

JAMES E. ELAM LETTER BOOK

(Mss. 672, 2464)

Inventory

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

Revised 2008

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SUMMARY

Size	1 v., 3 items
Geographic Locations	Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Inclusive Dates	1846-1853
Bulk Dates	N/A
Languages	English
Summary	Mostly letters to former Baton Rouge mayor and Judge James Essex Elam pertain primarily to family news, but some also relate to national political affairs, local events and conditions in Baton Rouge, the Mexican War, the California gold rush, and antebellum college life.
Access Restrictions	No restrictions on access.
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Related Collections	N/A
Citation	James E. Elam Letter Book, Mss. 672, 2464, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack Location(s)	H:15, Misc: E; OS:E

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

James Essex Elam, born in East Baton Rouge Parish December 7, 1829, served as mayor of Baton Rouge from 1858-1862 and 1865-1869. He attended Lagrange College in Kentucky (1846-1847), Centenary College in Jackson, La. (1847-1850), and law school at the University of Louisiana (now Tulane University) in New Orleans. Elam then returned to Baton Rouge to practice law with his father, James Mason Elam. He died in Baton Rouge on July 31, 1873.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Bound collection of letters, partially indexed, received by James Essex Elam, son of James M. Elam, in the antebellum period from members of his family. Most of the letters relate to personal affairs, but some references are made to the political situation, local conditions in Baton Rouge, the Mexican War, the California Gold Rush of 1849, and antebellum college life.

Collection also contains a certificate, 1853, of the appointment of James M. Elam as attorney and counselor of the Supreme Court of the United States.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The collection consists of a letter book of James Essex Elam (1846-1852). The letters are primarily written by his father, James Mason Elam, and discuss politics, moral issues, and his wish for his son to receive a good education and make a mark for himself in life. Other letters come from Elam's sisters and his friends from college and provide news of family members and mutual friends. Some correspondents include W.D. Brigham, Stephen Henderson, Jr. of Gartness Plantation, George M. Heroman, Thomas S. Jones, and W.P. Winans. Many letters contain news of people and events in Baton Rouge, including references to the Mexican-American War (May 1846), cholera in Baton Rouge (1849), the California Gold Rush (1848), and the Whig Party (1849). Also of note is a letter from G.B. Newe of Woodville, Miss. in which he mentions that "the good citizens of Woodville put a stop to" the marriage of Mr. Lumas and Miss Cooley, an African-American woman, as they "told him if he did get married they would tar and feather him" (December 14, 1848, page 316).

Also included in the collection is a certificate admitting James Mason Elam as an attorney and counselor of the United States Supreme Court (February 25, 1853), an engraving by W. Wellstood of James M. Elam (undated), and an issue of the Baton Rouge serial *Pansy Blossom* (April 1887).

CROSS REFERENCES

Subject	Date	Description of relevant documents
Baton Rouge (La.)--Politics and government.	1846-1852	Letters containing news of Baton Rouge politics
California--Gold discoveries.	1848	Elam's niece writes that she has received pieces of "California gold" (page 296); reference to "California Fever" and people moving from Baton Rouge to California (page 332, 334)
Centenary College of Louisiana.	1850	Letters from W. D. Brigham, Charles McVea and Robert Pugh
Cholera--Louisiana.	1849	Letters telling of friends and family sick or dying of cholera (pages 322, 324, 330, 334, 336, 352-360)
Lawyers--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.	1846-1852	Letters between James Mason Elam, lawyer of Baton Rouge, to his son attending college.
Mexican War, 1846-1848.	1846	Letters from James Mason Elam to his son discussing the Mexican-American War (pages 40-49, 60-62)
Slavery--Louisiana.	1847	James Mason Elam writes to his son discussing sickness and death among slaves on neighboring plantations (page 122)
Taylor, Zachary, 1784-1850.	1849	Letter from: Elam. "treated many of his personal and political friends with disrespect..." James M. Elam (page 358)
Washington (D.C.)--Description and travel.	1849	Letters from: James M Elam, sightseeing letters, father relates visit at the White House and other points of interest in Washington D.C. (page 344, 358)
Whig Party (U.S.)	1849	A. F. Gaines letter (page 360), and James M. Elam letter (page 358)

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
Misc.:E	--	--	1851-1853, undated
H:15	--	--	Letter Book, 1846-1852
OS:E	--	1	<i>Pansy Blossom</i> (Baton Rouge), April 1887