

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO
WARD M. CANADAY CENTER

Collection No. 018

JOHN RENICK OSBORN

Papers, 1831-1876

11 items

Processed by
Paul Gifford
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Introduction

The papers of John Renick Osborn, a lawyer of Toledo, Norwalk, and Circleville, Ohio, consist of memoirs written in 1876 giving an account of his life to 1837, nine incoming letters dating from 1831 to 1836, and a militia officer's commission of 1834. During the period to which his papers relate Osborn lived mostly in Columbus and Circleville.

There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

Biographical Sketch

1813, Apr. 1 - born Circleville, Ohio, son of Ralph and Catherine (Renick) Osborn, the father a lawyer

1817 - the family moved from Chillicothe to Columbus

1827 - entered Ohio University

1831 - graduated from Ohio University; went to Circleville to study law

1832 - began law studies at Transylvania University

1833 - attended law school in Cincinnati

1834 - admitted to bar; located in Circleville; commissioned major in 1st Rifle Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 16th Division in Ohio militia

1835 - located law practice in Norwalk

1837 - moved to Toledo

1839 - returned to Norwalk

1844 - state senator from Norwalk, a Whig

Biographical Sketch (cont.)

- 1845, 1847 - prosecuting attorney, Huron and Erie counties
- 1853 - promoter of, and officer in, Toledo and Illinois Railroad Company
- 1858 - moved to Toledo; attorney for Wabash Railroad
- 1865-1879 - partner, Osborn and Swayne
- 1883-1891 - partner, Osborn and Smith
- 1897, July 5 - died in Toledo

Scope and Content

In 1876, 63-year-old John Renick Osborn wrote his memoirs. The surviving copy in his papers ends abruptly with his first arrival in Toledo in 1837. The last page in the manuscript ends in the middle of a sentence, so the narrative originally did continue past that point, but it is now impossible for us to determine how far his memoirs actually progressed. To his manuscript, Osborn appended nine letters. Although they were placed chronologically within the memoirs, they did not form an integral part of the narrative. In order to preserve them and prevent further deterioration due to acid migration, the letters have been separated from the memoirs, encapsulated in mylar, and placed in a separate folder. Finally, Osborn's papers include his commission as a major in a militia unit from 1834.

Osborn was born to the political and legal elite of pioneer Ohio. His father Ralph, a lawyer, was State Auditor for many years and was an important force in the state Whig Party. Uncles on his mother's side were judges and legislators from Pickaway County. John R. Osborn discusses his father's activities and the genealogy and lives of his mother's family. He devotes a considerable part of the memoirs on his education, from the various schools and academies he attended in Columbus and elsewhere, to his college life at Ohio University and at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. He notes the strengths and deficiencies of his educational experiences. He describes Columbus as an intimate, and to be sure, undeveloped, community. Osborn mentions how he met his future wife and describes the difficulties of starting a law practice. The memoirs give a good account of the education and early professional life of an early-19th-century upper-class Buckeye.

The letters to John R. Osborn are, with one exception, from family members. His father wrote five of them, in which he admonished his son against straying from the path of righteousness. Others show concern about his health. Finally, a friend writes about some of the ladies he has met at a resort.

Folder List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1	1	Incoming letters, 1831-1836
	2	Memoirs
	3	Militia commission, 1834
	4	Typescript version of memoirs

(This box is located in R-4)

Statement of Provenance

The items in this collection passed from Osborn to his nephew and law partner Alexander L. Smith after the former's death in 1897. Gustavus Ohlinger, later Smith's partner, assumed ownership after Smith died in the 1920s. Ohlinger's daughter Alice Weaver donated them to the Libraries of the University of Toledo about 1975.

The literary rights to this collection are assumed to rest with the heirs or assigns of the persons responsible for the production of the particular items within the collection. Researchers bear full legal responsibility to acquire necessary permission to publish, though the Canaday Center may intervene in this process at its own discretion.

*=oversize cabinet
^=oversize area
**=locked cabinet
R-4=range four