
Francis Baylies Correspondence

Finding aid prepared by Katrina Denman.

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Francis Baylies Correspondence

Dates: 1848-1862

Bulk Dates: 1848-1852

Collection Number: mssHM 78727-78777

Creator: Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852

Extent: 51 items

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department

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Abstract: The collection consists of a series of 48 letters sent by American Congressman Francis Baylies to General John E. Wool between 1848 and 1852. Baylies writes extensively, and often scathingly, of antebellum era politics, statesmen, military operations, military leaders, and social movements. Specific topics covered include the Mexican-American War, the presidential elections of 1848 and 1852, New York state politics, and revolutionary activity in Europe in 1848-1849.

Language of Material: The records are in English.

Access

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Francis Baylies correspondence, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Acquisition Information

The collection was purchased for the Huntington from the William Reese Company by the Library Collector's Council, January 19, 2013.

Biography

Francis Baylies (1783-1852) was born on October 16, 1783, in Taunton, Massachusetts. He was a great-grandson of Quaker ironmaster Thomas Baylies (1687-1756), nephew of Hodjiah Baylies (1756-1843), an aide-de-camp to General George Washington during the American Revolution, and brother of Congressman William Baylies (1776-1865). Baylies studied law and was admitted to the bar in Massachusetts in 1810. He ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1818 before being elected to the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Congresses. He was the only New Englander to vote against John Quincy Adams when the presidential election of 1824 went to the House. Baylies ran as a Federalist, Jackson Federalist, and Jacksonian before being defeated in a re-election bid in 1827. He subsequently served as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1827 until 1832. He was briefly appointed as charge d'affaires in Buenos Aires in 1832, and after returning to the United States was re-elected to the House of Representatives. Baylies married Mrs. Elizabeth Moulton Deming in 1822. He published *An Historical Memoir of the Colony of New Plymouth* in 1830 and *A Narrative of Major General Wool's Campaign in Mexico*, in the years 1846, 1847, and 1848 in 1851. Baylies died in Taunton on October 28, 1852.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of a series of 48 letters sent by Francis Baylies to General John E. Wool between 1848 and 1852. Baylies writes extensively, and often scathingly, of antebellum era politics, statesmen, military operations, and military leaders. Individuals discussed (often disparagingly) in the letters include John Quincy Adams ("the concentrated essence of selfishness and malignity"), Thomas Hart Benton, Braxton Bragg, James Buchanan, Lewis Cass, Henry Clay, Caleb Cushing, George Mifflin Dallas, Jefferson Davis, Millard Fillmore, Horace Mann ("a mock philanderer and great humbug"), William L. Marcy, Gideon Johnson Pillow, James K. Polk, Winfield Scott, William Henry Seward ("the greatest political rogue"), Zachary Taylor ("cool and sensible and sagacious"), Nicholas Trist, John Tyler, J. Watson Webb, Daniel Webster (whom Baylies came

to admire as having "the highest powers of eloquence"), and Levi Woodbury.

Baylies's early letters were written to Wool while Wool was posted in Monterey following the Mexican-American War. Baylies writes of the adoption of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the accomplishment of which, he notes, was the result of Nicholas Trist saying "virtually to Squire Polk - you may kiss my axxx" (March 12, 1848). Baylies also doubts the terms of the treaty, writing that he would not want to see more of Mexico annexed than could be "swamped by the Yankees," namely, New Mexico and California (in a letter dated May 14, 1848, Baylies notes that he has "no wish to see the mongrel races of Mexico admitted to that high privilege [of shared sovereignty]. I would sooner admit the Choctaws or Cherokees whom I think more civilized..."). Although his own political views and alliances were often in flux ("In a chaos of parties who can tell which is right?" he wrote to Wool in 1849), Baylies remained a staunch admirer of Wool, whom he praised as a hero of the Battle of Buena Vista. He frequently asserts that it was Wool, and not Zachary Taylor, who had been responsible for victory, writing that "it was your rigid discipline alone which pressed the inchoate mass...into the shape and fashion of soldiers and imbued them with the military pride and spirit without which battles cannot be won" (Jan. 21, 1849). Baylies also saw Wool as the victim of political gamesmanship (when J. Watson Webb was competing with Wool for a political post in 1849, Baylies suggested that to achieve success Webb would "swear that General Taylor like a fabled Knight of Romance had defeated whole armies with his single arm"), but on congratulating Wool on his promotion to brevet major general in 1848 concluded that "tardy justice is better than the denial of justice."

In his early letters, Baylies also updates Wool with extensive news of the revolutionary activity in Europe in 1848-1849, including the establishment of the French Second Republic, which he described as a "stupendous revolution" (March 19, 1848). He also writes of events in Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, and Turkey, and worries about American preparedness for the consequences of the upheaval, noting that "I think Squire Buchanan would keep firmer nerves in a Pennsylvania coal mine, than amidst the streams of lava which these European volcanoes will vomit upon us" (Apr. 21, 1848).

Letters dated after September 5, 1848, were addressed to Wool in Troy, New York, and after that time Baylies's interest shifts to American politics. He writes expansively of the presidential election of 1848, in which he gave his full support to Zachary Taylor, who he believed was "the only man in the nation who can turn his back on the...venal cliques...who would throng his camp" (June 4, 1848). He also noted that the 1848 Democratic Convention in Baltimore "exhibited a scene of violence, recklessness, quarrelling and rudeness which was never transcended" (June 4-6, 1848). Baylies also writes extensively of the candidates in the 1852 election, of New York state politics (including references to local elections and Democratic party factions the Barnburners and Locofocos), of his doubts about the principles of the Monroe Doctrine ("manifestly absurd," he wrote in October 1849), and of general social movements, often elaborating on his idea that "government, laws, and property are creatures of society" (Apr.6, 1848). Other specific topics covered include the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies (which Baylies believed might have "consequences...more alarming to the South than even they apprehend" (Apr.6, 1848)); social demonstrations during what Baylies calls "Anniversary Week" in New York on May 15, 1848, which he summarized as "disgusting"; his May 1850 trip to Boston; some political notes on Massachusetts and Rhode Island; his brother William Baylies's political interests (Oct. 21, 1848); and his support of federal funding to improve canals near the Great Lakes and build a railroad "from the Mississippi to the Pacific" (March 10, 1849). Although Baylies wrote in October 1849 that he was "not lazy; neither am I too fat to wield the pen, although I might not figure in digging gold in California," he also alludes often to his troubles with gout, particularly starting in 1851. The last letter he wrote himself is dated August 21, 1852, and in it he asks Wool to help a man named James Marshall Lincoln, who "in a fit of eccentricity" had enlisted in the army and wished to be released. The final letter was written for Baylies by his niece Leonice on October 12, 1852, shortly before Baylies's death. The collection also includes a letter sent to Wool after Baylies's death from William Baylies, who thanks Wool for being with his brother during his final illness. Also included with the collection are two essays by an unknown author on the Canadian Rebellions of 1838, dated 1862 and possibly expanding on Baylies's earlier research on the topic.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged chronologically.

Personal Names

Adams, John Quincy, 1767-1848.

Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852.

Baylies, William, 1775-1865.

Benton, Thomas Hart, 1782-1858.

Bragg, Braxton, 1817-1876.

Buchanan, James, 1791-1868.

Cass, Lewis, 1782-1866.
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852.
Cushing, Caleb, 1800-1879.
Dallas, George Mifflin, 1792-1864.
Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889.
Fillmore, Millard, 1800-1874.
Mann, Horace, 1796-1859.
Marcy, William L. (William Learned), 1786-1857.
Pillow, Gideon Johnson, 1806-1878.
Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849.
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866.
Seward, William Henry, 1801-1872.
Taylor, Zachary, 1784-1850.
Trist, Nicholas Philip, 1800-1874.
Tyler, John, 1790-1862.
Webb, J. Watson (James Watson), 1802-1884.
Webster, Daniel, 1782-1852.
Wool, John Ellis, 1784-1869.
Woodbury, Levi, 1789-1851.

Corporate Names

Mexico. Treaties, etc. United States. 1848, Feb.2.
Democratic National Convention (1848: Baltimore, Md.)

Subject

Buena Vista, Battle of, Mexico, 1847.
Mexican War, 1846-1848.
Monroe doctrine.
Politics and culture--Europe--History--19th century.
Politics and culture--United States--History--19th century.
Slavery, abolition, and emancipation.
Social movements--United States--History--19th century.

Geographic Areas

Austria--History--1789-1900.
Boston (Mass.)--Description and travel.
California--History--1846-1850.
California--History--1850-1950.
Canada--History--1841-1867.
Europe--History--1848-1849.
France--History--1848-1870.
Germany--History--1848-1870.
Great Britain--History--19th century.
Italy--History--1815-1870.
Massachusetts--History--1775-1865.
Mexico--History--1821-1861.
New York (State)--History--1775-1865.
Rhode Island--History--1775-1865.
Russia--History--1801-1917.
Turkey--History--1829-1878.
United States--History--1815-1861.

Genre

Essays--Massachusetts--19th century.

Letters (correspondence)--Massachusetts--19th century.

Box 1**Correspondence 1848-1862**

1848, Mar. 11. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78727.
1848, Mar. 12. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78728.
1848, Mar. 12. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78729.
1848, Mar. 15. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78730.
1848, Mar. 19. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78731.
1848, Mar. 27. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78732.
1848, Mar. 28. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78733.
1848, Mar. 31. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78734.
1848, Apr.6. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78735.
1848, Apr.8. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78736.
1848, Apr.21. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78737.
1848, Apr.22. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78738.
1848, May 14. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78739.
1848, May 15. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78740.
1848, May 22. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78741.
1848, June 4-6. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78742.
1848, Sep.5. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78743.
1848, Oct.21. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78744.
1848, Oct.28. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78745.
1848, Dec.24. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78746.
1848, Dec.27. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78747.
1849, Jan.21. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78748.
1849, Feb.12. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78749.
1849, Mar.10. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78750.
1849, May 18. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78751.
1849, Aug.28. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78752.
1849, Oct.28. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78753.
1849, Nov.5. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78754.
1849, Dec.16. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78755.
1849, Dec.16. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78756.
1850, Jan.31. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78757.
1850, Feb.12. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78758.
1850, Feb.12. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78759.
1850, Feb.12. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78760.
1850, May 9. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78761.
1850, Aug.20. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78762.
1850, Oct.27. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78763.
[1851]. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78764.
1851, Jan.24. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78765.
1851, Jan.25. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78766.
1851, Apr.14. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78767.
1851, Apr.15. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78768.
1851, Apr.20. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78769.
1851, Apr.20. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78770.
1851, May. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78771.
1851, June 8. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78772.
1852, Aug.21. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78773.
1852, Oct.12. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78774.
1853, Feb.16. Baylies, Francis, 1783-1852. Letter to John E. Wool. HM 78775.

1862. "The Canadian Rebellion: General Wool on the Frontiers": essay. HM 78776.

1862. "Canadian Rebellion: A general overview of our national policy toward England in all her rebellions and...the conduct of England toward our Southern rebels": essay. HM 78777.