JAMES WHITCOMB
PAPERS, 1822–1851

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by

Paul Brockman
24 January 1996

revised by Dorothy A. Nicholson
July 2012

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org
COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:
Manuscripts: 2 document cases, 1 oversize folder
Visuals: 1 daguerreotype, 1 OVC graphic

COLLECTION DATES:
1822–1851

PROVENANCE:
Argosy Book Stores, New York, 1947;
Monica Jenkins, 1423 Oakcrest Dr., Hampton, VA, 1995;
Cowan’s Auctions, Inc. Cincinnati, 2012

RESTRICTIONS:
None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER:

NOTES:
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Whitcomb (1795–1852) was born in Vermont but moved to Kentucky where he graduated from Transylvania University. In 1822 he was admitted to the bar in Kentucky and practiced two years in Fayette County of that state before moving to Bloomington, Indiana in 1824. From 1830–1836 Whitcomb served as a Democratic Party member of the Indiana State Senate. In 1836, President Andrew Jackson appointed him commissioner of the General Land Office. Whitcomb was elected governor of Indiana in 1843. During his administration the Indiana Hospital for the Insane, the Indiana Asylum for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, and the Indiana Institute for the Education of the Blind were founded. Whitcomb resigned from office when he was elected to the United States Senate in 1848. He served in the upper house until his death in 1852.

Sources:

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains Whitcomb’s political and business papers, printed materials, a speech, a scrapbook, and two portraits.

Series 1: Includes documents relating to Whitcomb’s legal career, 1822–1826, handbills, newspapers, circulars, printed items, and a pamphlet regarding his political ventures and the operations of the Indiana and United States legislative bodies, 1836–1851. There are also letters to Whitcomb while serving in the United States Senate requesting his assistance in diplomatic and legal matters, 1849–1850. Topics include veteran’s pensions, land interests, and two letters from J. W. Davis, U. S. Commissioner to China, requesting Whitcomb’s and J. D. Bright’s assistance in obtaining a recall from his post, 23 September 1849 and 27 November 1849. There is correspondence to Whitcomb from the Madison and Indianapolis Rail Road Co. regarding his stock holdings in the operation. In addition there is a handwritten speech dated 1848 by Whitcomb to the Indiana Senate explaining his veto of a bill relating to the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal.

Series 2: Contains Whitcomb’s personal scrapbook from 1844–1846 with approximately 320 pages of newspaper clippings on the Indiana Governor and United States Senate races.

Series 3: Portraits include a lithograph print of Whitcomb ca. 1836 while he was Commissioner of the Land Office and a daguerreotype dated 1851.
### Series 1: Correspondence and Printed Materials, 1822–1851

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<td>Speech by Governor James Whitcomb to the Indiana Senate explaining his veto of a bill relating to the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal, Feb. 10, 1848, handwritten and signed, 6 pp.</td>
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### Series 2: Scrapbook, 1844–1846

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Loose items removed from scrapbook  
Box 2, Folder 9

**Series 3: Portraits, ca. 1836, ca. 1851**

**CONTENTS**

**Title:** J.W. Whitcomb Commissioner of the Land-Office. (signature)

**Illustrator/Printer:** From Life on Stone by Chs. Fenderich. Published in Washington City by Chas. Fenderich. P.S. Duval, Lith. Phila.

**Description:** Crayon lithograph portrait, ¾ view.

**Size:** 12 ⅛ x 10 ⅝ inches

**Date:** ca. 1836

Daguerreotype portrait:
1/6th plate housed in full case with inked note pasted to the pad reading: “Hon. James Whitcomb-Ex-Governor of Indiana. Presented to A.L. Ruter Defour by himself-May 1851.”
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, M0670).

5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.