

**Benjamin Edwards Papers**  
**1819-1827**  
**Mss.B.Ed9**

American Philosophical Society  
6/2003  
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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	American Philosophical Society
<b>Creator</b>	Edwards, Benjamin
<b>Title</b>	Benjamin Edwards Papers
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1819-1827
<b>Call number</b>	Mss.B.Ed9
<b>Extent</b>	0.25 Linear feet
<b>Extent</b>	0.25 linear feet
<b>Location</b>	LH-MV-C-4
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	Benjamin Edwards was a minor figure on the Stephen H. Long Expedition to the Rocky Mountains. His six letters addressed to his father Oliver Edwards briefly mention the expedition, including his attempts to collect pay for his part in the expedition. His letters also discuss his life in Louisiana after the expedition working on the Steamboat Hope and later as overseer of slaves in a sawmill.
<b>Preferred Citation</b>	Cite as: Benjamin Edwards Papers, American Philosophical Society.

## Background note

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Little is known about Benjamin Edwards. He was a member of the Stephen Harriman Long Expedition in charge of scientific explorations between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Long designed and supervised the construction of a steamboat, the *Western Engineer*, that was to carry the scientific team, that included William Baldwin, Titian R. Peale, Thomas Say, and Samuel Seymour, up the Mississippi River. Shortly after commencing the journey on 5 May 1819, the expedition encountered problems with the steamboats design and machinery, a lack of efficient fuel, and the muddy waters of the Missouri River, all of which slowed progress.

On 17 September the steamboat arrived at Fort Lisa, a trading fort of the Missouri Fur Company about five miles below Council Bluffs. The Long expedition selected a spot between Fort Lisa and Council Bluff to establish "Engineer Cantonment", their winter quarters. After a few months the Cantonment was completed and Major Long returned to the east coast. He returned the following May with orders from the War Department to cease work along the Missouri and turn instead to exploring the Platte River and its sources. The expedition left their winter quarters on 6 June 1820.

Whether Edwards joined this expedition or not is unknown. By August 1822 he had left government service and found employment on the steamboat *Hope* in New Orleans. Always hoping to go home to his family in Wear, New Hampshire, Edwards continued to anticipate that he would receive the \$850 dollars owed to him by the U.S. Government for his services on the Long expedition that would enable him to return to New Hampshire. While waiting, Edwards was employed at a sawmill in Alexandria, Louisiana, where he oversaw slaves. By 1827 the money had still not arrived and feeling that it never would, Edwards settled in New Orleans.

## Scope & content

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The Benjamin Edwards Papers contains six letters written from Benjamin Edwards to his father, Oliver Edwards, from 1819 to 1827. As a member of the Stephen H. Long expedition to the Rocky Mountains, Edwards briefly describes his experiences of wintering at Council Bluff, problems with the steamboat, and the hard task of getting paid by the government for his services on the expedition. By August 1822, Edwards had left the employment of the government and found work on the steamboat Hope in New Orleans and later at a sawmill on the Mississippi River.

## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 6/2003

## Provenance

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### Acquisition Information

Acquired, 1957.

### Processing Information

Recatalogued by Leigh McCuen, June 2003.

## Indexing Terms

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### Genre(s)

- Family Correspondence
- General Correspondence
- Travel Narratives and Journals

### Personal Name(s)

- Edwards, Oliver
- Long, Stephen Harriman, 1784-1864

### Subject(s)

- African American
- Exploration
- Exploration.

- Stephen H. Long Expedition to the Rocky Mountains (1819-1820)
- Travel
- West (U.S.)-Description and travel

## Other Descriptive Information

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Two letters in this brief collection may be of interest to students of African American history. In letters dated 27 March 1823 and 1 March 1824, Benjamin Edwards discusses his experiences as a slave overseer at a sawmill in Louisiana.

## Other Descriptive Information

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Benjamin Edwards was a member of Major Stephen H. Long's "Yellowstone Expedition," also known as the Rocky Mountain Expedition, in 1819-1820. The expedition completed the first ascent of the Missouri River. This collection consists of one letter Edwards wrote to his father while on the expedition and a series (approximately 5) letters Edwards wrote to his father after leaving the expedition. These later letters primarily discuss issues surrounding winding down the expedition, including Edwards' attempt to receive wages due him. After the expedition, Edwards bounced around the Mississippi River. At one time, he worked as an overseer of slaves at a sawmill near New Orleans, which he briefly describes in one of his letters.

## Benjamin Edwards Papers

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**Collection Inventory**


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<b>Benjamin Edwards Papers</b>	<b>1819-1827</b>	<b>.25 linear feet</b>
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<b>Edwards, Benjamin</b> ALS to Oliver Edwards	1819 November 20	3 p
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Writing from the Engineer Cantonment, where the expedition arrived on 18 September travelling from Cow Island, Edwards relates that he is in good health and expects that the expedition will winter at the Bluffs and return down Missouri River in the Spring after the return of Major Long from Washington.

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<b>Edwards, Benjamin</b> AL to Oliver Edwards	1822 March 21	1 p
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Edwards is unable to return home due to bad weather and he can not get a "settlement" on the boat he is now on which is not under the command of Major Long.

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<b>Edwards, Benjamin</b> ALS to Oliver Edwards	1822 August 11	2 p
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Edwards now aboard the steamboat Hope of Louisville, Kentucky writes that he is expecting to soon receive the \$850 the U.S. Government owes him.

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<b>Edwards, Benjamin</b> ALS to Oliver Edwards	1823 March 27	1 p
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Edwards has settled for a time in Alexandria, Louisiana and is working in a Sawmill.

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<b>Edwards, Benjamin</b> ALS to Oliver Edwards	1824 March 1	3 p
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Edwards reports that he still has not receive his money from the government but will stop in Philadelphia to speak with Major Long. He continues to work in the mill where he supervises the slaves.

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**Benjamin Edwards Papers**

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**Edwards, Benjamin**

1827 September 9

2 p

ALS to Oliver Edwards

Edwards writes that he is well and is settled in New Orleans.

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