Finding Aid for the Sir John Bowring Papers, 1839-1857

Processed by UCLA Library Special Collections staff; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé and edited by Josh Fiala.

UCLA Library Special Collections
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Sir John Bowring Papers,

Date (inclusive): 1839-1857

Collection number: 722

Creator: Bowring, John, Sir, 1792-1872

Extent: 5 boxes (2.5 linear ft.)

Abstract: Sir John Bowring (1792-1872) undertook commercial missions on behalf of the government, examining the accounting and financial systems of other governments, which led to a change in the English Exchequer. In 1824, his friend Jeremy Bentham founded the Westminster Review, and Bowring became one of the first editors. He served as a member of Parliament intermittently between 1835-47 and worked vigorously for the repeal of the corn laws. Also served as British consul at Canton, 1847-54, and from 1854-60 he served as plenipotentiary to China, governor, commander-in-chief and vice-admiral of Hong Kong. He established diplomatic relations with Siam in 1855. He authored many books on travels and politics. The collection consists of correspondence, manuscripts, and related printed material comprising a portion of the official and semi-official records of Sir John Bowring's diplomatic missions in China.

Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections.
Los Angeles, California 90095-1575

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.

Restrictions on Access
Open for research. STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Sir John Bowring Papers (Collection 722). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

UCLA Catalog Record ID
UCLA Catalog Record ID: 4230405

Biography

Bowring was born on October 17, 1792 in Exeter, England; after school in Exeter, he spent four years in a merchant's house where he learned a variety of languages; in 1811 he became clerk in the London house of Milford & Company, subsequently going into business on his own; later undertook commercial missions on behalf of the government, examining the accounting and financial systems of other governments, which led to a change in the English Exchequer; in 1824 his friend Jeremy Bentham founded the Westminster Review, and Bowring became one of the first editors; served as a member of Parliament intermittently between 1835-47; was closely connected with Richard Cobden, and worked vigorously for the repeal of the corn laws; served as British consul at Canton, 1847-54; from 1854-60 he served as plenipotentiary to China, governor, commander-in-chief, and vice-admiral of Hong Kong; established diplomatic relations with Siam in 1855; author of many books on travels and politics; he died on November 23, 1872.

Biographical Narrative

John Bowring, English diplomat, linguist, writer, and traveller was born at Exeter, October 17, 1792, and was the eldest son of Charles Bowring of Lakebeare. Bowring received his education in Exeter, and upon leaving school entered a merchant's house there. During the four years that he remained with this firm, he laid the foundations for his linguistic attainments, becoming familiar with the French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, and Dutch languages. Later he acquired sufficient knowledge of Swedish, Danish, Russian, Servian, Polish, Arabic, Magyar, Bohemian, and Chinese to enable him to translate works in those languages.

In 1811 Bowring became a clerk in the London house of Milford & Company and subsequently went into business on his own, travelling abroad extensively for commercial purposes. This experience qualified him for the various commercial missions he later undertook on behalf of his government. These were in the nature of examining the accounting and financial systems of other countries. Reports of these missions, particularly that of the commission to examine the accounts of the United Kingdom, of which Bowring was secretary, led to a complete change in the English exchequer, and was the
foundation of all improvements which have since been made. Jeremy Bentham, intimate friend and advisor of Bowring, founded the Westminster Review in 1824, and Bowring became one of its first editors, writing political as well as linguistic articles for the journal. His political views also found expression in Parliament, where he served as a member from the Clyde burghs and other districts intermittently between 1835 and 1847. He was closely connected with Richard Cobden and others in the establishment of the Anti-Corn Law League in 1838 and worked vigorously in Parliament for the repeal of the corn laws.

**Scope and Content**

Collection consists of correspondence, manuscripts, and related printed material comprising a portion of the official and semi-official records of Sir John Bowring’s diplomatic missions in China. Correspondents include Charles John Canning, George Frederick Villiers (4th Earl of Clarendon), Sir Thomas Wade, Sir James Stirling, and William Miller.

**Organization and Arrangement**

Arranged in the following series:

1. Letters to Bowring (Box 1).
2. Letters from Bowring (Box 2).
3. Letters to and from others than Bowring (Box 3).
4. Miscellaneous papers, newspaper clippings and related printed material (Boxes 3-4).
5. Boards and covers originally around Bowring papers (Box 5).

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

Bowring, John, Sir, 1792-1872--Archives.
Governors general--China--Hong Kong--Archival resources.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--China.
Abbot, Joll, 1793-1855: Box 3, folder 6 (subject).
Alcock, Sir Rutherford, 1809-1897: Box 3, folder 2 (letter to).
Aulick, John H., 1789-1973: Box 3, folder 1 (letter to).
Balfour, Sir George, 1809-1894: Box 2, folders 5b & 9.
Bazley, Sir Thomas: Box 1, folder 4.
Bradley, Charles William, 1807-1865: Box 1, folder 7.
Brown, Sir William, 1784-1864: Box 1, folders 11 & 14; Box 2, folder 5b.
Capern, Edward, 1819-1894: Box 1, folder 14.
Cobden, Richard, 1804-1865: Box 2, folder 5.
Clarendon, George William Frederich Villiers, 4th Earl of, 1800-1870: Box 1, folder 7; Box 2, folder 2-4; Box 3, folder 2.
Dalhousie, James Andrew Broun Ramsay, 1st Marquess of, 1812-1860: Box 1, folders 5-6; Box 2, folders 5, 5a, 5c, 5d, 5e & 6.
Davis, Sir John Francis, 1795-1890: Box 2, folder 5b.
Davis, Joseph Barnard, 1801-1881: Box 2, folder 5b.
Edmonstone, Sir George Frederick, 1813-1864: Box 2, folder 5.
Ellice, Edward, 1781-1863: Box 2, folders 7-14.
Ellis, Sir Henry, 1777-1869: Box 1, folders 7.
Galloway, Richard H.: Box 1, folders 10, 12, 15 & 16; Box 2, folders 5 & 5a.
Granville, George Levenson-Gower, 2nd Earl of, 1815-1891: Box 2, folder 7.
Gillis, John Pritchet, 1803-1873: Box 1, folder 3.
Hammond, Edmund, Baron of Hammond, 1802-1890: Box 2, folders 14.
Hill, Sir Rowland, 1795-1879: Box 2, folder 5b.
Hodgkin, Thomas, 1798-1866: Box 2, folder 5b.
Hooker, Sir William Jackson, 1785-1865: Box 1, folder 5; Box 2, folder 5b.
Lindley, John, 1799-1865: Box 2, folder 5b.
MacLane, Robert Milligan, 1815-1898: Box 1, folder 4; Box 2, folders 5b, 6 & 14.
Massie, Thomas Leake, 1802-1898: Box 1, folder 10.
Medhurst, Sir Walter Henry, 1822-1885: Box 3, folder 1 (letter to).
Miller, William, 1795-1861: Box 1, folders 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 & 15; Box 2, folders 5, 5e, 10, 12 & 13; Box 3, folder 2 (letter to).
Parker, Peter, 1804-1888: Box 1, folders 16-18; Box 2, folders 5, 5a & 7.
Parkes, Sir Harry Smith, 1828-1885: Box 1, folder 5; Box 2, folder 5c; Box 3, folder 4.
Preble, George Henry, 1816-1885: Box 1, folders 6 & 14.
Seymour, Sir Michael, 1802-1887: Box 1, folder 17.
Smith, John Abel, 1801-1871: Box 2, folders 5 & 7.
Staunton, Sir George Thomas, 1781-1859: Box 1, folder 6; Box 2, folder 5e & 11.
Stirling, Sir James, 1791-1865: Box 1, folders 5-6; Box 2, folders 5, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d & 9.
Tennent, Sir James Emerson, 1804-1869: Box 2, folder 5e & 9; Box 3, folder 2 (letter to).
Thompson, Thomas Perronet, 1783-1869: Box 1, folders 9, 11, 14 & 17; Box 2, folders 5e & 8.
Wade, Sir Thomas Francis, 1818-1895: Bxs.1-2, scattered letters from and to; Box 3, folders 1 (letter from) & 6.
Walker, Robert John, 1801-1869: Box 2, folders 5 & 5a.
Walmsby, Sir Joshua, 1794-1871: Box 1, folder 12; Box 2, folder 6.
Ward, Sir Henry George, 1797-1860: Box 1, folders 7, 12 & 13; Box 2, folders 6, 10 & 13; Box 4, folder 3.
Weir, William, 1802-1858: Box 2, folder 6.
Weld, Charles Richard, 1813-1869: Box 1, folder 11.
Wickham, Henry Lewis, 1789-1864: Box 1, folder 16; Box 2, folder 11.
Wilson, Horace Hayman, 1786-1860: Box 2, folders 5b, 10 & 11.


Box 1, Folder 1  
1849.  
Physical Description: (11 items).

Box 1, Folder 2  
1852.  
Physical Description: (3 items).

Box 1, Folder 3  
1853.  
Physical Description: (10 items).  
Scope and Content Note  
Including letters from John P. Gillis.

Box 1, Folder 4  
1854.  
Physical Description: (13 items).  
Scope and Content Note  
Including letters from Robert McLane, and Sir Thomas Bazley.

Box 1, Folder 5  
January-August 1855.  
Physical Description: (47 items).  
Scope and Content Note  
Letters from Sir William Hooker, Sir Harry Parkes and William Miller.
Box 1, Folder 6  **September-October 1855.**
Physical Description: (17 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters from Herman Brockhaus, George Preble, Sir James Ramsey and Sir James Stirling.
Included is a copy of the *Macao Gazette*.

Box 1, Folder 7  **November-December 1855.**
Physical Description: (13 items).
Scope and Content Note
Correspondents include Sir Henry Ward, Sir Henry Ellis, William Miller and Charles Bradley.

Box 1, Folder 8  **January-March 1856.**
Physical Description: (11 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters from William Miller.

Box 1, Folder 9  **April 1856.**
Physical Description: (7 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters from William Miller.

Box 1, Folder 10  **May 1856.**
Physical Description: (11 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters from Thomas Massie and William Miller.

Box 1, Folder 11  **June 1856.**
Physical Description: (8 items).
Scope and Content Note

Box 1, Folder 12  **July 1856.**
Physical Description: (7 items).
Scope and Content Note

Box 1, Folder 13  **August 1856.**
Physical Description: (7 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters from William Miller and Sir Henry Ward.

Box 1, Folder 14  **September-October 1856.**
Physical Description: (14 items).
Scope and Content Note

Box 1, Folder 15  **November 1856.**
Physical Description: (15 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters from William Miller and Richard H. Galloway.
Box 1, Folder 16  
**December 1856.**  
**Physical Description:** (12 items).  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters from Henry Wickham, Richard H. Galloway, Count de Couvey and Peter Parker.

Box 1, Folder 17  
**January 1-15, 1857.**  
**Physical Description:** (14 items).  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters from Thomas P. Thompson, Sir Michael Seymour and Count de Couvey.

Box 1, Folder 18  
**January 16-27, 1857.**  
**Physical Description:** (24 items).  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters from Count de Couvey and Peter Parker.

Box 1, Folder 19  
**February 1-15, 1857.**  
**Physical Description:** (20 items).  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters from Count de Couvey, Peter Parker and Sir Michael Seymour.

Box 1, Folder 20  
**February 16-28, 1857.**  
**Physical Description:** (12 items).  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters from Peter Parker and Count de Couvey.

Box 2, Folder 1  
**1852.**  
**Physical Description:** (1 item).

Box 2, Folder 2  
**January 1-November 17, 1853.**  
**Physical Description:** (6 items).

Box 2, Folder 3  
**November 18-December 31, 1853.**  
**Physical Description:** (3 items).

Box 2, Folder 4  
**1854.**  
**Physical Description:** (6 items).

Box 2, Folder 5  
**January 1855.**  
**Physical Description:** (42 items).  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters to Peter Parker, James Stirling, Lord Dalhousie and Richard Cobden.

Box 2, Folder 5a  
**February 1855.**  
**Physical Description:** (31 items).  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters to James Stirling, Peter Parker and Lord Dalhousie.
Box 2, Folder 5b  March 1855.
Physical Description: (29 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters to James Stirling, Sir Rowland Hill, Richard Milligan MacLane, Sir George Balfour.

Box 2, Folder 5c  May 1855.
Physical Description: (17 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters to James Stirling and Sir Rowland Hill.

Box 2, Folder 5d  June-July 1855.
Physical Description: (15 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters to Lord Dalhousie and James Stirling.

Box 2, Folder 5e  August-September 1855.
Physical Description: (14 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters to William Miller and Lord Dalhousie.

Box 2, Folder 6  October 1-15, 1855.
Physical Description: (8 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters to Sir Joshua Walmsby, William Weir, Lord Dalhousie, Henry Ward and Robert Milligan MacLane.

Box 2, Folder 7  October 16-31, 1855.
Physical Description: (7 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters to Edward Ellice, Peter Parker and Lord Granville.

Box 2, Folder 8  November 1-11, 1855.
Physical Description: (6 items).
Scope and Content Note
Letters to William Miller and Thomas P. Thompson.

Box 2, Folder 9  November 12-30, 1855.
Scope and Content Note
Letters to Sir George Balfour and James Stirling.

Box 2, Folder 10  December 1-11, 1855.
Physical Description: (5 items).
Scope and Content Note

Box 2, Folder 11  December 12-31, 1855.
Physical Description: (6 items).
Scope and Content Note
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2, Folder 12</th>
<th><strong>January-August 1856.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (9 items).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters to William Miller.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2, Folder 13</th>
<th><strong>September-December 1856.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (7 items).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters to Sir Henry Ward and William Miller.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2, Folder 14</th>
<th><strong>1857.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (7 items).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters to Lord Canning, Edward Ellice, Robert Milligan McLane and Edmund Hamond.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 1</th>
<th><strong>Letters to and from Others than Sir John Bowring, 1852-1857</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1852-1854.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (4 items).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 2</th>
<th><strong>1855-1857.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (3 items).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters to Sir Rutherford Alcock and Sir James Tennent. Letter from William Miller.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 3</th>
<th><strong>Miscellaneous Papers, Newspaper Clippings and Related Printed Material, 1839-1857</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contents are mainly clippings from the following newspapers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Friend of China</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Friend of India</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Polynesian</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>North China Herald</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>China Daily Mail</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hong Kong Government Gazette</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Overland Mail</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Hong Kong Register</em></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 4</th>
<th><strong>Miscellaneous papers, 1839-1847.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (3 pieces).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1839 - Original proclamation of High Officers stopping forever the English trade with China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1847 - Memorandum of Rates of Exchange...</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 5</th>
<th><strong>1851-1852.</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (6 items).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 5</th>
<th><strong>1853-1854.</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (5 items).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 6</td>
<td>1855-1857.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (16 items).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 7</th>
<th>n.d.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (12 items).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 1</th>
<th>1850-1854.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (4 pieces).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 2</th>
<th>January-September 1855.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (20 pieces).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 3</th>
<th>October-December 1855.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (4 pieces).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 4</th>
<th>January-June 1856.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (4 items).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 5</th>
<th>July-December 1856.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (3 pieces).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 6</th>
<th>January 1-9, 1857.</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Physical Description: (5 pieces).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 7</th>
<th>January 10-12, 1857.</th>
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<td>Physical Description: (5 pieces).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 8</th>
<th>January 13-19, 1857.</th>
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<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 9</th>
<th>January 20-23, 1857.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Physical Description: (4 pieces).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 10</th>
<th>January 24-31, 1857.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (6 pieces).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 11</th>
<th>February 1-10, 1857.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Physical Description: (5 pieces).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 12</th>
<th>February 11-23, 1857.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (4 pieces).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 13</th>
<th>February 24-28, 1857 &amp; n.d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: (8 pieces).</td>
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</table>