

BURKE, JOSEPH FRANCIS, 1845-1927.

Joseph Francis Burke papers, 1832-1929

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Burke, Joseph Francis, 1845-1927.
Title: Joseph Francis Burke papers, 1832-1929
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 251
Extent: .25 linear feet (1 box)
Abstract: Collection consists of the papers of Atlanta businessman and militia commander Joseph Francis Burke, his wife Louise Cotting Burke, and Louise's father David G. Cotting.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Source

Purchase, 1976.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Joseph Francis Burke papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by DEW, November 24, 1978.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Joseph Francis Burke, Atlanta businessman and commander of the Gate City Guard, was born November 2, 1845. Burke's early years were spent in Charleston, South Carolina, where, in January 1861, he participated with his regiment, the Charleston Zouave Cadet Corps, in firing on the *Star of the West*, a merchant steamer carrying reinforcements for the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter. In 1870, he married Louise Cotting of Washington, Georgia. She was the daughter of David G. Cotting, Georgia Secretary of State (1868-1873) and the granddaughter of John Ruggles Cotting, State Geologist of Georgia (ca. 1840).

Burke probably moved to Atlanta in the late 1860's or early 1870's, where he was engaged in a number of business activities. He is listed in the Atlanta city directories-variously as bookkeeper (1872), broker (1892), and president of the Georgia Lighting and Heating Company (1899). A letterhead of 1881 shows Burke as chief partner in J. F. Burke & Co., "Proprietors of the Georgia Spice Mills," dealing in tea, spices, baking powders, and flavoring extracts. In 1882 Burke was appointed to the staff of Alexander Stephens, newly elected Governor of Georgia. When Stephens died in March of 1883, Burke was temporarily named state Adjutant General and placed in charge of funeral arrangements. Stephens' remains were kept in Burke's family vault for about a year, while a monument to Stephens' memory was erected in his hometown of Crawfordville, Georgia.

Burke is best known for his association with the Gate City Guard, a state militia unit formed in Atlanta shortly before the Civil War. Burke served as captain of the Guard from 1878 to 1882 and 1886-1887; in 1893, when the unit withdrew from the state troops and became known as the Old Guard Battalion of the Gate City Guard, he was elected president and battalion commander, a post he held until 1914, when he retired from active service and was made honorary colonel. Under Burke's leadership the Guard's prestige and popularity increased and the company became a prominent fixture at important city and state events. It was Burke who conceived and planned the noted "Peace Mission" of 1879, a friendship tour by the Gate City Guard of northern cities, where they were accorded much attention and acclaim. In 1895, Burke was made an honorary vice-president of the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta because of special services rendered to the Exposition by the Gate City Guard. Another of Burke's dreams for the Guard was realized in 1911, with the erection of a Peace Monument in Piedmont Park commemorating the Peace Mission of 1879. The unveiling ceremonies, at which Burke presented the monument to the city of Atlanta, were attended by numerous northern and southern dignitaries and from 50,000 to 75,000 Atlantans.

Burke was active in a number of civic organizations in Atlanta, including the Atlanta Association of Charities and the Atlanta Benevolent Society, which later became Grady Hospital. For more than twenty years he served as president of the Atlanta Humane Society and was a member of the first board of directors of the Young Men's Library Association forerunner of the Atlanta Public Library. Burke was a long-time member of Atlanta's Sacred Heart Church. He died in Atlanta on April 24, 1927 at the age of 81, and was buried in Oakland Cemetery. Biographical source: Information on Burke's association with the Gate City Guard was found in *Chronicles of the Old Guard of the Gate City Guard, Atlanta, Georgia, 1858-1915*, by H. C. Fairmann

(F293.3/F35) and *The Old Guard of the Gate City Guard of Atlanta* (UA158/G3BF7). Other biographical data is from obituaries in the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution*.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of miscellaneous business, legal, and personal papers of J. F. Burke, a few personal items of Mrs. J. F. Burke, and a small group of papers of Mrs. Burke's father, D. G. Cotting.

The majority of the J. F. Burke items are business and legal papers relating to real estate at 233 Peachtree Street, between Harris and Cain (now International Boulevard) Streets. Burke purchased this property in 1903 from the American Trust and Banking Company and sold it in 1909 to Dr. William S. Elkin, a prominent Atlanta druggist who owned the adjoining property. The American Trust and Banking Company had acquired the lot in 1902 through a mortgage foreclosure on Marie E. (Salisbury) Bullock, wife of former Georgia governor (1868-1871) Rufus Brown Bullock. Most of the papers relate to Mrs. Bullock's association with the property, primarily to her financial difficulties, and include abstracts of titles, deeds, receipts, insurance policies, promissory notes, protests of promissory notes, fi-fas, a suit in City Court of Atlanta, and a consent decree, containing a list of personal effects, furniture, household goods, etc. to be sold by the bank at public auction following the foreclosure of the mortgage. Also included are three letters of Rufus B. Bullock; two concern routine business re the property taxes and insurance, the third to Capt. James Warren English (1837-1925), president of the American Trust and Banking Company (December 2, 1902) requests that the Company grant Bullock a loan and an extension on making payment so he can attempt to "have this matter closed up." Attached to this letter is a description of the Peachtree house and property in Bullock's hand.

Other papers of Burke are miscellaneous in nature. Most deal with various real estate and business transactions in Atlanta, 1867-1896. Several deeds are included involving properties on Marietta Avenue and Calhoun, Collins, Marietta, and South Streets, as well as a fi-fa regarding a lot on Edgewood Avenue in Inman Park. Two letters written by Burke concern an offer made by Mrs. D. G. Cotting to finance a new drill room for the Gate City Guard. Another letter is to Burke from Jefferson Davis (February 4, 1889). It is a brief letter, obviously a reply to a question from Burke, and encloses a small card bearing Davis' autograph.

Materials of Mrs. J. F. Burke include two letters from Marie E. (Salisbury) Bullock (June, 1903), which contain personal and family news; a fragment of the will of Susan (Rawson) Collier, wife of Atlanta mayor Charles Augustus Collier and mother of Julia Collier Harris, which bequeaths several items to Mrs. Burke; a letter, presumably to Mrs. Burke, from her mother Frances H. Cotting concerning some restrictions in her will; and two photographs of Mrs. Burke. Included are two business letters addressed to Mrs. Burke shortly after J. F. Burke's death in 1927. One, from an Atlanta attorney, gives the worth of Burke's estate as \$100,565; the other, from an official of the Gate City Guard, asks for the return of certain mementoes of the Guard and for a portrait of Burke to be hung in the Guard's meeting room.

The papers of David G. Cotting include seven letters to Cotting from Alexander Hamilton Stephens (November 24, 1860-March 16, 1867). Two of the letters are pre-secession and deal primarily with the secessionist impulse, the destructiveness of the fire-eaters, and Stephens' hope that the union can be preserved. However, in his final pre-war letter to Cotting (February 6, 1861) written from the Montgomery convention that named him provisional vice president

of the newly formed Confederate States, Stephens admits that war is inevitable. Prophetically, he assesses that the fate of the new government "will depend not so much on the strength of the craft as upon the crew and particularly those in command. There lies the trouble." The two wartime letters relate in part to Cotting's association with the Augusta, *Georgia Chronicle and Sentinel*. One letter is Stephens' response to a Cotting article supporting government compensation for cotton and other private property destroyed by military authority. Stephens argues that property destroyed to prevent its falling into enemy hands "is destroyed not as private property but as enemy supplies," and therefore should not be compensated for by the government. The two post-war letters, written by a bed-ridden Stephens, are darkly pessimistic in tone, forecasting "ruin," "doom," and military rule for the South.

The collection includes two journals kept by D. G. Cotting in Washington, Augusta, and other places in Georgia, 1832-1863. One, a small diary, contains brief entries reporting weather conditions, visitors, and hunting ventures. An entry of March 19, [1843] mentions "a comet with a tail of over [50 degrees] in length visible in the southwest." The larger journal contains primarily Cotting's poetry, but includes several essays. The writings show him to be classically educated and articulate with a gift for lyrics. Miscellaneous Cotting material includes an 1845 letter from Cotting to Mrs. Frances L. Hemphill proposing marriage; a 1871 letter written by Cotting concerning the estate of his ancestor John Ruggles, which contains some genealogical information; and Cotting's will (1874), witnessed by Robert Battey and Willis F. Westmoreland. Two small printed items are also included: "Report of the State Geologist" made to Georgia Governor Charles J. MacDonald by John Ruggles Cotting, father of D. G. Cotting, ca. 1840, and "Letter of Hon. Joshua Hill, of Georgia, on the Election of U.S. Senators," February 10, 1866, with a marginal note indicating that Cotting is the "talented Georgian" referred to in Hill's text. A photocopy of the latter is filed with the collection; the original has been cataloged for the Rose Library.

Arrangement Note

Collection arranged by record type.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Legal Papers regarding Property at 233 Peachtree Street, 1890-1901
1	2	Legal Papers regarding Property at 233 Peachtree Street, 1902-1910
1	3	Miscellaneous legal papers, 1867-1896
1	4	Miscellaneous papers, 1874-1927
1	5	Papers of Mrs. J. F. Burke, 1897-1929
1	6	Papers of D. G. Cotting, 1845-1874
1	7	Journals of D. G. Cotting, 1832-1863
