

Collection #
M 0108,
BV 1256–1267, 1968–1970, 1980
F 0185P–0193P, 0194N,
OM 0091

**CALVIN FLETCHER (1798–1866)
PAPERS, 1817–1917**

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Processed by

Paul Brockman
10 January 2002

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 29 manuscript boxes, 21 bound volumes, 14 reels of microfilm, 1 oversize folder

COLLECTION DATES: 1817–1917

PROVENANCE: The majority of the Calvin Fletcher papers were placed in the custody of the Indiana Historical Society after the death of Laura Fletcher Hodges in 1923. Mrs. Hodges was the granddaughter of Calvin Fletcher. Additional materials came from: Indiana Historical Bureau, 140 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, 1937; Frederic Luther Co., 2803 E. 56th St., Indianapolis, Dec. 1962; Mrs. Louis F. Hays, 102 W. Poplar, Greencastle, IN, May 1975; Larry LaFoe, Indianapolis, IN

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: Microfilm; diaries were published by the Indiana Historical Society in 9 volumes, 1972–83.

RELATED HOLDINGS: Emily Beeler Fletcher Diaries & Papers (BV 2181–2203, 2330–2336, M 0479, F 0182–0184); *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, 9 volumes (KF368 .F54 A333)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1923.0001, 1937.0004, 1962.1211, 1975.0531, 2005.0270

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Calvin Fletcher was a prominent citizen of Indianapolis from his arrival in 1821 until his death in 1866. He was a state senator, successful lawyer, businessman, and farmer. He was also active in a number of organizations in the city.

Fletcher was born in Ludlow, Vermont, on 4 February 1798, the eleventh child of Jesse and Lucy Keyes Fletcher. He left Vermont in 1815 and settled in Urbana, Ohio, where he taught school and studied law under James Cooley. It was there that he met and married Sarah Hill. In 1821, they moved to Indianapolis.

Shortly after his arrival, he was elected prosecuting attorney for the Marion County Circuit Court and began to travel within the state. In 1825 he was elected state senator and remained in office until his resignation in 1833. Although he never ran for public office again, he continued his interest in politics by drafting proposed legislation for free schools, participating in debates, and attending political conventions. During this time, Fletcher entered into a successful law partnership and collection business with Ovid Butler and later Simon Yandes. Fletcher resigned from this business in 1845.

In 1834, Fletcher was appointed a director of the State Bank and a commissioner for the Sinking Fund. He also became president of the Indianapolis branch of the State Bank and retained that position until the charter for the bank ran out. The state chartered a new bank, the Bank of the State of Indiana, instead of extending the charter of the existing bank. Fletcher then organized the Indianapolis Branch Banking Co., also known as the Fletcher and Sharpe Bank, with Thomas Sharpe.

Fletcher's other business interest included land speculation, in partnership with Nicholas McCarty, and being president and a member of the board of directors of the Indianapolis and Bellefontaine Railroad.

Besides banking and the law, Fletcher was also interested in agriculture. He was a successful farmer. He helped to found the Marion County Agricultural Society and was the treasurer for its first annual fair. Letters from his sons reveal their experiences at the Cincinnati, New York, and Rhode Island fairs.

The moral and educational development of Indianapolis was another of Fletcher's concerns. He supported a number of the local churches and attended many of them personally. He was active in the Sabbath schools, first as a teacher and later as superintendent of the Sabbath School of Roberts Chapel. He also gave lectures at the Sunday School picnics.

Although lacking in formal education, Fletcher spend a great deal of time reading. He was also a strong advocate for free public schools in the city. In 1847 he participated in the Common School Convention meeting held in Indianapolis. He served as a school trustee

for seven years, setting up a free school system. He was also involved in recruiting teachers from the East.

Fletcher was also a member of the Indianapolis Benevolent Society, the Indiana Historical Society, the local temperance committee, and other groups. During the Civil War, he was chairman of the joint committee of the U.S. Sanitary Commission and the local commission, making arrangements for the care of the sick and wounded.

Sarah Hill Fletcher died in 1854. One year later, Fletcher married Mrs. Keziah Price Lister (nee Backus), a teacher from New Hampshire. Calvin Fletcher died on 26 May 1866.

Source: Original collection guide.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of the Fletcher family correspondence, the diaries of Calvin and Sarah Hill Fletcher, miscellaneous legal documents, broadsides and printed material, an account book, a book of recollections and speeches, and an autograph book. Also included in the collection are typed transcripts of Fletcher's diaries and a majority of his letters.

Calvin Fletcher's diaries begin in 1817, with intermittent entries until 1835, when they become regular, and conclude with his death in 1866. The diary of Sarah Hill Fletcher begins in 1821 and continues until 1838. It helps to augment the lapses in Calvin's diaries. When considered together, the Fletcher diaries provide a comprehensive view of life in Indianapolis from 1821 to 1866.

Fletcher recorded his thoughts concerning current events, his business activities, his political, social and family life, and his travels. He also recorded the weather conditions on a daily basis. The diaries provide a source of information concerning legislation and the activities of the Indiana Senate while Fletcher was in office, books available to Indiana residents during this period, the Indianapolis school system, banking and economic conditions, farm prices and practices, and various court cases.

Fletcher traveled extensively both in Indiana and in the East. He rode the Fifth Judicial Circuit as a prosecuting attorney and his land deals took him to various parts of the state. His involvement in the Indiana banks and frequent trips east to visit his family were responsible for many of his trips outside Indiana. In 1825, he recorded his first trip to Ludlow, Vermont. He continued to record his travel experiences throughout the diaries. Travel accounts also appear in the correspondence to Calvin Fletcher.

The correspondence consists mainly of letters to Calvin Fletcher from various family members. Earlier letters include a number written by Fletcher to his parents and to members of his wife's family in Ohio. There is also some business correspondence. While Fletcher was away, he would receive reports from his wife, and later his sons, concerning his business affairs.

The Fletcher family, Calvin's brothers and sisters, settled in various parts of the country. Their letters reveal various points of view concerning politics, economic conditions, slavery, and the war. The letters of Andrew Ingram, a lawyer of Lafayette, Indiana, describe living conditions and the problems of being a lawyer in that town. Included in the correspondence are letters from C.E. Beecher and William Slade concerning the importation of teachers from the East for the local schools and the Civil War letters of Stephen Keyes Fletcher, who served with the 33rd and 115th Indiana Regiments.

The correspondence is arranged chronologically. The letters had been placed in bound volumes. They were indexed and microfilmed in that arrangement and then removed from the volumes and placed in the present order.

The diaries have been published with very few omissions (as *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, 9 volumes). Materials not found in the published volumes include the account book (1843-1849); recollections of Sarah Hill Fletcher written by her children after her death; printed material in the form of broadsides, programs and newspaper clippings; genealogy material; biographical sketches of Calvin Fletcher written by Simon Yandes, D.D. Pratt, and one unsigned (probably by James Cooley Fletcher); and an autograph book of Sally Parker of Proctorsville, Vermont.

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0108).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

