanan updates him on the surrender of Oribe, ending the siege on Montevideo. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 31** U.S.S. Jamestown, at Sea, 1 June 1852

Letter to James Buchanan addresses the recent political news from the States and what is occurring in South America. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 32** U.S.S. Jamestown, Buenos Aires, 1 September 1852

Letter to James Buchanan describing his reactions to the results of the Baltimore Convention and also the various ministers Foltz encounters in South America.  
(2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 33** Buenos Aires, 2 November 1852

Letter to James Buchanan passes along more information on the political situation in Argentina and Uruguay. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 34** Buenos Aires, 4 March 1853

Letter to James Buchanan discussing the recent Presidential elections, Foltz's Navy ship, and the political climate in Argentina. (2 items, 2 pieces)

**Folder 35** Buenos Aires, 20 March 1853

Letter to James Buchanan passes along the name of an acquaintance—Mr. Lemuel Wells. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 36** U.S.S. Jamestown, Monte Video, 25 December 1853

Letter to James Buchanan expressing Foltz's opinion on the U.S. Navy at the present moment. (1 item, 1 piece)



**Folder 37** U.S.S. Jamestown, off Pernambuco, Brazil, 25 March 1854  
Letter to James Buchanan recounting how Foltz's ship ran aground. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 38** Lancaster, 8 June 1854  
Letter to James Buchanan inviting him to Foltz wedding and describing his return to Pennsylvania after three years at sea. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 39** Philadelphia, 9 August 1855  
Letter to James Buchanan anticipating his return to the United States and discussing the Abolitionists. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 40** Philadelphia, 22 November 1855  
Letter to James Buchanan commenting on the political situations in England and the U.S. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 41** Philadelphia, 30 January 1856  
Letter to James Buchanan urging him to stay in Europe until the Fall, after the Presidential election. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 42** Philadelphia, 13 October 1856  
Letter to James Buchanan describing the support for him, leading up to the election. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 43** Philadelphia, 23 February 1857  
Letter to James Buchanan alerting him of an epidemic at an hotel and advises him to stay at another location. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 44** Philadelphia, 7 April 1857  
Letter to J.B. Henry recommending Captain DuPont as commander for a specific Navy ship. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 45** Philadelphia, 18 July 1857  
Letter to James Buchanan describes current affairs in Philadelphia and informs him that Foltz's wife will have a baby soon. Foltz writes that if the baby is a boy, they will name him after Buchanan. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 46** Philadelphia, 28 July 1857  
Letter to James Buchanan recommending he visit Wheatland to rest and recover. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 47** Philadelphia, 9 December 1857  
Letter to Dr. J. Blake asking for information on appointment that was reported on in the *Lancaster Herald Examiner*. (1 item, 1 piece)



**Folder 48** Philadelphia, 1 January 1858

Letter to James Buchanan about a recent meeting of Stephen Douglas supporters and Foltz's long relationship with Buchanan. (1 item, 1 piece)

**Folder 49** Philadelphia, 24 April 1858

Letter to J.B. Henry questioning why Foltz has not be appointed to a certain position as was promised or announced. (1 item, 1 piece)

