JOHN LAW
LETTERS, 1835–1842

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Processed by

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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: 1 folder
COLLECTION DATES: 1835–1842
PROVENANCE: Larry LaFoe, Indianapolis, Indiana, June 2006
RESTRICTIONS: None
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Law (1796-1873) was born on October 28, 1796 in New London, Connecticut. He comes from a distinguished family background. Both his grandfather and father held seats in Congress, his grandfather Richard Law from 1776 till the end of the Revolutionary War and his father Lyman Law was elected to Congress in 1811 and served until 1817. They both also started their careers in the legal field as lawyers. John Law’s career path followed that of his family. He attended Yale University, where his father went, and graduated in 1814 at the age of 18. After college, John began studying law under the tutelage of his father. In 1817, with law degree in hand from Connecticut, Law moved west to Indiana. After passing the bar upon his arrival, Law settled in at Vincennes in December of 1817 at the young age of 21.

On November 28, 1822, John Law married Sara Ewing in Vincennes, IN. In 1824, Law was elected as a member of the House of Representatives. A year later, he was appointed prosecuting attorney for the first judicial circuit. Law was elected as judge of the seventh judicial circuit, which included Knox, Sullivan, Monroe, Owen, Vigo, Martin, Putnam, Clay, and Daviess counties in 1844. He held that position for seven years. In 1855, Law was appointed by President Pierce judge of the court of land claims in Vincennes. Law soon left that position to become a representative in Congress in 1860, and again in 1862. After his term finished in 1864, Law returned home to Indiana and focused his life on becoming a historian of Vincennes. John Law died on October 7, 1873 at the age of 76.

John’s younger brother William H. Law was born in 1805 in Connecticut and lived into the 1860s. Again there are no records of his death. Census records show no mention of him after 1860. Evidently he was an attorney as some of the letters refer to him as “attorney and counselor at law” in the address. He most likely followed in his family’s footsteps.

Sources:

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

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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, SC 2809).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.