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Sebastian, Benjamin, 1741-1832 (MSS 523)

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**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Benjamin Sebastian, a lawyer of Jefferson County, Kentucky, served as associate justice of the Kentucky Court of Appeals from 1792 until 1806. Sebastian had been a participant in the Spanish Conspiracy, a plan conceived during Kentucky’s statehood conventions in the 1780s to unite with the Spanish government of Louisiana in order to open a trade route down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. The Conspiracy ended in 1795 after Spain ceded part of the Louisiana territory and allowed the United States free navigation of the river.

In 1806, Sebastian’s receipt of a pension from Spain was discovered and, after an investigation by the U.S. House of Representatives, his conduct was condemned. Rather than face impeachment by the Kentucky General Assembly, Sebastian resigned his judgeship.

After leaving the Court of Appeals, Sebastian purchased land at Falls of Rough in Grayson County, Kentucky, and remained there the rest of his life.

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection contains photostatic copies and typescripts of correspondence and other documents relating to Benjamin Sebastian’s involvement in the Spanish Conspiracy and the congressional investigation that resulted in his resignation from the Kentucky Court of Appeals. The original documents are now held at the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. They were once in the possession of Ben Johnson of Bardstown, Kentucky, whose father was the law partner of Ben Hardin, the attorney for Sebastian in the impeachment proceedings instituted against him.

Included is the declaration of Sebastian and three confederates expressing their intention to open negotiations with Spanish authorities for free navigation of the Mississippi (Folder 2). Various exchanges between Sebastian and Spanish officials, including the governor of Louisiana, detail his contacts and attempts to negotiate trade terms (Folders 2, 3). After attacks on his conduct led by Kentucky legislator Humphrey Marshall in the pages of his newspaper, the *Western World*, and the initiation of an investigation in the House of Representatives, Sebastian wrote letters explaining his actions and harshly criticizing Marshall and the investigation (Folders 3, 4). With Henry Clay as messenger, he also wrote to the Spanish minister to the United States in Washington.
States asking for the resumption of his pension after he lost his judge’s salary (Folder 3). Sebastian’s letter of resignation to Kentucky Governor Christopher Greenup (Folder 4) is also included.

**SHELF LIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 1</th>
<th>Benjamin Sebastian</th>
<th>1795-1940</th>
<th>30 items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Benjamin Sebastian – Correspondence and papers</td>
<td>1795-1796</td>
<td>8 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Benjamin Sebastian – Correspondence and papers</td>
<td>1804-1807</td>
<td>14 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Benjamin Sebastian – Undated papers; biographical sketch excerpt</td>
<td>1940, n.d.</td>
<td>7 items</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS 523, SEBASTIAN, Benjamin, 1795-1940

Letters and papers of Benjamin Sebastian, associate justice of the Kentucky Court of Appeals, relating to his involvement in the Spanish Conspiracy and his response to a congressional investigation of his conduct that led to his resignation from the Court.

½ box. 4 folders. 30 items. Photostats, typescripts.

SC2014.3.94

**SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

Armesto, Andres Lopez F2
Brown, James, 1766-1835 F3
Carondelet, Luis Hector, Baron de, 1748-1807 F2
Casa Yrujo, Marquis de, 1763-1824 – Correspondence F3
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852 F3
Gayoso de Lemos, Manuel, 1747-1799 F4
Gayoso de Lemos, Manuel, 1747-1799 – Relating to F3
Greenup, Christopher, 1750-1818 – Letter to F4
Macon, Nathaniel, 1757-1837 – Letter to F3
Marshall family – Comments about, 1806 F3
Marshall, Humphrey, 1760-1841 – Relating to F3
Mericult, Juan Francisco F2
Minor, Stephen, 1760-1815 F3
Seitz, John A., d. 1804 – Correspondence F3
Spanish Conspiracy – Relating to

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