



## **John Dougherty Letter Book (C2292)**

**Collection Number:** C2292

**Collection Title:** John Dougherty Letter Book

**Dates:** 1826-1829

**Creator:** Dougherty, John, 1791-1860

**Abstract:** The Dougherty letter book contains letters from Dougherty, fur trader, interpreter, and Upper Missouri Indian agent, to William Clark, superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis, various U.S. Army officers, Indian agents, interpreters and fur traders, U.S. War and Treasury Department officials, Missouri politicians, and private citizens.

**Collection Size:** 0.1 cubic feet  
(1 volume; also available on 1 roll of microfilm)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia](https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/frontier/id/3044/rec/4). If you would like more information, please contact us at [columbia@shsmo.org](mailto:columbia@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *John Dougherty Letter Book* (C2292); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

**Donor Information:** The letter book was donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Dora K. Ruff on September 27, 1965 (Accession No. CA0027).

**Alternate Forms Available:** The letter book is also available on microfilm.

A digital copy of the letter book is available online at:  
<https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/frontier/id/3044/rec/4>.

**Processed by:** Processed by SHSMO staff, date unknown. Finding aid revised by Heather Richmond, September 2021.

**Historical Note:**

John Dougherty, a native of Kentucky, was born on April 12, 1791. He immigrated to St. Louis, Missouri, as a young man. Later, as an employee of the American Fur Company, Dougherty spent the six winters from 1809 to 1815 trapping on the Columbia River. Dougherty learned to speak French and numerous indigenous dialects fluently and in 1819 and 1820 served as an interpreter for Major Stephen H. Long's expedition.

Dougherty served as an Indian agent from 1820 until 1837 when he was dismissed by Martin Van Buren's administration for political differences. During Dougherty's service as an Indian agent he was headquartered at Fort Leavenworth, Council Bluffs, and St. Louis. He assisted in making various treaties with indigenous tribes, principally with the Pawnee, Otoe, Missouri, Iowa, Sauk, and Fox tribes, and his most conspicuous public service was in connection with the cession of the Platte Purchase territory in Northwest Missouri in 1836.

In 1837 Dougherty purchased a large estate near Liberty, in Clay County, Missouri. He continued his connections with Native lands; however, as a U.S. sutler and freighter. In 1840 Dougherty was elected to the Missouri state legislature from Clay County on the Whig ticket. In 1856 he completed a palatial residence on his Clay County estate, which he called Multnomah. He died at Multnomah on December 28, 1860.

**Arrangement:**

The letter book includes 153 letters, all from Dougherty, dating from August 23, 1826, to September 29, 1829. The letters are numbered successively, but they are not in chronological order. A chronological list of the letters follows this inventory.

**Scope and Content Note:**

Dougherty's principal correspondent was William Clark, superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis, and the majority of the letters were written from Dougherty's headquarters at Fort Leavenworth. Other important correspondents include U.S. Secretaries of War James B. Barbour, Peter B. Porter, John H. Eaton, Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, and Congressman Spencer D. Pettis. The remaining letters are addressed to various U.S. Army officers and Indian agents and traders located in Missouri and in Native American territories.

The most extensive material relating to indigenous tribes concerns the Pawnee Nations and the Kansa. Other tribes under Dougherty's jurisdiction or mentioned in his correspondence include the Fox, Missouri, Sauk, Omaha, Shawnee, Comanche, Ponca, Iowa, Osage, Otoe, Sioux, Cheyenne, Yankton, Arapaho, Mandan, Arikara, and Delaware.

Topics include Dougherty's commission as Indian agent, his duties and wages, the quarters at Fort Leavenworth, attempts to mediate peace treaties, annuities and gifts given, food and medical shortages, the effects of starvation and disease, particularly among the Kansa, liquor control, attempts to teach Euro-American agricultural and mechanical skills to indigenous peoples, intertribal marriages, intermarriage of indigenous peoples and fur traders, intertribal conflicts, human sacrifice, indigenous-white conflicts and encroachment upon Native lands, the activities of various agents and interpreters, the fur trade, the American Fur Company, the Santa Fe Trail, indigenous thievery and attempts to recover stolen property, 1824 and 1827 legislation regulating trade with indigenous peoples, and recommended changes in policies toward indigenous peoples.

**Container list:**

v. 1                      Letter book, 1826-1829

**Chronological Order of Letters**

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