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## Documents Online

**Title:** Letters from James Buchanan to Unknown Recipients

**Date:** 1840-1855

**Location:** MC 1998.10

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Sir,

Washington 17<sup>th</sup> April 1840

I have had the honor of receiving your favor of yesterday. The Bankrupt Bill has not yet been reported by the Committee on the Judiciary; and I understand a difference of opinion exists among its members as to the objects which it ought to embrace. I can say for myself that whatever may be my final vote upon the question, and this will much depend upon the character of the measure presented, ~~that~~ I shall most cheerfully exert any little influence which I may possess to have the subject fairly considered & decided <sup>upon</sup> at the present session of Congress. The great difficulty has always been rather in the details than on the principle of a Bankrupt Law.

Yours very respectfully,

James Buchanan

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Yours very respectfully  
James Buchanan

Private

Lancaster 18 September 1844

My dear Sir,

On my return home yesterday entirely fagged out, I found yours of the 10<sup>th</sup> Instant. I have not read Mr. Clayton's speech; and should be glad you would procure & send me a copy of it. I presume it is on the subject of the Tariff; and the great error committed by our party is that we have been drawn off from the Bank & other questions & have confined ourselves too much to the favorite issue of the Whigs. Although you denounced my visit to Northern Pennsylvania ~~as useless~~; in your speech at Harrisburg as useless; yet I have raised an excitement every where I have gone on the Bank question. Our friends in that portion of the State will denounce the Bank as loudly as the Whigs do free trade. One excitement will countervail the other. The public mind ought every where to dwell upon the Bank & its corruptions. It is the true chord to touch & every where it vibrates to the popular heart.

Pennsylvania is full of Whig pamphlets. The pamphlet offering \$1000 reward for the detection of any inaccuracies in certain quotations from Col: Polk's speeches on the subject of the



Tariff has reached almost every man in the Country whom  
I have been. There will be one published <sup>at Harrisburg</sup> of a counterbalancing  
character containing quotations from Clay's speeches & letters.  
All this, I think, has produced not any very serious effect;  
though we shall have to exert ourselves until the last moment.  
The Whigs are fighting with the energy of despair. Clayton's  
must be a very extraordinary speech if I shall answer it. I  
had fairly withdrawn & counselled my friends not to bring my  
name forward in the Baltimore Convention against Mr. Van Buren. It  
is very certain that no Northern man who had voted for the  
Tariff of '42 could have got the vote of the Democratic Southern  
States; but this is neither here nor there & was a <sup>La good</sup> strong reason  
for preferring Col: Polk to any man who had supported that  
measure, the Tariff will be just as safe in his hands as in those of Mr. Clay.

At our Iowauda Mass Meetings we had thousands from  
New York. Colonel Hathaway of Elmira was there. He had  
been a member of the Syracuse Convention & is a man of  
talents, eloquence, wit & discretion. He entertains ~~not~~ a doubt  
but ~~that~~ we shall carry Polk, Dallas & Wright in that  
State. In great haste, I remain sincerely & respectfully  
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Your friend  
James Buchanan



Wheatland, near Lancaster 28 August 1851.

My dear Sir /

I have this moment received your very kind & interesting letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> Instant & hasten to return you my grateful thanks for <sup>your</sup> efficient agency in making a convict of John C O'Skell. I am under so many obligations to you that I know not how I shall ever be able to repay them.

I met O'Skell at the Bedford Springs & was much pleased with his frank manly & free spoken manner. I liked the man & had much bagatelle conversation with him. He did not profess to be my political friend; but yet I thought he was far from being my foe personally.

I have been up in Union & Northumberland Counties; & I think they have both released themselves from the domination of Cameron. Nothing sustains him there but the influence of the public works which are altogether under his control & that of his brother Willard. The same is true in regard to <sup>Simon M</sup> Muffler, Huntington & Blair.

Brodhead has been abusing his franking privilege by circulating the vilest articles of the Keystone against me throughout the South. He is a thorough tool of Cameron & as such ought to be known. — I think the popularity of Judge Campbell is daily increasing & I hope it may grow to be mountain high.

From your friends  
yours respectfully  
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2680  
150 W  
MS  
57

Legation of the United States

Legation of the United States,  
London 7 Sep: 1855.

My dear Sir,

Your three letters of July 13, July 23<sup>d</sup>  
& August 12 came here together in the Despatch  
Bag by the Baltic & reached the Legation on Monday  
Morning last the 3<sup>d</sup> Instant!! Your last ought to  
have reached me by the Steamer which left Boston  
on the 15<sup>th</sup> ultimo.

I am very much indebted to you for  
them. Their spirit is excellent & reminds me of the  
olden time. Your account of the different Presidential  
& vice Presidential <sup>candidates</sup> is just such as I might have  
expected, & <sup>would</sup> confirm <sup>me</sup> in the wisdom of my determination  
not to be a candidate, even if any such confirmation  
were necessary. The truth, however, is that I have

lost all desire to reach this high office & I do not  
make the slightest sacrifice of feeling in renouncing it.  
Very far, indeed, from this. Some friends have put the  
question to me, - what if you should be nominated by  
the voluntary action of the Cincinnati Convention? To  
this question I have declined to respond; because any  
response to it would indicate <sup>on my part</sup> that such an event might  
be possible, - arguing a degree of vanity which I do not  
indulge. There is not the least danger that I shall  
ever be put to the test. No man will ever be made  
President against his own consent. "Sufficient, then,  
unto the day is the evil thereof."

I am at present in a painful state of uncertainty  
as to the time of my departure from this country, which  
I hope may be relieved by the arrival of the next steamer.  
I had taken passage from Liverpool for the 6<sup>th</sup> October  
& agreed to give up my house, - when I received an

instruction from Washington which cannot, on all human  
probability, be executed until November, even if there. Both  
duty & honor require that I should not leave until I  
shall have complied with the wishes of the President; & being  
pretty much of an optimist, I suppose it is all for the best.  
Seaton is now here & informs me that the President  
has requested him to write to Schroeder that he would not  
be required to return home until the next Spring, - so that  
Appleton's appointment will be postponed until that period.

~~If I were the best friend of G.~~  
By the bye, - the business of the Legation is now  
conducted with entire satisfaction to myself. The wheels  
move without greasing. If I had my wish I could  
not desire a better Secretary or a better Clerk.

The war seems to be progressing but slowly: &  
the English are preparing for another winter Campaign in  
the Crimea. Meanwhile, such is the inveterate custom <sup>here</sup> of  
~~the Country~~ & such the love of the governing classes  
for the Country & Country sports, that no public business



will be transacted which can probably be postponed, until  
the end of November. <sup>The west end of</sup> London is at present a great  
deserted village, without the least appearance of gaiety or  
fashion. According to the common phrase, there is nobody  
in Town. John Bull, - I mean the people, seems to be as  
intent as ever on the prosecution of the war. Some of the  
most distinguished Parliamentarians & political leaders in  
England are in favor of peace; but comparatively they have  
no followers. The people insist that Sebastopol must first  
be taken; - *Delenda est Carthago.*

What a triumph for France & Louis Napoleon was  
the spectacle of the Queen & grand-daughter of George 3<sup>d</sup>,  
doing homage to the memory of Napoleon the first at his  
tomb! From all I can learn the fêtes, spectacles &  
entertainments <sup>in France</sup> in honor of her Majesty <sup>in splendor & magnificence</sup> exceeded any which  
have ever been given in ancient or modern times.

I think the President's conduct towards yourself, in regard  
to our grand business, is worthy of all commendation. I have not  
time to write another sheet. - Miss Lane desires to be very kindly  
remembered to all<sup>rs</sup> & yourself. - I mean to give my affectionate  
regards to all<sup>rs</sup> & a kiss to little May.  
Ever your friend  
& obliged to give my

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I think the Presidents conduct towards yourself, in regard to our friend [*name deleted*] is worthy of all commendation. I have not time to write another sheet. Miss Lane [*name partially deleted, but legible*] desires to be very kindly remembered to Mrs. [*name deleted*] & yourself. Please to give my affectionate regards to Mrs. [*name deleted*] & a kiss to little Mary.

Ever your friend  
James Buchanan