

## Albany Institute of History and Art

### A Guide to the Charles A. Clinton Papers

#### Collection Summary

**Collection Title:** Charles A. Clinton Papers

**Call Number:** MG 193

**Creator:** Clinton, Charles Alexander

**Inclusive Dates:** 1819-1855

**Bulk Dates:** 1819-1828

**Abstract:** The collection is composed of seven bound volumes compiled and written by Charles Alexander Clinton, the son of former New York Governor, DeWitt Clinton. Included in the collection is a copybook of letters drafted soon after his father's death, a commonplace book, a volume of notes from a law class and four volumes called Flim Flams that contain newspaper clippings mostly dealing with his father's political career.

**Quantity:** 3 Boxes, 1 linear foot.

#### Administrative Information

**Custodial History:** These volumes were donated by Albert B. Roberts in February 26, 2008.

**Preferred Citation:** Charles A. Clinton papers, MS 193, Albany Institute of History & Art Library, New York.

**Acquisition Information:**

Accession #: LIB 2009.024 – LIB 2009.030

Accession Date: 2/26/2008

**Processing Information:**

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#### Restrictions

**Restrictions on Access:** None

**Restrictions on Use:** Permission to publish material must be obtained in writing prior to publication from the Chief Librarian & Archivist, Albany Institute of History & Art, 125 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12208.

<b>Index Term</b>
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**Persons**

Ambrose, Spencer, 1765-1848  
Buren, Martin Van, 1782-1862  
Clinton, Charles Alexander, 1798-1861  
Clinton, DeWitt, 1769-1828  
Clinton, George, 1739-1812  
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845  
La Fayette, marquis de, 1757-1834  
Lamb, Anthony, 1771-1855  
Lansing, John, 1754-1829  
Morgan, Lewis, 1754-1844  
Pitcher, Nathaniel, 1777-1836  
Rensselaer, Solomon Van, 1774-1840  
Rensselaer, Stephen Van, 1764-1839  
Tompkins, Daniel D., 1774-1825  
Yates, Joseph Christopher, 1768-1837  
Young, Samuel, 1779-1850

**Organizations**

Albany Lyceum of Natural History  
Albany Regency  
Bucktails  
Council of Appointment of the State of New York  
Erie Canal Commission  
Society of the Cincinnati  
Tammany Hall  
Whig Party (N.Y.)  
Democratic Party (N.Y.)  
People's Party (N.Y.)

**Subjects**

Erie Canal (N.Y.) - History  
Florida - Description and travel.  
Fulton Bank  
Governors - New York (State)  
Legislators - United States

Lieutenant Governors - New York (State)  
Mayors - New York (State) - New York  
Missouri Compromise  
New York Historical Society  
New York (State) - Politics and government - 1775-1865.  
Southern States - Description and travel.  
United States - Congress. – Senate  
United States - Description and travel.  
United States - Politics and government - 1783-1865.  
War of 1812.

**Places:**

New York State Capitol (Albany, N.Y.)  
New York (N.Y.)  
New York (State)

**Document Types**

Bound Manuscript

**Titles**

None

<b>Biography of</b>
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Charles Alexander Clinton ( born 1798 - died November 21,1861). Charles, born in New York City, was the second son of Dewitt and Maria Franklin Clinton. DeWitt Clinton (March 2, 1769 Little Britain, New York – February 11, 1828 Albany, New York) was an early American politician who served as United States Senator, Mayor of New York City and Governor of New York. DeWitt is primarily remembered as an active promoter of the Erie Canal. In total, DeWitt and Maria had ten children.

Biographic information about Charles Clinton is limited. He grew up in New York City and graduated from Union College in 1820. In 1823 he served on a committee to further the interest of the Albany Lyceum of Natural History. In 1827, Charles married Catherine Hone. Ms. Hone was the daughter of Philip Hone, the Mayor of New York from 1826 to 1827. Charles was elected to serve as the Notary of the Fulton Bank in 1827. He also served as the Judge Advocate for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Cavalry until July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1828.

Charles served as his father's personal secretary until his father's death in February of 1828. Charles continued serving as the personal secretary for Nathaniel Pitcher, Governor Pro Tem until December of 1828. Afterwards, Charles moved to New York to practice law. In 1829, Charles was admitted into the Society of the Cincinnati, the oldest hereditary military society in the United States.

Charles wrote two books: *A Winter from Home* in 1852 and *Biographical Sketch of the Clinton Family* in 1859. A complete copy of *A Winter from Home* is included in the 7<sup>th</sup> manuscript and is an account of a journey through the Southern States and up the Mississippi River to St. Paul.

### Scope and Contents of the Records

Seven bound manuscripts are included in the collection.

The first volume is a copybook with drafts of correspondence prepared by Charles after the death of his father, DeWitt Clinton, in February of 1828. Most letters notify friends and family of his family's loss. Other letters deal with the settling of his father's estate. General Lafayette, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, Nathaniel Pitcher and Stephen Van Rensselaer III are just a few of Charles' correspondents. Several letters in the book mention an elaborate silver vase that New York City presented to DeWitt Clinton for his political support and promotion of the Erie Canal while governor of the state. The vase, one of a pair made by Philadelphia silversmiths Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, was presented to Clinton in Albany on March 19, 1825, and was part of the estate that Charles was settling. The draft letters date from October 1827 to June 1835.

The second volume is a notebook from a law class that Charles presumably attended in 1820. Both civil and criminal law is covered. The book provides some insight into the teaching of law in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The book has numbered pages and an index in the back of the book. The last entry is on page 281.

The third volume is a commonplace book. This book was presumably created in 1825. There is no discernable order or theme to the book. Topics include but are not limited to: ethics, zoology, biology, love of country, and discord. The book has numbered pages and an index in the back of the book. The last numbered page is 451. However, numerous numbered pages remain blank.

The last four manuscripts in the collection are titled Flim Flams. Among other printed material, the manuscripts are made up of newspaper clippings which are outrageous, deceptive, funny, unusual, scandalous, shady or otherwise strange material. Most of the clippings are editorials covering his father's political career. Some of the clippings were written by DeWitt Clinton. However, there are some outliers covering such topics as natural history, book reviews, poetry, and numerous articles from a series run in the Albany Daily Advertiser titled 'Rural Sports'. There is a limited marginalia presumably penned by Charles in most of the volumes which provides additional context.

Newspapers clippings are from a variety of newspapers including but not limited to: Albany Daily Advertiser, Farmer's Register, Schenectady Cabinet, Commercial Advertiser, Columbian, Albany Argus, Morning Chronicle, American Citizen and the Evening Post. The pages within

the four volumes are numbered consecutively from 1 to 956. Pages 613 to 749 are missing which indicates that one volume is missing.

The first volume of Flim Flams was created between early 1819 and December of 1822. The volume includes clippings from 1818 to 1822. This volume covers DeWitt's involvement in the Erie Canal and the strong opposition from Martin Van Buren and the Bucktails. Towards the end of this volume a controversy over the salaries of the State Printers is covered.

The second volume of Flim Flams was created in late 1822 through 1823. This volume continues with the controversy over the salary given to the State Printer, Isaac Q. Leake and Moses L. Cantine. Leake and Cantine were joint editors of the Albany Argus, a Republican newspaper. Most of the articles ran in papers that supported the Federalist at the time. This volume also includes a series of nine letters to the editors that ran in the Columbian from December of 1809 to 1810 penned by an individual that went by "Rattle in the Tail". A subsequent series of communication titled *The Diarrhodon* is included as well. This communication ran in the Columbian from December 1810 to March of 1811. The first twenty articles are included but the twenty-first article that ran in the March 15, 1811 edition is not included. The author of these two series is unknown.

The third volume of Flim Flams was created in 1823. It begins with clippings from 1807. The clippings are letters to the editors penned by John Lansing, DeWitt Clinton and then Vice-President of the United States and DeWitt's uncle, George Clinton. In question is the appearance of improprieties concerning DeWitt's possible appointment as the Chancellor of the State, the highest judicial officer in the state. Also included is a controversy over the appointment of the Sheriff of the County of Westchester in the same year and a series of letters to the editor of the Columbian titled the *Martling-man* that ran in 1812. Marginalia attributes it to 1810. (One letter in this series appears at the end of the previous volume.) Numerous articles on George and DeWitt Clinton follow dated from 1804 to 1823. The volume also includes numerous articles on Natural History.

The last volume of Flim Flams was created over two spans of time. The first section is from 1824 to 1827. It starts mid-way through a series of letters to the editor that ran in the summer of 1824 in the Schenectady Cabinet and a series titled *Political Correspondence* that ran in Albany Daily Advertiser. Covered in this material is the removal of DeWitt Clinton from the Erie Canal Commission, the Democratic Party nomination of Samuel Young for Governor, the 1824 and 1826 election for Governor. From page 862 on the articles are from 1843 to 1855. Also included is a copy of Mr. Clintons' 1852 book *A Winter from Home*.

## **Organization of the Records**

The Papers are organized in seven bound manuscripts.

## **Related Material**

Numerous collections at the AIHA contain information on Charles' father. AJ 144, The DeWitt Clinton Family Papers is a collection of correspondence between DeWitt and his wife Elsie DeWitt; and letters to Mrs. William L. Learned on the death of her mother, Elsie DeWitt, 1885. GR 78-10 contains broadsides and circulars concerning federal and state politics, 1789-1802; and New York State Senate and Assembly reports, 1811-13, originally collected by DeWitt Clinton. The library also holds two books on DeWitt Clinton, *DeWitt Clinton and the American political economy : sectionalism, politics, and Republican ideology, 1787-1828* by Steven Edwin Siry and *The birth of empire: DeWitt Clinton and the American experience, 1769-1828* by Evan Cornog. Additional material on the Clinton family can be found at the New York State Archive.

## **Detailed Description of the Collection**

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

<b>Box #</b>	<b>Folder #</b>	<b>Title / Description</b>
1	1	Correspondence Copybook, 1827-1835
	2	Law Notebook, 1820
	3	Commonplace Book, 1825
2	4	Flim Flams, 1819-1820
	5	Flim Flams, 1822-1823
3	6	Flim Flams, 1823
	7	Flim Flams, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1843, 1844, 1846, 1847, 1848, 1851, 1852, 1855