

C Dougherty, John (1791-1860), Letter Book, 1826-1829  
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## INTRODUCTION

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.

## DONOR INFORMATION

The Dougherty letter book was donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Dora K. Ruff on 27 September 1965 (SHS Accession No. 27).

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Dougherty, a native of Kentucky, was born on 12 April 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 Indian 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 variously at Fort Leavenworth, Council Bluffs, and St. Louis. He assisted in making various treaties with the Indians, 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 the Indian territories, 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 28 December 1860.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This letter book contains copies of John Dougherty's correspondence relating to his official duties as subagent and later agent for various Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri territory. Included are 153 letters, all from Dougherty, dating from 23 August 1826 to 29 September 1829. The letters are numbered successively, but they are not in chronological order. A chronological list of the letters follows this inventory.

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, and 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 the Indian territories.

The most extensive material relating to Indian tribes concerns the Pawnee Nations and the Kansa Indians. 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, Indian annuities and gifts, food and medical shortages, the effects of starvation and disease, particularly among the Kansa Indians, liquor control, attempts to teach agricultural and mechanical skills to Indians, intertribal marriages, intermarriage of Indians and fur traders, intertribal conflicts, human sacrifice, Indian-white conflicts and encroachment upon Indian lands, the activities of various agents and interpreters, the fur trade, the American Fur Company, the Santa Fe Trail, Indian thievery and attempts to recover stolen property, 1824 and 1827 legislation regulating Indian trade, and recommended changes in Indian policy.

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