

**A0429**

**Rufus Easton (1774-1834) Family Collection, 1796-1897**

1 Box (0.5 linear feet)

**REPOSITORY**

Missouri Historical Society Archives

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**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Rufus Easton was born in Washington, Litchfield County, Connecticut, in 1774. Easton married Alby Abial Smith in 1799. He studied law in Litchfield under Ephraim Kirby before establishing a practice in Rome, New York. In the winter of 1803-1804, Easton moved to St. Louis and set up a law practice. Thomas Jefferson appointed Easton judge of the Territory of Louisiana in 1805. He also served as the first postmaster for St. Louis in the same year. During the time of the Burr conspiracy, Easton corresponded with Aaron Burr regarding the actions of Governor James Wilkinson. However, when Burr was placed on trial for his actions, Easton denied any involvement in Burr's plans. In 1814, Judge Easton was elected a delegate to Congress from the Missouri Territory and in 1821, when the state was organized, he was appointed attorney general of Missouri. Easton owned the land on which Alton, Illinois, was established. The town was named for his son, Alton R. Easton. Rufus Easton died July 5, 1834, in St. Louis.

Alton R. Easton was born June 23, 1807, in St. Louis. Easton entered West Point in 1824 but resigned in 1827 to take up the study of medicine. Citing ill health, Easton abandoned his medical studies and joined the army. He was captain of the St. Louis Grays in 1833 and rose to the rank of colonel of the St. Louis Legion. During the Mexican War, Easton's company rode to the rescue of General Zachary Taylor's army in Mexico. Easton became acquainted with Elizabeth Ott, a teacher at Lindenwood College, and corresponded with Ott during his service. They were married in St. Charles upon his return. They had three children before Eliza Ott died in October 1859. In 1862, Easton married Emeline Noye with whom he had three sons. In 1853, Easton was appointed assistant treasurer of the United States by President Millard Fillmore. Between 1860 and 1865, Easton served under the County Court of St. Louis and also served as inspector general of the state during the Civil War. In 1869, President U.S. Grant appointed Easton as assessor of internal revenue. He was later appointed pension agent. Easton retired in 1877 and died in December 1893.

Mary Easton Sibley was born in Rome, New York, in 1800. She married Major George Sibley in 1815. George Sibley was the Indian factor at Fort Osage along the Missouri River near Independence, Missouri. Mary lived at the fort during his service. She subscribed to the belief that all children should be educated and established a school for frontier children. Later she founded a school for African-American children. In 1853, George and Mary established a boarding school for girls in St. Charles, Missouri. The school became Lindenwood College, the first female college west of the Mississippi River. Mary remained active at Lindenwood throughout the rest of her life. She died in 1878 and is buried on the Lindenwood campus.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The Rufus Easton Family Collection is arranged chronologically and consists of legal documents, correspondence, manuscripts, land grants, commissions and genealogical information relating to the lives of Rufus Easton, his son Alton Easton (1807-1893), and daughter Mary Easton Sibley (1800-1878). The collection contains correspondence of the Easton family with many prominent men of the nineteenth century, including Moses Austin, David Barton, Israel Dodge, Ulysses S. Grant, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Lucas, and William Tecumseh Sherman. Material in the collection consists of original documents, typescripts, and photostats.

Rufus Easton's relationship with Aaron Burr is documented in a letter of introduction dated March 11, 1804, written by Burr for use by Easton during a trip to New Orleans. An additional letter from Burr dated March 18, 1805, congratulates Easton on his appointment to territorial judge and mentions Burr's intention of visiting St. Louis in the near future. A subsequent letter written by Easton to the president of the United States in February 1806 denies any involvement in the Burr conspiracy. Also included in the collection is a letter of deposition written by Easton during Burr's trial for treason in 1807. The letter, dated July 18, 1807, and certified by Gideon Granger, states the facts of Easton's relationship with Burr and denies any involvement in the conspiracy. Granger acted as Easton's legal counsel on the Burr situation. The collection contains Granger and Easton's correspondence relating to the Burr conspiracy.

The collection contains a series of letters (Folder 6) written to Alton Easton, son of Rufus Easton, by Elizabeth Ott while Alton served in the St. Louis Battalion during the Mexican War. Easton and Ott later were married. Letters dated 1859, written between Elizabeth Ott Easton and her mother, Catherine Ott, speak of Elizabeth's deteriorating health and expected death. There are also letters from Alton's sister, Mary Easton Sibley, discussing family news.

The later material in the collection consists of commissions and correspondence between Alton Easton and General U.S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. The documents relate to Easton's wartime position as inspector general and postwar appointment as pension agent.

## INVENTORY

### **Box 1 1796-1897; no date**

folder 1	1796-1802
folder 2	1803-1804
folder 3	1805
folder 4	1806-1824
folder 5	1825
folder 6	1847-1849
folder 7	1850-1859
folder 8	1863-1869
folder 9	1873-1897; no date
folder 10	no date
folder 11	Genealogy