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PAMPHLET DESCRIBING M7

**Confidential and Unofficial
Letters Sent by
the Secretary of War
1814-1847**



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Records of the Office of the Secretary of War

Record Group 107

CONFIDENTIAL AND UNOFFICIAL LETTERS
SENT BY THE SECRETARY OF WAR
1814-1847

On the two rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced two volumes of confidential and unofficial letters sent by the Secretary of War; or by his chief clerk, during the period November 26, 1814-April 7, 1847. The volumes consist of fair copies of communications considered distinct from the normal correspondence of the office. The letters, on a variety of subjects relating to the business of the Department of War, were sent to Members of Congress, military officers, and private citizens.

The volumes are part of Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, Record Group 107.

The Department of War was created by an act of Congress of August 7, 1789, and the Secretary of War was charged with the responsibility of administering and operating the Armed Forces of the United States, and Indian affairs. His responsibilities were later extended to matters relating to pensions and bounty lands for military service. Naval affairs were removed from the jurisdiction of the Secretary of War when the Department of the Navy was created on April 30, 1798. His responsibilities for Indian affairs and for pensions and bounty lands were transferred to the Department of the Interior when that Department was created in 1849.

During the first half of the 19th century the responsibilities of the War Department became so great that subordinate offices were established to handle specific functions. Among those offices established before the Mexican War were the Office of the Quartermaster General, the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, the Adjutant General's Office, the Office of the Surgeon General, the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of the Chief of Engineers, and the Topographical Bureau.

In the process of conducting its business the Office of the Secretary of War created a number of large series of official correspondence. In addition, a much smaller number of letters marked "unofficial," "private," and "confidential" was sent. These letters were copied into two special volumes that were maintained as a separate series. These are the volumes reproduced in this microfilm publication.

The two volumes contain approximately 350 letters sent over a 33-year period, beginning in late 1814. The letters were written by Secretaries of War James Monroe, Alexander Dallas, John C. Calhoun, Lewis Cass, Joel Poinsett, John Bell, and William Marcy. Apparently the other Secretaries of War between 1814 and 1847 either wrote no letters of this nature, did not record them, or recorded them elsewhere, perhaps in volumes that they retained upon leaving office.

Many of the letters reproduced in this microfilm publication were written during the War of 1812; the Mexican War, the periods of difficulties with Spain in the Floridas and with Great Britain along the northern frontier, and at other times of national crisis. Some of these letters deal with matters of national and international importance. Included, for example, are letters to Gens. Jacob Brown and George Izard concerning the threat of a British invasion across the Niagara Frontier during the last months of the War of 1812, correspondence with Gen. Winfield Scott relating to his activities in South Carolina during the Nullification Crisis of 1832, and secret instructions sent to Gen. Zachary Taylor in July 1846, directing him to open unofficial peace negotiations with Mexican authorities to end the Mexican War.

There are also letters dealing with more personal matters, such as the appointment or reinstatement of commissioned officers in the Regular Army and in the State militias, of cadets to the United States Military Academy, and of posts sutlers, Indian agents, and military storekeepers; the promotion and fitness of general officers; the reversal of decisions of military courts; the awarding or revocation of military contracts; and the mediation of disputes among officers or State officials.

The intended arrangement of the letters in these volumes was chronological, but for various administrative reasons the clerks were not always able to enter the letters precisely in that order. As a result, several pages of both volumes contain letters that should have been entered earlier.

There is a name and subject index for each volume. The index for volume 1 is incomplete: none of the letters copied in the volume between pages 131-160 were included in it. The index for volume 2 includes entries for letters entered on pages 145-167, but these pages were removed from the volume at some time before it was accessioned by the National Archives. They have not been located.

Many series of closely related records in Record Group 107 have been reproduced in other microfilm publications and include the Registers of Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Main Series, 1800-1870 (M22); Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Main Series, 1801-1870 (M221); Letters Sent to the President by the Secretary of War, 1800-1863 (M127); Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800-1889 (M6); Reports to Congress From the Secretary of War, 1803-1870 (M220); and Orders and Endorsements Sent by the Secretary of War, 1846-1870 (M444).

The editorial material for this introduction was prepared by David A. Gibson.

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