



## Smithsonian Institution Archives

### Joseph Ashmead Clay and John Randolph Clay Papers, 1841, 1859-1866 and undated

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Historical Note.....	1
Descriptive Entry.....	2
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	3

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Joseph Ashmead Clay and John Randolph Clay Papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 7095
<b>Date:</b>	1841, 1859-1866 and undated
<b>Extent:</b>	0.25 cu. ft. (1 half document box)
<b>Creator::</b>	
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7095, Joseph Ashmead Clay and John Randolph Clay Papers

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## Historical Note

John Randolph Clay (1808-1885) was a career American diplomat who served in Europe and Latin America in the period from 1830 to 1860. He was born into the Philadelphia family of Clays; reared in Virginia, he entered the bar there in 1828. He never practiced law. Clay served in various diplomatic capacities in the following places: Russia (1830-1837), Austria (1838-1845), Russia (1845-1847), and Peru (1847-1860). In 1861 he moved to England where he remained until his death in 1885; in 1865 he returned to Philadelphia for a visit. Randolph was married twice, first to Frances Ann Gibbs, and second to Jane Crawford; he had two sons, Harry Gibbs Clay and Randolph Clay, and a daughter, Mary Frances Clay. Joseph Ashmead Clay (1806-1881) was Randolph's older brother; his wife was Cornelia Clay. Joseph entered the bar in Philadelphia in 1827. He managed Randolph's affairs in Philadelphia and influenced his diplomatic appointments in Washington.

Joseph and Randolph developed an interest in mineralogy in their youth and collected avidly throughout their lives. Randolph sent in many specimens during his travels abroad, and Joseph collected American specimens for their cabinet and for exchange. Apparently, both secured specimens exclusively by purchase or exchange. Joseph maintained the cabinet in Philadelphia, and after his death it was given to the University of Pennsylvania.

Biographical information may be found in George Irvin Oeste, *John Randolph Clay: America's First Career Diplomat*, University of Pennsylvania, 1966.

## Descriptive Entry

These papers were donated to the Smithsonian Institution Archives by Paul E. Desautels, Associate Curator, Department of Mineral Sciences, National Museum of Natural History. Desautels acquired the collection with a mineral collection which he acquired about 1946.

These papers concern the mineralogical collections of Joseph Ashmead and John Randolph Clay and incidentally relate to family affairs and politics. They include letters between Joseph and Randolph, and his son, Harry Gibbs Clay, concerning specimens sent or received; detailed specimen lists; and accounts of specimens bought, sold, and exchanged. Specimens were received from Robert Damon (England), Richard Talling (England), and William S. Vaux; special mention is made of the collection assembled at Amherst College by Charles Upham Shepard. Letters also include references to family affairs, especially statements by Randolph Clay in matters of political and social importance; among the important topics are the Civil War as viewed by Englishmen; evaluations of James Buchanan; and policies of Napoleon III.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Mineralogy  
Minerals

Types of Materials:

Manuscripts

Names:

Clay, Harry Gibbs  
Clay, John Randolph, 1808-1885  
Clay, Joseph Ashmead, 1806-1881

## Container Listing

### Box 1

- Box 1 of 1      Joseph A. Clay to J. Randolph Clay, 1841, 1863-1864. One letter, 1841, and 13 letters, 1863-1864, relating to mineral collections which Randolph sent from England (1863-1864) or which Joseph himself had purchased to place in the cabinet in Philadelphia; include comments on the mineralogical collection of Charles Upham Shepard of Amherst College and collecting assistance of Thomas Nuttall; sources of collections referred to include William S. Vaux and Richard Talling, and Robert Damon. Political topics include the election of President Tyler (1841) and extensive comments on the Civil War, and Joseph and Randolph Clay's political position as War Democrats. Some letters are fragments, and some are undated.
- Box 1 of 1      Joseph A. Clay to J. Randolph Clay, 1865. Four letters, mostly relating to family affairs and comments on mineralogical collections, without detailed lists of minerals.
- Box 1 of 1      J. Randolph Clay to Joseph A. Clay, 1859, 1863-1864. Nineteen letters, mostly relating to mineralogical collections sent by Randolph to Joseph from Peru (1859) and England (1863-1864); sources of collections include Robert Damon, Richard Talling, and William S. Vaux. Political topics include the Civil War, especially English attitudes; criticism of James Buchanan by Robert J. Walker; and Napoleon III. Randolph describes his childhood and its effect on his character.
- Box 1 of 1      J. Randolph Clay to Harry Gibbs Clay, 1864-1865. Four letters, regarding mineralogical specimens, which Harry sometimes received for his uncle Joseph, and family affairs. Letter of February 27, 1865 gives Randolph's racial views.
- Box 1 of 1      Specimen Lists, 1861-1865. Twenty-six items, including detailed lists of specimens and financial information about purchases and exchanges. Dealers include Robert Damon, William S. Vaux, and Richard Talling.
- Box 1 of 1      Undated Specimen Lists. Ten items, including some apparently relating to Peruvian specimens and objects.