

A0549

Hamilton Rowan Gamble (1798-1864) Collection, 1787-1964

11 boxes; 2 oversize folders

Compiled by Barbara Kodner, September, 2004

REPOSITORY

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hamilton Rowan Gamble was born in Winchester, Virginia, on November 29, 1798. He was the son of Joseph Gamble and Anne Hamilton Gamble who came to Virginia in 1774; he was the youngest of seven children. He studied law, and at age 20 was licensed to practice law in Virginia, Tennessee and Missouri. In 1818, Hamilton Gamble came to St. Louis to join the law practice of his elder brother, Archibald Gamble, who was then clerk of the Circuit Court of St. Louis and who made Hamilton a deputy of the court. Shortly thereafter, Hamilton Gamble became prosecuting attorney of the Circuit Court of Howard County, Missouri.

In 1824, Governor Frederick Bates appointed Gamble secretary of state, and he moved to St. Charles, the capital of Missouri. In 1826, Governor Bates died and Gamble moved back to St. Louis where he worked chiefly on land cases and became famous for land litigation.

Hamilton Gamble married Caroline J. Coalter from Columbia, South Carolina, in 1827. She was sister to the wife of Edward Bates who was later President Lincoln's attorney general during the Civil War. They had three children: Hamilton Gamble (who married Sallie M. Minor); Dr. David Gamble (who married Flora Matthews); and Mary Coalter Gamble (who married Edgar Miller).

In 1846, Hamilton Gamble was elected to the Missouri Supreme Court (Whig Party) where he became chief justice almost immediately. A contemporary opinion describes Gamble: "His decisions and opinions handed down while he was sitting as a Supreme Court judge were among the most noteworthy in the history of the Western jurisprudence and attracted universal attention and commendation." He resigned his judgeship in 1855 due to failing health, and in 1858 moved to Pennsylvania.

When the political situation in Missouri became critical after Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson, a Southern sympathizer, fled in 1861, Gamble returned to St. Louis to become provisional governor of Missouri. Federal authorities considered Gamble "one of the safest and wisest counselors."

During the Civil War, Gamble led the state through perilous times, unsafe conditions bordering on anarchy between Unionists and Secessionists within Missouri and from neighboring states, attempts by Radicals within his own party to remove him as governor, and disagreements with generals in the Union army which required President Lincoln's intervention. The correspondence

between President Lincoln, Attorney General Edward Bates and Governor Gamble sheds light on conditions in Missouri during the Civil War. Gamble's letters show intense patriotism to the Union, but they also protest against unnecessary harshness and acts of repression on the part of federal authorities. Near the eve of the Union victory, on January 31, 1864, Gamble died due to complications from a broken arm and resulting infection after an earlier fall.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Hamilton R. Gamble Collection is arranged chronologically with the bulk of the documents dating from 1787 to 1876. It consists of deeds, early land grants, surveys, a St. Louis court docket book (1816-1833), bills of sale, legal papers regarding land ownership and business agreements, letters pertaining to causes of the Civil War, letters regarding the raising of a state militia, correspondence with political and military leaders, account books and receipts. The collection is indexed in the Archives Card Catalog.

Papers pertaining to land cases include deeds from French and Spanish ownership of this area, such as a deed between Pierre Chouteau and his wife who sold land for \$248 to Meriwether Lewis (box 1/folder 2); a land grant to Andrew Bowen from President James Monroe with the presidential seal (box 1/folder 5); notes on Doit Delany's land between Creve Coeur Lake and the Missouri River, part of a land grant to Antoine Reynal by the Spanish government (box 6/folder 1); a copy of the land paper from May 23, 1772, signed by Laclede Liguist, et al., designating land granted in the name of the king (box 5/folder 3).

Papers regarding slave cases in the courts of Missouri include an 1805 freedom suit by Celeste, an Indian woman, vs. Madame Chevalier (box 1/folder 2). An 1827 case of Margrite vs. Pierre Chouteau, Sr., explains that the plaintiff's grandmother, an Indian, was taken in war by the French and possibly sold as a slave in 1769 (box 2/folder 5). Subsequent papers in the collection show that the case was dismissed in 1838 for want of jurisdiction (box 6/folder 6).

Letters to and from Gamble from the years before and during the Civil War illuminate the issue of slavery and emancipation in a border state. A copy of a letter from Gamble in 1861 states his view of abolitionists (box 9/folder 13). A copy of an address at an 1862 meeting of loyal states in support of President Lincoln and emancipation bears a notation that Governor Gamble refused to sign it as governor of Missouri (box 10/folder 3). The original draft and copy of Gamble's 1863 message before a party convention concerns emancipation for the state of Missouri (box 10/folder 7).

Critical papers and letters between Gamble and President Abraham Lincoln cover such issues as: raising and paying for a state militia (box 9/folder 3); the situation in Missouri at the beginning of the Civil War (box 9/folder 8); and disagreements between Gamble and Union generals over who should be in control of the state militia (box 10). Collection includes several letters signed by President Lincoln (box 9/folder 12, box 10/folder 9).

The collection includes official papers with government seals from 1824 when Gamble was appointed secretary of state of Missouri (box 2/folder 2), and from 1849 on a certificate admitting Gamble as an attorney and counselor of the U.S. Supreme Court (box 8/folder 5).

Miscellaneous letters consist of one against gambling and playing roulette from “The Friends of Morality” (box 4/folder 6); plans for a 2nd Presbyterian Church on 5th Street, including drawings of the church interior (box 7/folder 1); and a letter soliciting donations to establish Linden Wood Female College (box 8/folder 9). Other letters and journal entries discuss treatments of diseases, e.g., cholera and neuralgia (box 8/folder 5). Receipts and account books show costs of clothing, household items, food, building materials and bills of sale for slaves to and from Gamble (box 2/folder 6; box 3/folder 7; box 5/folder 1&5; box 7/folder 5; box 8/folder 4&6&11; box 9/folder 2). Letters written near the end of the Civil War, shortly before Gamble’s death, discuss the status of the provisional government (box 10/folder 7).

FOLDER LIST**Box 1**

folder 1 1787-1797
folder 2 1798-1815
folder 3 1816-1836
folder 4 1817-1820
folder 5 1818-1827 (court docket)
folder 6 1820-1822
folder 7 Jan-June 1823

Box 2

folder 1 1823-1824
folder 2 1824-1826
folder 3 1826
folder 4 1826-1834
folder 5 Mar 1827
folder 6 Mar-Dec 1827

Box 3

folder 1 1828
folder 2 1828
folder 3 1828
folder 4 Jan-Apr 1828
folder 5 Apr-Oct 1828
folder 6 Nov 1828-Mar 1829
folder 7 Apr-Dec 1829

Box 4

folder 1 Jan-Feb 1830
folder 2 Mar-June 14, 1830
folder 3 June 16, 1830-1831
folder 4 Jan-July 1831
folder 5 Aug-Nov 1831
folder 6 Dec 1831-May 1832
folder 7 June-Sept 1832
folder 8 Oct-Dec 1832

Box 5

folder 1 Jan-Oct 1833
folder 2 1834
folder 3 Jan-May 1834
folder 4 June-Dec 1834
folder 5 Jan-May 1835
folder 6 June-Oct 1835
folder 7 Nov-Dec 1835

Box 6

folder 1 Jan 1836
 folder 2 Feb-June 1836
 folder 3 July-Dec 1836
 folder 4 Jan-June 1837
 folder 5 July-Dec 1837
 folder 6 Jan-July 1838
 folder 7 Aug-Dec 1838

Box 7

folder 1 Jan-June 1839
 folder 2 July-Dec 1839
 folder 3 Jan-June 1840
 folder 4 July-Dec 1840
 folder 5 Jan-June 1841
 folder 6 July-Dec 1841
 folder 7 Jan-June 16, 1842
 folder 8 June 18-Dec 20, 1842
 folder 9 Jan-June 1843

Box 8

folder 1 July 11-Nov 10, 1843
 folder 2 Nov 11, 1843-Mar 1, 1844
 folder 3 Mar 1844-Oct 28, 1845
 folder 4 Apr 1846-July 24, 1848
 folder 5 Jan-June 1849
 folder 6 July 11, 1849-Feb 12, 1850
 folder 7 Feb 14-Dec 21, 1850
 folder 8 Dec 24, 1850-Feb 7, 1853
 folder 9 Feb 19, 1853-Dec 1854
 folder 10 Jan-Dec 1855
 folder 11 Jan-Nov 27, 1856

Box 9

folder 1 Dec 15, 1856-Oct 1857
 folder 2 Jan-Oct 1859
 folder 3 Jan 1860-Mar 15, 1861
 folder 4 Mar-July 1861
 folder 5 Aug 1-5, 1861
 folder 6 Aug 6, 1861 (broadside to the people of Ralls County)
 folder 7 Aug 6-12, 1861
 folder 8 Aug 13-23, 1861
 folder 9 Aug 24-Sept 12, 1861
 folder 10 Sept 13-27, 1861
 folder 11 Sept 28-Oct 22, 1861

folder 12 Nov 4, 1861
folder 13 Nov 4, 1861-Jan 1862
folder 14 May 15, 1862 (receipt from R.H. Miller & Sons)
folder 15 Jan-Mar 1862

Box 10

folder 1 Apr-May 1862
folder 2 June 1-Sept 12, 1862
folder 3 Sept 12-30, 1862
folder 4 Oct-Dec 1862
folder 5 Jan-Feb 1863
folder 6 Mar-May 1863
folder 7 June 1-15, 1863
folder 8 June 18-July 21, 1863
folder 9 July 23, 1863
folder 10 July 25-29, 1863
folder 11 Aug 1863
folder 12 Sept 1863
folder 13 Oct 19, 1863
folder 14 Oct 20-Dec 24, 1863

Box 11

folder 1 Jan 1, 1864-Dec. 14, 1866
folder 2 1869-1876; 1907; 1961; 1964; no date
folder 3 no date
folder 4 no date
folder 5 no date
folder 6 no date
folder 7 no date