

# Henry Mason Morfit Papers

## A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.  
2015

Contact information:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Additional search options available at:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms015008>

LC Online Catalog record:

<http://lcn.loc.gov/mm79033431>

Prepared by Richard Bickel

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Henry Mason Morfit Papers

**Span Dates:** 1819-1858

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1844-1855)

**ID No.:** MSS33431

**Creator:** Morfit, Henry Mason, d.1868

**Extent:** 4,000 items ; 13 containers ; 5.2 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** Lawyer. Correspondence and financial and business papers relating to Morfit's Washington, D.C., practice as a claims lawyer and as a political figure in the administrations of Andrew Jackson.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Armstrong, John, 1758-1843--Correspondence.  
Atkinson, Archibald, 1792-1872--Correspondence.  
Baltzell, Philip, 1791-1856--Correspondence.  
Baltzell, Thomas, 1781-1843--Correspondence.  
Campbell, George Washington, 1769-1848--Correspondence.  
Carroll, Charles H. (Charles Holker), 1794-1865--Correspondence.  
Crumphorn, George W. (George William), 1786-1848--Correspondence.  
Dana, James, 1735-1812--Correspondence.  
Douglas, Earl--Correspondence.  
Duncan, Garnett, 1800-1875--Correspondence.  
Eaton, John Henry, 1790-1856--Correspondence.  
Gales, Joseph, Jr., 1786-1860--Correspondence.  
Garwood, Richard--Correspondence.  
Gelston, Hugh--Correspondence.  
Green, Duff, 1791-1875--Correspondence.  
Hobbie, Selah Reeve, 1797-1854--Correspondence.  
Holleman, Joel, 1799-1844--Correspondence.  
Ingersoll, Joseph R. (Joseph Reed), 1786-1868--Correspondence.  
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845.  
Kinnard, George L., 1803-1836--Correspondence.  
Ludlow, Thomas William, 1795-1878--Correspondence.  
McIlwaine, Henry--Correspondence.  
McLean, Alney, 1779-1841--Correspondence.  
Morfit, Henry Mason, 1793-1865.  
Prescott, Eustis--Correspondence.  
Rhind, William H.--Correspondence.  
Sawyer, Lemuel, 1777-1852--Correspondence.  
Seaton, William Winston, 1785-1866--Correspondence.  
Stubbs, Simon S. (Simon Stubblefield), 1808-1867--Correspondence.  
Taliaferro, John, 1768-1852--Correspondence.  
Walker, Robert J. (Robert John), 1801-1869--Correspondence.  
Woodbury, Levi, 1789-1851--Correspondence.

### Organizations

Charles C. Watson & Sons--Correspondence.  
Guier & George--Correspondence.

Ogden & Jones--Correspondence.

### **Subjects**

Business enterprises.

Claims.

Depressions--1836-1837.

Finance.

Financial crises--United States--19th century.

French spoliation claims.

Land speculation--Southern States.

Land speculation--West (U.S.)

Loans.

Maritime law.

Patents.

Practice of law--Washington (D.C.)

Presidents--United States--Election.

Slavery--United States.

Slaves--United States.

### **Places**

United States--Claims vs. France.

United States--Claims.

United States--Commerce.

United States--Economic conditions--To 1865.

United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Claims.

United States--Politics and government--1815-1861.

United States--Politics and government--1829-1837.

### **Occupations**

Lawyers.

Legislators--Maryland.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Provenance**

The papers of Henry Mason Morfit, lawyer, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1942.

### **Processing History**

The papers of Henry Mason Morfit were arranged and described in 1975 and 1979. The finding aid was revised in 2015.

### **Related Material**

The Lewis McKenzie Turner Watermark Collection in the Manuscript Division includes many letters addressed to Henry Mason Morfit.

### **Copyright Status**

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Henry Mason Morfit is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

### **Access and Restrictions**

The papers of Henry Mason Morfit are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Henry Mason Morfit Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1793, Jan. 1	Born, Norfolk, Va.
1817, Nov. 20	Married Catherine Campbell (died 1893)
1820's	Moved to Washington, D.C., and became a claims lawyer
1832	Delegate from Washington, D.C., to the Democratic convention, Baltimore, Md., that renominated Andrew Jackson for president
1861	Moved to Baltimore, Md., and later became a member of the Maryland legislature
1865, Dec. 1	Died, Baltimore, Md.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Henry Mason Morfit (1793-1865) span the years 1819-1858, with the bulk of the collection dating from 1844 to 1855. Virtually all of the material consists of incoming correspondence and financial records that relate to Morfit's career as a Washington claims lawyer and politician. The collection is organized into three sets of correspondence arranged chronologically and a miscellany file.

While the majority of the letters were written from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, and Norfolk, Morfit's correspondents lived in almost every section of the United States and in Europe. Primarily, the letters relate to business matters such as the development of the West, new commercial enterprises, the loan of money, damages to goods, maritime questions, and, most frequently, the collection of claims. Some political correspondence is present, particularly during presidential election years.

Some of the claims handled by Morfit had their origin in the colonial period, while others relate to the American Revolution and the years thereafter. Included are claims of soldiers and officers of the American Revolution, those relating to French loans and French spoliation, other maritime claims in which the United States was a party, and individual and corporate claims. Both American and European were among Morfit's clients.

Other letters deal with slave transactions, testamentary dispositions, land speculation in the South and West, and the question of patents. The aftermath of the Panic of 1837 is documented in letters that discuss the hardships of ordinary people and members of the business community. Prominent correspondents from the business and legal profession are Philip Baltzel, Thomas Baltzel, Earl Douglas, Hugh Gelston, Alney McLean, Thomas William Ludlow, and Eustis Prescott.

Morfit also dabbled in politics and held minor legal positions in the Jackson administration. Although this aspect of his life is not reflected very prominently in the papers, there is some correspondence dealing with presidential election campaigns. Occasional letters from Congressmen John Armstrong, George Washington Campbell, John Henry Eaton, Henry Jared Ingersoll, and Levi Woodbury appear, as do letters from newspapermen William W. Eaton, Joseph Giles, Duff Green, and William H. Rhind.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Set I
BOX 1	1821-1829 (7 folders)
BOX 2	1830, Jan.-1833, July (6 folders)
BOX 3	1833, Aug.-1840, May (7 folders)
BOX 4	1841, Mar.-1844, Sept. (6 folders)
BOX 5	Set II
BOX 5	1845
BOX 5	Part 1
BOX 6	Part 2
BOX 7	Part 3
BOX 8	1846
BOX 8	Part 1
BOX 9	Part 2
BOX 10	Part 3
BOX 11	Set III
BOX 11	1844, Oct.-1849, Dec. (7 folders)
BOX 12	1850-1855 (6 folders)
BOX 13	1856-1858, undated (4 folders)
BOX 13	Miscellany
BOX 13	Financial papers, 1819-1856, undated
BOX 13	Correspondence of others, sketches, and unidentified material
BOX 13	Legal papers, 1821-1858, undated