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Rowan Family (MSS 69)

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BIOGRAPHY

John Rowan, Sr., son of William and Sara Elizabeth (Cooper) Rowan, was born in York County, Pennsylvania, on July 12, 1773. Following the Revolutionary War and the loss of the family fortune, William emigrated with his family to Kentucky to begin anew on land he had purchased before leaving Pennsylvania. After a journey of five months, the Rowans arrived at Louisville in March 1783. The next spring, the Rowans and five other families established a settlement at the Long Falls of Green River.

A few years later, the Rowan family moved to Bardstown, where seventeen year old John entered Salem Academy which was headed by the distinguished educator, Dr. John Priestly. Some of John’s classmates who later became widely known in their respective professional fields were Archibald Cameron, Felix Grundy, John Pope, John Allen, John Simpson, and Joseph Hamilton Daviess. Rowan proved to be a remarkable student, possibly the best classical scholar of his day in Kentucky. Upon completion of his work under Dr. Priestly, John studied law in Lexington and was admitted to the bar in 1795, thus beginning his long and outstanding career as a lawyer and politician.

Rowan married Ann Lytle (1774-1839) about 1794, and they settled on a thirteen-hundred-acre tract of land east of Bardstown which became known as Federal Hill. It was transferred to John by his father-in-law. John and Ann were the parents of nine children (See Chart, B1,1,#2).

In 1804, Rowan was appointed Kentucky’s Secretary of State and served until 1806, when he was elected to Congress as the Bardstown District’s representative.
After his congressional term expired, he returned to Federal Hill and continued to practice law until 1813. Then, Rowan served in the state legislature from 1813 to 1817 as Nelson County's representative after which he accepted the appointment as judge of the Court of Appeals in 1819, serving for one year. About 1822, the Rowan family moved to Louisville, but continued to spend part of each year at Federal Hill. Shortly thereafter, Rowan was elected to two terms in the state legislature representing Jefferson and Oldham counties. Winning a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1824, Rowan served from 1825 to 1831. Returning to Kentucky, he practiced law until his appointment as Commissioner of Mexican Claims in 1839. He served also as the first president of the Kentucky Historical Society from 1838 until his death. Death came to Rowan on July 13, 1842. He was buried at Federal Hill.

John Rowan, Jr., whose parents were John, Sr., and Ann (Lytle) Rowan, was born at Frankfort, Kentucky, on February 9, 1807. He received his education in Nelson County; at Nashville, Tennessee, under Dr. Priestly; at St. Joseph’s College in Bardstown; studied law at Lexington; and earned his law degree from Transylvania University in 1832. Rowan, Jr., moved to Louisville and had a law practice there for a few years. In 1835, he married Rebecca B. Carnes (1813-1897) of Baltimore, Maryland. Following their marriage they moved to a Mississippi plantation, residing there only a short period of time before moving to Federal Hill. John never practiced law again full-time, but turned his attention to managing the family farm at which he was not very successful. They were the parents of ten children (See Chart, B1,#3). John, Jr., was the only son to survive his father, and he was given Federal Hill as his share of the estate. On January 3, 1848, he received an appointment, which he had actively sought, as charge d'affaires to the Kingdom of Two Sicilies. John, Jr., and his family, arrived in Naples on June 29, 1848, and resided there during his one-year term of service. Following his stay in Naples, he and his family returned to Federal Hill, where he died on August 16, 1855.
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Armstrong, J. M. & Co. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living*


Nelson County Census Records, 1860. (microfilm)


Tinsley, Harry D. *History of No Creek, Ohio County, Kentucky*, 1953, p. 118-120.

THE COLLECTION

The materials of and relating to John Rowan, Sr., constitute about one-third of the total number in the collection. The items are chiefly letters of Rowan to his son John, Jr. There are four letters of Rowan, Sr., that are holographic copies made by his granddaughter, Madge Rowan Frost in 1908, which originally were written to his wife, daughter, and son.

Correspondence comprises most of John, Jr.’s materials. Included are letters to his wife, letters to him and his wife, business letters, and legal papers relating to his position as charge d’affaires to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

The collection is organized chronologically around people and events.

SHELF LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX</th>
<th>ROWAN family</th>
<th>1784-1923</th>
<th>112 items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Biographical information and genealogical charts</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Items</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>John Rowan, Sr. - Letters to members of his family (copies)</td>
<td>1808; 1818; 1842</td>
<td>2 items (4 letters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Typescript copies of above letters</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>John Rowan, Sr. - Correspondence</td>
<td>1836-1841</td>
<td>15 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Letters to his son, John, Jr.</td>
<td>1836-1841</td>
<td>12 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Letter to his wife</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>1 item</td>
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<tr>
<td>3c</td>
<td>Incoming letters to John, Sr.</td>
<td>1837; 1841</td>
<td>2 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>John Rowan, Sr. - Business papers and speech</td>
<td>1833-1843</td>
<td>4 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>John Rowan, Sr. - Legal paper pertaining to the settlement of his estate and paper written about him</td>
<td>1843(?); 1852</td>
<td>2 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>John Rowan, Jr. - Correspondence</td>
<td>1833(?)-1855</td>
<td>20 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>Letters to his wife</td>
<td>1833(?)-1853</td>
<td>6 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>6b</td>
<td>Incoming letters to John, Jr. and his wife</td>
<td>1835-1855</td>
<td>14 items</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>John Rowan, Jr. - Incoming letters, etc.</td>
<td>1848-1850</td>
<td>11 items</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>J. W. Schaumburg - Papers relating to his army restoration claim</td>
<td>1836-1852</td>
<td>4 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>John Rowan, Jr. - Business and legal papers</td>
<td>1845-1852</td>
<td>36 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>9a</td>
<td>Printed items</td>
<td>1845-1848</td>
<td>5 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings, etc.</td>
<td>1848(?)-1923</td>
<td>6 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1-D1, 18</td>
<td>Survey and letter</td>
<td>1784; 1849</td>
<td>2 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Letter - John M. Clayton of the U.S. Dept. of State to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies</td>
<td>June 1, 1849</td>
<td>1 item</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2 Jefferson County survey May 4, 1784 1 item

**CATALOG CARD**

MSS ROWAN Family 1784-1923

69 Correspondence, business and legal papers, clippings, etc., of John Rowan, Sr., 1773-1843, lawyer, judge, U.S. Representative and Senator, and owner of Federal Hill, Bardstown, Ky.; and of John Rowan, Jr., 1807-1855, master of Federal Hill and U.S. charge' d'affaires to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1848-1850.

½ box. 10 folders. 112 items.
See Descriptive Inventory for details.

K/78

**SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

Bardstown
Bardstown - Cholera, 1833 B1,6a
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Cass, Lewis, 1782-1866 - Comments about, 1848 B1,5b
Chinn, Thomas Wither, 1791-1852 B1,9
Cholera - Bardstown, 1833 B1,6a
Cholera - Cincinnati, Ohio, 1849 B1,6b
Cincinnati, Ohio - Cholera, 1849 B1,6b
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Clayton, John Middleton, 1796-1856 B1,9
Diplomatic service, 1847-1853 B1,6,7&9
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Fillmore, Millard, Pres. U.S., 1800-1874 - Petitions to, 1850 B1,8
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Grundy, Felix, 1777-1840 - Comments about, 1840 B1,3a
Hammer, Eliza Cooper (Rowan), 1798-1815 - Relating to, 1895 B1,10
Hammer, John Milton, 1789-1825 - Relating to, 1895 B1,10
Harrington, William Henry, Pres. U.S., 1773-1841 - Comments about, 1841 B1,3a
Historic houses - Federal Hill B1,2,3a&4
Immel, George and Michael - Relating to, 1784 C1-D1,18
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**CHRONOLOGICAL CARDS**

1784-
1808-
1833-
1841-
1895-
1923

**SEE AND SEE ALSO CARDS**

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   See
Sicily

My Old Kentucky Home
   See
Federal Hill

Rowan, Eliza Cooper
   See
Harney, Eliza Cooper (Rowan)

Rowan, Mary Jane
   See
Steele, Mary Jane (Rowan)

Women
   See also
Wives - Attitude towards

12/09/02