

THOMAS JEFFERSON BOYD PAPERS

Mss. 99
Inventory

Compiled by
Leslie Bourgeois

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
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Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2008

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SUMMARY

Size	3.25 linear feet
Geographic Locations	Virginia and Louisiana
Inclusive Dates	1805-1939
Bulk Dates	1819-1869
Languages	English
Summary	The Thomas Jefferson Boyd papers are comprised of correspondence and legal, financial, and personal papers related to Boyd's legal practice, public service, personal business, and family life in Wytheville, Virginia.
Access Restrictions	No restrictions.
Reproduction Note	Can be reproduced.
Copyright	Copyright is retained in accordance with U.S. copyright laws.
Related Collections	David French Boyd Papers, Mss. 40, 99, 794, etc. Hotel Boyd Photographs and Post Card, Picture Collection, Mss. 023628. Leroy S. Boyd Papers, Mss. 99. Thomas Duckett Boyd Family Papers, Mss. 808, 893, 530, etc. Thomas Jefferson Boyd Photographs, Picture Collection, Mss. 023634. Wright-Boyd Family Papers, Mss. 3362.
Citation	Thomas Jefferson Boyd Papers, Mss. 99, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack Location(s)	D:128-130; OS:B; R:5

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Colonel Thomas Jefferson Boyd was born on June 15, 1804 to parents Thomas D. Boyd and Mary Magruder in Albemarle County, Virginia, near Monticello. In February 1826, Boyd began studying law at the nearby University of Virginia, where he came into frequent contact with his namesake, Thomas Jefferson. Upon receiving his degree in July 1828, Boyd briefly practiced law in Charlottesville, Virginia. He then moved to the town of Wytheville, Virginia in 1830, which was known as Evansham until 1839. Boyd soon began a law partnership with Judge David McComas. In 1833, Boyd married Minerva French, the sister-in-law of McComas, and they had ten children. Both their eldest child, David French Boyd (1834-1899), and their ninth child, Thomas Duckett Boyd (1854-1932), served as early presidents of Louisiana State University.

In addition to his law practice, Boyd spent much of his life in public service. He became a trustee of the town of Wytheville in 1839, a position he would hold for over fifty years. In this capacity, he aided the town engineer, James Piper, with laying out the town. Because of this work, Boyd became known as the “Father of Wytheville.”

Boyd was elected to a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates for two terms as a Democrat, beginning in 1848. As a representative, he was successful in establishing the route of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad to pass through Wytheville. In 1853, he was elected as a commissioner to the Virginia Board of Public Works for the Southern District. Throughout his six years in this office, Boyd had the opportunity to focus solely on the internal improvements of Virginia.

In 1856, Boyd built the Hotel Boyd, an inn located at the Wytheville Train Depot, and he subsequently retired from his law practice. Due to the financial panic of 1857, Boyd lost much of his wealth, so he focused on running the inn and paying back his debts. After the start of Civil War, Boyd served as the Quartermaster of the Depot for the Confederate Army at nearby Dublin, Virginia. He was taken prisoner in 1865 but later escaped and paid for his freedom. In 1870, President Andrew Johnson pardoned him and restored his citizenship. Boyd died on February 16, 1893, at the age of 88.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Thomas Jefferson Boyd Papers are comprised of correspondence and legal, financial, and personal papers related to Boyd's legal practice, public service, personal business and family life in Wytheville, Virginia. The correspondence consists mostly of letters received by Boyd in regards to legal and personal matters, as well as his work in the Virginia House of Delegates and Board of Public Works, especially on the subject of railroads and internal improvements. The legal documents pertain to Boyd's cases in his partnership with David McComas, including estate issues, land surveys, business partnerships, powers of attorney, subscriptions, promissory notes, and receipts of payment. The financial documents contain receipts and tax documents for Boyd's personal business. The personal papers consist of Boyd's school work at the University of Virginia and his notes for political speeches. The papers also include a ledger used by Boyd regarding payments from his legal clients.

LIST OF SERIES

I. Correspondence, 1805-1869, undated

II. Legal, 1819-1866, undated

III. Financial, 1826-1867, undated

IV. Personal Papers, 1826-1939, undated

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I: Correspondence, 1805-1869, undated (1.75 linear feet)

Series contains correspondence received by Boyd in reference to his law practice, public service, personal business, and family life. A few copies of letters written by Boyd are also included. Several letters contain penciled notes made by Leroy S. Boyd, the son of David F. Boyd.

Legal correspondence (circa 1830-1839) consists of information regarding cases being worked on by Boyd and McComas in their practice. The majority of these cases dealt with land deals and estate issues. Potential clients also inquired about the merits of their cases and asked for advice on how best to proceed. Additionally, information on the payment of legal fees was discussed, including a copy of Boyd's response to B. R. Montgomery's dispute over the amount of money he owed (June 17, 1835). A frequent correspondent on legal matters was Thomas W. Gilmer, a lawyer friend of Boyd's from Charlottesville, who would later serve as the Governor of Virginia (1840-1841).

Politics was a frequent topic of conversation among Boyd's correspondents, especially during presidential, gubernatorial, and legislative election years. Most of the letters on this subject consist of personal opinions on the chances of candidates in a particular region and their viewpoints on legislation. One example of this is a letter by Andrew S. Fulton, a Virginia Congressman from Wytheville and frequent correspondent, regarding Zachary Taylor and the Presidential Election of 1848 (June 18, 1848). Letters also include people's opinions on Boyd's chances for re-election to the House of Delegates in 1851 and extensive coverage of Boyd's position in neighboring counties during his campaign as Commissioner in the Southern District for the Board of Public Works, 1852-1853. Two items of interest on this race are a letter of support signed by fifteen individuals asking Boyd to run for this post (April 25, 1853) and a copy of Boyd's response thanking them and confirming his candidacy (April 27, 1853).

A major topic of conversation during Boyd's years as a public servant was the establishment of the Lynchburg and Tennessee Railroad, later renamed the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. Major correspondents on this subject include General O. G. Clay, F. B. Deane, Jr., Charles F. M. Garnett, J. R. McDaniel, James Truck, and James Piper. The correspondence focuses on the issues of the railroad legislation, buying equipment for the track, a geological survey of the land, the route, stockholder's meetings, contract amounts, and recommendations for and by potential personnel. A series of letters by U.S. congressmen explain their arguments for the establishment of the railroad to link Virginia with Memphis and eventually New Orleans: Thomas Stanley Bockock of Virginia (January 6, 1849), Jacob Thompson of Mississippi (January 21, 1849) and F. P. Stanton of Tennessee (January 21, 1849). Other letters of interest discuss the passage of the railroad bill by Rufus A. French, brother-in-law of Boyd (March 8, 1849), the routing of the train through Wytheville by James Piper (July 12, 1849), and a potential run of the train from Lynchburg to Christiansburg by Charles F. M. Garnett (April 18, 1854).

As a member of the Board of Public Works, Boyd received correspondence regarding a wider variety of internal improvement projects including other railroads, turnpikes, and canals.

Correspondence covers the placement of these projects, disputes between companies, personnel recommendations, entreaties for employment, and requests for repayment by employees who had used their own funds for the sake of their projects. Correspondents include the railroad presidents of the Baltimore & Ohio, Southside, and Richmond & Danville lines.

While Boyd was in Richmond serving in the House of Delegates and Board of Public Works, friends would send him the latest news from Wytheville and updates on the health of his family. One notable event was the arrest of a man for allegedly planning to set fire to the Wytheville Bank (December 14, 1848). Additionally, Boyd received requests for vaccines while in Richmond to assist the people of Wytheville after a smallpox outbreak emanated from slaves that were transported through the area (February 11 and 14, 1851).

Correspondence also pertains to Boyd's personal business affairs. Throughout the late 1850s, Boyd received inquiries about his lands that he had up for sell in Giles Count and Wythe County. One request for information came from Governor Henry A. Wise (August 2, 1859) and his response that he would not buy the land but may come for a visit (August 7, 1859). Another letter from J. A. Cowurden mentions Boyd's embarrassments due to the Panic of 1857 (November 13, 1858). The *Boyd v. Magruder* case, dealing with old land claims in Boyd's family, is also discussed (August 3, 1860).

Boyd maintained correspondence with his family members. Frequent correspondents were his sister Mary Boyd Herndon, niece Sarah Jennings, his wife's brothers James H. French, Napoleon Bonaparte French, and Rufus A. French, and his sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. David McComas. The main topics of conversation were general family news, health updates, and comments on Boyd's work in Richmond. James H. French, whom Boyd was financially supporting, sent Boyd his views on his professors at the University of Virginia (January 18, 1840). A letter from Charles C. Jennings recounts the apparent suicide by rope hanging of Mary Boyd Herndon in Huntsville, Missouri (May 11, 1846). David McComas wrote denying an affair and blamed his behavior on the "spirits" (May 25, 1847). Rufus A. French wrote Boyd advising him not to run for the Board of Public Works (February 8, 1852). Boyd also received two letters from his wife, Minerva: one was a note in pencil written on the back of a letter from Judge Brown requesting that he send tea (February 26, 1850) and the second gave general family news (April 7, 1853).

David F. Boyd is also a topic of conversation. His good performance at the University of Virginia is mentioned (August 9 and December 7, 1854). Mr. Newman responds to Boyd's displeasure at David's appointment as a teacher at a school in Wytheville because of the lack of pay but implies that David is happy with the situation (January 12, 1857). Boyd also wrote to David complaining about Abraham Lincoln (circa 1860-1861) and sent updates on the family, including brother Thomas (December 14, 1868).

Series II: Legal, 1819-1866, undated (0.6 linear feet)

Series contains legal documents regarding estate issues, land surveys, business partnerships, powers of attorney, subscriptions, promissory notes, and receipts of payment in completion of lawsuits for both Boyd's law practice and his personal affairs. For Boyd's law practice, the

estate documents include those for Robert Meek, including an appraisal of his slave holdings and the subsequent sale of his slaves (1845-1861). In addition, there is a land survey conducted for Joseph Burr and Edward Dillion (1838). Other agreements of note are a business partnership for opening a jewelry store (1835) and a subscription for the members of the Wytheville band to purchase their instruments (1847). Series also includes Boyd's handwritten notes for cases he worked on (undated) and a ledger he used regarding the payments of his clients (1831-1839).

Materials relating to Boyd's personal affairs include his contract for renting a room in Charlottesville (1828-1830), several promissory notes from Boyd, and tavern licenses (1849-1851). Other items of note are a subpoena for Boyd and wife Minerva in answering a complaint filed against them (May 17, 1836) and the details of multiple filings by Boyd against Joseph Kent (1858).

Series also includes land documents from Louisiana (1832-1854). Land documents from both Louisiana and Virginia, including a land survey of the "Iron and Coal Lands of T .J. Boyd" and a listing of the resources within several counties are all included in oversize.

Arranged chronologically.

Series III: Financial, 1826-1867, undated (0.5 linear feet)

Series consists of receipts and tax documents relating to Boyd's personal affairs. The receipts are for rent at the University of Virginia, personal items, law books, and from the postmaster as proof of checks and certificates of deposit sent through the mail. Series also includes the receipts for his sons and daughters for music and dance lessons, as well as French, Greek, Latin, and mathematics lessons (1835-1863). Series also includes multiple fines received by Boyd for failing to attend the county muster (1831-1853) and yearly tax documents for Wythe County and the Commonwealth of Virginia (1836-1866). Of note is the inventory of supplies for Boyd's hotel in Wytheville (1856) and a retail liquor license from the IRS giving Boyd the title of "Retail Liquor Dealer and Hotel Keeper" (1866).

Arranged chronologically.

Series IV: Personal Papers, 1826-1939, undated (0.3 linear feet)

Series consists of school work, school reports, notes for speeches, and honors for Boyd after his death. Boyd's school work from the University of Virginia includes his assignments in mathematics, French, and essays for invernals (1826-1828). The school reports of James H. French from Georgetown College (1839) and the University of Virginia (1840) are also included. Other items of interest are Boyd's handwritten notes for his speeches, including a copy of an 1848 speech that explains his political views, and notes from railroad journals in order to aid him in making the argument for internal improvements (undated). Upon Boyd's death, the Wythe County Circuit Court passed a resolution in his honor (February 18, 1893). Series also contains the speech from the dedication of a fountain memorial for Boyd in Wytheville from the Stuart Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (1915) and an article from the *Wythe County News* on Boyd's life (1939).

Arranged chronologically.

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CONTAINER LIST

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<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Contents</u>
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