

**The Filson Historical Society**

**James Speed 1812-1887  
Papers, 1863-1876**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, see the Curator of Special Collections, James J. Holmberg.

**Size of Collection:**  
.33 cubic feet

**Locator Number:**  
Mss./A/S742d

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Biographical Note

James Speed was born in Jefferson County, Kentucky in 1812 and died in Louisville in 1887. He was a lawyer, Kentucky legislator and friend and advisor of President Lincoln. Lincoln appointed Speed attorney general in 1864 and he pursued Lincoln's policy of moderation toward the south until Lincoln's death. Speed then started favoring a more radical policy. He favored the military commission to try the Lincoln conspirators and others not protected by parole. He advocated black suffrage and was a critic of President Andrew Johnson. He was prominent in Radical Republican activities and later supported Grover Cleveland in 1884.

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**Scope and Content Note**

Letters of James Speed concerning legal cases, the Republican Party, petitions from people for his political connections, and from government officials concerning legislation. Correspondence with Jeremiah Black includes his opinions of Lincoln as a person and President and other politicians. He tells of the Military Tribunal for the Lincoln Conspirators and is asked to be a pall bearer for William Seward.

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**Folder List**

**Folder 1:** Correspondence 1863-1871.

Folder 2: Correspondence April - August 1872.

Folder 3: Correspondence September - November 1872.

Folder 4: Correspondence December 1872.

Folder 5: Correspondence 1873-1876.

Folder 6: Business Papers.

Folder 7: Miscellaneous Material.