### Overview of the Collection

**Title:** William Eaton Papers  
**Dates (inclusive):** 1792-1829  
**Bulk dates:** 1798-1805  
**Collection Number:** mssEA 1-555, mssFAC 385  
**Creator:** Eaton, William, 1764-1811.  
**Extent:** 555 pieces in 9 boxes, 11 envelopes, and 1 case  
**Repository:** The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department  
1151 Oxford Road  
San Marino, California 91108  
Phone: (626) 405-2129  
Email: reference@huntington.org  
URL: http://www.huntington.org  
**Abstract:** This collection contains the papers of American soldier and diplomat William Eaton (1764-1811), chiefly accumulated during his service in the Mediterranean and dating between 1798 and 1805. The papers document the relations between the United States and the Barbary states, the Tripolitan War (1801-05), James Leander Cathcart, and naval operations of the U.S. and European powers.  
**Language:** English.

### Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

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### Preferred Citation


### Provenance

Purchased from Charles T. Harbeck, through the agency of George D. Smith, 1917.

### Biographical Note

William Eaton (1764-1811), American soldier and diplomat, was best known for his exploits in the Barbary states from 1798 to 1805. After a period of service in the United States Army in Georgia, he became United States consul to Tunis and took part in the negotiations concerning some changes in the 1797 treaty with this country. In 1803, following a conflict with Tunis authorities, he was expelled from the country, and returned to the United States. Having succeeded in promoting his plan for an American intervention designed to support a rival claimant for the rule of Tripoli, Eaton arrived to the Mediterranean in 1804, with the fleet commanded by Samuel Barron, as United States naval agent to the Barbary States. Eaton led an expedition in behalf of the deposed ruler of Tripoli, in an attempt to end the war between that country and the United States begun in 1801. When the success of the venture seemed almost assured with the capture of Derne, Eaton was surprised to be ordered to leave Tripoli, and to learn that negotiations by Tobias Lear for a peace, involving the ransom of American captives and maintaining the usurping ruler, were concluded. Following the peace of 1805, Eaton returned to the United States. He obtained a grant of 10,000 acres in Maine from the Massachusetts legislature and later received about $10,000 to liquidate claims for his expense in Tripoli. In May 1807-1811, he served as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He finally retired to his home in Brimfield, Massachusetts, and died in 1811.

### Scope and Content

This collection contains the papers of William Eaton, chiefly those accumulated during his service in the Mediterranean. The main period covered by these papers is that of 1798 to 1805, relating to the Barbary affairs. The earlier and later items are for the most part of a personal nature. Included are letters, documents (including 9 volumes of contemporary copies), commonplace books, manuscripts, with a few sketches. The papers document the relations between the U.S. and the Barbary states, the Tripolitan War (1801-05), James Leander Cathcart, naval operations of the U.S. and European powers. Also included are items related to Eaton's professional and personal affairs -- his army career, business transactions, claims against the U.S., and relations with his family and friends.
Subject matter:

I. Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers
   A. Algiers: Consulship of Richard O'Brien (official and personal correspondence)
   B. Tripoli
      1. Consulship of James Leander Cathcart (official and personal correspondence)
      2. War, 1801-1805
         a. Nicolai C. Nissen, Danish Consul and U.S. Chargé d'Affaires (official correspondence)
         b. Expedition in behalf of Ahmed II (Hamet Karamanli), ending in the occupation of Derne
         c. U. S. naval operations:
            1). Attack on Tripoli
            2). Co-operation with the land force at Derne
      3. Treaty of peace
   C. Tunis: Consulship of William Eaton
      1. Negotiations with the bey
      2. Relief of Danish captives

II. General naval operations in the Mediterranean
   A. European Powers
   B. The United States

III. Eaton's personal affairs
   A. Early army service: Recruiting, service in Georgia, courtmartial, etc.
   B. Personal correspondence with family and friends
   C. Business transactions
   D. Claims against the United States

Persons represented in the collection include Ahmed II, Bey of Tripoli (11 pieces); Samuel Barron (6 pieces); Samuel Briggs & Briggs Bros. (firm) (7 pieces); James Leander Cathcart (108 pieces); George G. Coffin (4 pieces); George Davies (3 pieces); William Eaton (92 pieces including 11 volumes); Hammoudah, Bey of Tunis (3 pieces); Thomas Jefferson (3 pieces); Rufus King (6 pieces); Ahmed Korshid, Viceroy of Egypt (3 pieces); James Madison (6 pieces); Francesco Mendrici (5 pieces); Alexander Murray (3 pieces); Nicolai Christian Nissen (37 pieces) Richard O’Brien (71 pieces); Timothy Pickering (5 pieces); Antonio Porcile (3 pieces); Stephen Pyncron (4 pieces); William Loughton Smith (3 pieces); and others.

The chronological distribution of the correspondence and miscellaneous papers is: 1792-1798 (26 pieces); 1799 (60 pieces); 1800 (72 pieces); 1801 (125 pieces); 1802 (71 pieces); 1803 (21 pieces); 1804 (26 pieces); 1805 (71 pieces); 1806-1811 (36 pieces); and 1813-1829 (3 pieces).

Some notable items include:
- 1795, Nov. 26. PICKERING, Timothy. To William Eaton. Instructions relative to the Creek Indians
- 1798, June 14. SEAGROVE, James. Return of the Creek Indians at Colerain
- 1799, Nov. 2. SMITH, William Loughton. To William Eaton. A résumé of the political affairs of the United States at that time (letter press copy)
- 1799, EATON, William. Note of the effects granted to the regency of Tunis by the peace with the United States
- 1801, July 10. KING, Rufus. To Richard Dale, regarding the regalia for Tunis (letter press copy)
- 1802, Mar. 15. MORTIMER, H. W. & SON, and T. MORTIMER (firm). To Rufus King: Account for arms presented to the Bey of Tunis. Annexed to the above: 1802, Feb. 10. RANDALL & BRIDGE (firm). Bill for jewels set in gun mountings; also, invoice of jewels for the Bey of Tunis
- 1804, Sep. 5. O’BRIEN, Richard. To William Eaton. Letter telling of the attack on Tripoli
• 1807, June 8. AHMED II. To William Eaton. Friendly letter thanking Eaton for his efforts in Ahmed’s behalf (in Italian, with Ahmed’s signature and seal)

Most of the letters are originals, but the official government communications are mainly copies. Many of the letters are duplicated in the letterbooks; some are only in the letterbooks.


**Arrangement**

Items are arranged chronologically within the following groupings: Boxed materials (Boxes 1-9); Loose volumes (EA 198-208); Facsimiles (1 case).

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library’s Online Catalog.

**Subjects**

- Barron, Samuel, -1810 -- Correspondence.
- Cathcart, James L. (James Leander), 1767-1843 -- Correspondence.
- Eaton, William, 1764-1811 -- Archives.
- King, Rufus, 1755-1827 -- Correspondence.
- Madison, James, 1751-1836 -- Correspondence.
- O’Brien, Richard, approximately 1758-1824 -- Correspondence.
- Pickering, Timothy, 1745-1829 -- Correspondence.
- United States. Army -- Officers -- Archives.
- United States. Navy -- History -- Tripolitan War, 1801-1805 -- Sources.
- Consuls -- United States -- Archives.
- Diplomats -- United States -- Archives.
- Navy agents -- United States -- Archives.
- Africa, North -- Foreign relations -- United States.
- Libya -- History -- 1551-1912 -- Sources.
- United States -- Foreign relations -- Africa, North.
- United States -- Foreign relations -- 1789-1809.
- United States -- History -- 1783-1815 -- Sources.
- United States -- History -- Tripolitan War, 1801-1805 -- Sources.

**Alternate Authors**

- Harbeck, Charles Thomas, 1850- former owner.
- Barron, Samuel, -1810.
- Cathcart, James L. (James Leander), 1767-1843.
- King, Rufus, 1755-1827.
- Madison, James, 1751-1836.
- Pickering, Timothy, 1745-1829.

**Boxes**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1800 July-1801 February</td>
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<td>1803 February 20-1805 January 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1805 February 7-after 1805</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Box 9

1806-1829

Loose volumes

Letterbook: copies of public and other letters. 1794 May 16-1799 December 9 EA 198
Letter and record book: negotiations of the United States with the Kingdom of Tunis. 1798 December 18-1799 December 9 EA 199
Letter and commonplace book 1799 April 8-1802 February 13 EA 200
Letterbook and journal. 1799 December 14-1801 June 28 EA 201
Pages from a commonplace book. 1799-1802 EA 202
Letterbook and journal relating chiefly to affairs of Denmark in Tunis 1801 July 4-1801 October 2 EA 203
Letterbook: continued communication from Tunis. 1801 June 28-1802 August 23 EA 204
Letter and record book of affairs at Tunis 1802 September 12-1803 March 22 EA 205
Letterbook and journal relating to affairs of Tripoli and the expedition to Derne. 1804 January 2-1805 June 17 EA 206
[Commonplace book]. 1804 January 2-1805 November EA 207
[Commonplace book]. 1804 June 22-1805 February 14 EA 208

Facsimiles

Case

Collection of photostats from various libraries covering the period 1803-1835.
FAC 385-399