Summary Information

Call number: C0089
Repository: Princeton University. Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
          Manuscripts Division
          One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 1.7 linear feet
      2 archival boxes
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: Consists primarily of letters by Aaron Burr (Princeton Class of 1772) to members of his family and associates, along with some documents pertaining to his legal career.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
# Table of Contents

**Summary Information** ........................................................................................................... 1  
**Biography/History** .................................................................................................................. 3  
**Description** ............................................................................................................................. 4  
**Access and Use** ....................................................................................................................... 4  
**Acquisition and Appraisal** ....................................................................................................... 4  
**Related Materials** .................................................................................................................... 4  
**Processing and Other Information** .......................................................................................... 4  
**Subject Headings** .................................................................................................................... 5  

**Contents List** ............................................................................................................................

- **Correspondence, 1771-1904** .............................................................................................. 6  
- **Documents, 1777-1803** ....................................................................................................... 11  
- **Photostats/Facsimiles, 1771-1829** ....................................................................................... 12  
- **Printed Matter, 1802, 1875, 1958** ..................................................................................... 13  

**Contents List** ............................................................................................................................
Aaron Burr was born in Newark, New Jersey, on February 6, 1756, to Aaron Burr, a theologian and second president of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), and Esther Edwards Burr, daughter of famous revivalist pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards. The younger Burr’s parents died before he was three, and he was raised by his maternal uncle, Timothy Edwards. Burr entered the College of New Jersey at age thirteen, and graduated in 1772 with distinction. After graduation, he studied theology privately before switching his concentration to law.

Burr interrupted his studies when he enlisted in the American army attacking Boston in 1775. He rose quickly through the ranks because of his skills on the battlefield, but he did not get along well with George Washington. Although promoted to Washington’s secretarial staff, Burr transferred to the staff of Washington's second-in-command, Israel Putnam, to avoid conflicts with the general. Burr was successful under Putnam, valiantly leading troops in combat and securing important camps, such as in Brooklyn Heights and later at the battle of Monmouth Courthouse in New Jersey in 1778.

Burr resigned from the army in 1779 due to poor health, which was aggravated by the high temperatures and humidity at Monmouth. He continued to study law after leaving the army and recovering from illness, and became a member of the bar of New York in 1782. He married Theodosia Prevost in the same year, with whom he had one child, Theodosia Burr. Professionally, Burr entered a rivalry with Alexander Hamilton, another prominent lawyer in New York.

Burr began his political career in 1784 when he was elected to the state assembly. He continued in politics to serve in the United States Senate and ultimately as Vice President of the United States under Jefferson. He was a controversial character in Albany and Washington, D.C., not siding clearly with any single faction and repeatedly being accused of self-interested legislation, political conspiracy, and generally unfair and dishonest practices, some of which can be confirmed. Burr's political career was thus tumultuous, and he found himself regularly in and out of favor with the ruling powers. He ultimately lost his second candidacy for Vice President when he alienated Republican leadership with sympathies for the Federalists. In the same year, he lost a bid for the governorship of New York.

Burr blamed much of his political downfall on Alexander Hamilton and his compatriots. After failing to force Hamilton to apologize for statements made against Burr in the gubernatorial race, Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel. When Burr killed the prominent politician, popular opinion cast him as a cold-blooded murderer, and warrants were put out for his arrest in New York and New Jersey. Burr fled to Philadelphia and then the South to escape capture.

On these travels, Burr began dreaming of a new nation formed in the Southwest. Burr believed that conflict between Americans and the Spanish could encourage an occupation of Mexico, allowing a new nation to form. One of his allies in these plans, however, revealed the scheme to President Jefferson, and Burr was indicted for treason. He was acquitted by John Marshall, whose narrow interpretation of the Constitution’s definition of treason was influenced by the justice's dislike of and disagreements with Jefferson.

In Burr's later life, he lived abroad, attempting to gain support for his plan for a new nation in the Southwest. Upon returning to the United States in 1812, he began again to practice law in New York. He remarried to a wealthy widow, who divorced him for adultery. He died on September 14, 1836, the same day the divorce was granted.
The collection consists of over 50 letters and several documents of Aaron Burr (Princeton Class of 1772) and assorted photostats and facsimiles of additional Burr material. Addressees of the letters include Jeremy Bentham, Theodosia Burr (his wife), Theodosia Burr (his daughter), Mary Coles Payne (Dolley Madison's mother), and George Washington. In the latter letter, dated 1779, Burr resigns his rank and command in the Continental Army. Many of the other letters and documents deal with legal cases and legal advice, including a case related to slavery in which Burr represented an enslaver.

Access and Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. No further photoduplication of copies of material in the collection can be made when Princeton University Library does not own the original. Inquiries regarding publishing material from the collection should be directed to RBSC Public Services staff at rbsc@princeton.edu. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition

The collection was formed as a result of a departmental practice of combining into one collection manuscript material of various accessions relating to a particular author. Materials were acquired via various purchases and gifts.

Appraisal

No materials were separated from the collection during 2019 processing.

Related Materials

Related Archival Material

Related collections include C0090 (Aaron Burr, 1716-1757, Collection) and C0081 (Fuller Collection of Aaron Burr, 1756-1836).
Works Cited
The Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1977) was consulted during preparation of the biographical note.

Encoding

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

- Burr, Aaron, 1756-1836 -- Trials, litigation, etc.
- United States. Continental Army—Officers
- Lawyers—United States—18th century
- United States—History—Revolution, 1775-1783—Sources
- Legal correspondence--18th century
- Legal documents--18th century
- American history/Revolution
- American history/Early national
## Contents List

### Correspondence, 1771-1904

**Size:** 28 folders  
**Description:** Letters primarily written by Burr to others; several to him have been interfiled.  
**Arrangement:** Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correspondent</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Box:</th>
<th>Item:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alston, Theodosia Burr (1783-1813),</td>
<td>1793 December 16</td>
<td>ALS, 3 pp., by Burr, describing the frequency of and manner in which Theodosia should write to her father as part of her lessons, including a sample letter on the third page. Includes small TD of unknown origin describing a man's pleasure upon receiving a portrait of Darwin.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beers, Mr,</td>
<td>1796 February 7</td>
<td>ALS, 3 pp., by Burr, regarding legal matters including the cases of Bennet and others. Also mentions the arrival of &quot;Spanish Treaty&quot; and &quot;Jay's Treaty.&quot; Includes note describing the acquisition of the letter, written by Edward H. Sholl, M.D., Class of 1853, dated May 20, 1872.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson, Egbert (1746-1833),</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>ALS, 1 p., by Burr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentham, Jeremy (1748-1832),</td>
<td>1819 November 29</td>
<td>ALS, 1 p., by Burr, regarding a German astronomer and requesting Bentham's works on [Religion]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burr, Sally,</td>
<td>1771 November 28</td>
<td>ALS, 1 p., by Burr, to his sister, Sally, written from Nassau Hall while he is a student at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burr, Theodosia,</td>
<td>1795 June 11</td>
<td>ALS, 1 p., by Burr, mentioning her &quot;Odyssey&quot; and requesting a letter from the recipient, despite the volume of letters Burr has sent for her to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colt, Peter (1736-1824),</td>
<td>1782 July 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Description:
  · ALS, 3 pp., by Burr

Craft, William D. (1787-1826), 1823-1828

   Box: 1 Item: 7

Description:
  · ALS, 1 p., March 17, 1823, by Burr
  · ALS, 1 p., April 29, 1823, by Burr
  · ALS, 1 p., March 29, 1826, by Burr
  · ALS, 2 pp.: January 12, 1827, by Burr
  · ALS, 1 p., February 16, 1827, by Burr, regarding taxes and the Circuit Court of the U.S.
  · ALS (initialed), 1 p., February 20, 1827, by Burr
  · ALS, 1 p., March 3, 1827, by Burr
  · ALS, 2 pp., March 4, 1827, by Burr, regarding Medina and [Gaibina]
  · ALS, 1 p., March 18, 1827, by Burr
  · ALS, 1 p., March 22, 1827, by Burr, including a "slip" to be delivered to "Mr. P."

Duane, William (1760-1835), 1801 April 25

   Box: 1 Item: 8

Description:
  · ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Edwards, Timothy (1738-1813), 1790 July 9

   Box: 1 Item: 9

Description:
  · ALS, 2 p., by Burr. Includes complete photocopy of the original.

Edwards, Pierpont (1750-1826), 1792 January 8

   Box: 1 Item: 10

Description:
  · ALS, 2 pp., by Burr

Gait, Thomas, Dr, 1824 August 8

   Box: 1 Item: 11

Description:
  · ALS, 1 p., by Burr. Includes complete photocopy of the original and TLS and photocopy of TLS from John F. Schenk, dated Christmas 1939, commenting on Burr's place in history.

Harison, Richard, 1791 June 2

   Box: 1 Item: 12

Description:
  · ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Hauterive, Alexandre Maurice Blanc de Lanaute, comte d' (1754-1830), 1790 July 27

   Box: 1 Item: 13

Description:
Correspondence ... (Continued)

· ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Henry, John V, 1799 April 17

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Hopkins, Miles, 1793

Description:
· ALS, 2 pp., July 15, 1793, by Burr, regarding the acquisition of books for the recipient’s library; ALS, 3 pp., November 2, 1793, by Burr, regarding books acquired and to be acquired for the recipient’s library, including a list of books

Ireson, William, 1798 August

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Lathrop, Gurdon William (1790-1832), 1814

Description:
· ALS, 3 pp., March 28/29, [n.y.], by Burr, regarding various lawsuits
· ALS (initialed), 1 p., January 27, 1814, by Burr

Martin, Luther (1748-1826), 1813 December 27

Description:
· ALS, 2 pp., by Burr

Monroe, James (1758-1831), 1794 November 10

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Montanye, Vincent, 1785 March 23

Description:
· ADS (incomplete), 1 p., by Burr regarding the estate of the recipient

Morris, Robert (1734-1806), 1787 February 14

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Nicholson, John (1757-1800), 1794 March 31

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr, requesting a few more "Certificates of Population Shares" signed by the recipient

Payne, Mrs, 1795 May 8

Box: 1 Item: 14

Box: 1 Item: 15

Box: 1 Item: 16

Box: 1 Item: 17

Box: 1 Item: 18

Box: 1 Item: 19

Box: 1 Item: 20

Box: 1 Item: 21

Box: 1 Item: 22

Box: 1 Item: 23
Description:
· ALS, 2 pp., by Burr, regarding failure to see her before traveling and advice about money

Pelletreau, John, 1827

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., January 11, 1827, by Burr, regarding a trip by stagecoach and legal cases
· ALS, 1 p., January 14, 1827, by Burr
· ALS, 1 p., January 17, 1827, by Burr, regarding legal cases

Peters, Henry and Roosevelt, James G, undated

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr to regarding an application to the Court of Chancery to compel the recipients to exhibit accounts and estate records

Pichon, L. A. (Louis André), baron (1771-1850), 1803 February 13

Description:
· ALS (in French), 3 pp., to Burr.

Prévost, Augustine, Maj, 1784-1790

Description:
· ALS, 2 pp., January 9, 1784, by Burr
· ALS, 3 pp., April 25, 1789, by Burr
· ALS, 3 pp., August 24, 1789, by Burr
· ALS, 3 pp., May 7, 1790, by Burr

Remsen, Henry (1762-1843), 1799 October 2

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr, authorizing payment of $420 to the Honorable E. Boudinot, Esq

Riggs, E. W, 1904 March 9

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., to Mr. Collins, requesting relabelling and transfer of "Aaron Burr's letter" to University Library

Rhoades, Julius, 1821 August 15

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr, letter accompanying papers giving a notice of legal motion "to enlarge publication"

Sergeant, John (1747-1824), 1772

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., June 12, 1772, by Burr, requesting the sum of $4.10, carried by George Merchant and with an endorsement verifying that the sum was received
· ALS, 1 p., August 15, 1772, by Burr, requesting the recipient to send "a considerable sum" as he sees fit by "the bearer Georgem," includes endorsement that $4 was received
Folder includes 3 TDs describing and labeling the letters in a small envelope by an unknown author.

"Stirling, Lord", 1778 April 10

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr, regarding "Capt. Tom" returned absent without leave, questioning his proper punishment

Troup, Robert (1757-1832), 1780 February 14

Description:
· ALS, 3 pp., to Burr, regarding Troup's resignation from his office, the move to Princeton from Philadelphia, and his fears about the changes

Van der Lyn, John, undated

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., undated, by Burr
· ALS, 1 p., undated, by Burr
Folder includes small typed note by unknown author, describing Burr's handwriting or signature.

Van Schaack, Peter (1747-1832), 1790 October 20

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr

Washington, George (1732-1799), 1779 February 25

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr, describing the reasons for his leave from his rank and command in the Army and his actions to ensure a replacement will be ready before he leaves
Folder includes a typed transcript of the letter.

Williamson, Isaac H. (Isaac Halsted, 1767-1844), 1830 February 27

Description:
· ALS, 1 p., by Burr accompanying papers enclosed with the letter

Wilson, John Lyde, circa 1807 July 22-1809

Description:
· ALS to Mrs. Joseph Alston, regarding papers of his friend, Aaron Burr
Yates, William (1792-1845), 1818 June 7  
Description:  
- ALS, 1 p., by Burr, inquiring after the character and merit of Isaac Truax before employing him

Unidentified ("Just a fortnight?"), 1822  
Description:  
- ALS, 1 p., by Burr, replying to the recipient's inquiry about legal action

Unidentified ("Mr. [France]?"), undated  
Description:  
- ALS, 1 p., to [Burr]

Documents, 1777-1803  
Size: 4 folders  
Description: Documents regarding financial and legal matters.  
Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by the name of the associated person.

Brewer, Elizabeth (1758-1821), 1777 April 24  
Description:  
- ADS, 1 p., affidavit declaring the author, Brewer, saw William Butler Lynch in Brunswick on the "15th"

Gelston, David, 1796 June 22  
Description:  
- ADS, 1 p., promissory note written by Burr to pay recipient $2,000 dollars sixty days after date

Green, Timothy, Dr, 1794-1803  
Description:  
- AD, 1 p., December 15, 1794 - January 1, 1797, account sheet for Burr's account with the author  
- ADS, 1 p., January 15, 1796, receipt  
- ADS, 1 p., December 2, 1799 - March 20, 1800, account sheet for Burr's account with the author

Legal Complaint Signed by Aaron Burr in the Case of Thomas Stevenson vs. John Lake, 1784 August 9  
accessionnumber: AM 2019-124  
Folder: 1  
Description: Consists of a manuscript legal complaint on behalf of Aaron Burr's client Thomas Stevenson in the case of Thomas Stevenson vs. John Lake in the New York Mayors Court regarding a woman who was enslaved
photostats/facsimiles, 1771-1829

size: 6 folders

description: consists of photostats and facsimiles of letters and documents.

arrangement: arranged alphabetically by recipient (or author, when not burr).

alston, theodosia burr (1783-1813), 1794 january 7

description:

· als (facsimile), 2 pp., by burr, providing comments and corrections on her most recent letter

reeve, sally burr (1754-1787), 1771 november 28

description:

· als (facsimile), 1 p., by burr to his sister sally

unidentified ("i understand from your letter?"), 1793 july 27

description:

· als (photostat), 1 p., by burr

unidentified ("his stature is about?"), undated

description:

· am (photostat), 4 pp., unknown writer's impression of burr. includes note that original is in new york public library.

various letters, 1792-1829

description:

· als (photostat, 2 copies), 1 p., november 12, 1771, by burr to his sister sally
· als (photostat), 1 p., june 20, 1789, by burr to unknown recipient
Printed Matter ... (Continued)

- ALS (facsimile), 3 pp., September 12, 1792, by Burr to Timothy Edwards
- ALS (facsimile), 2 pp., [1792], by Burr to Jacob De Lamater
- ALS (facsimile), 1 p., April 17, 1795, by Burr to [Mr. Henry Dinker]
- ALS (facsimile), 2 pp., July 15, 1800, by [Harman Blinerth] to D. Woodbridge
- ALS (facsimile), 2 pp., January 5, 1802, by Burr to [Sam Brook]
- ALS (facsimile), 1 p., March 25, 1802, by [W Hampton] to Burr
- ALS (facsimile), 4 pp., March 24, 1806, by Burr to unknown recipient
- ALS (facsimile), 2 pp., December 23, 1806, by [Kherr] to General Wilkinson
- ALS (facsimile), 3 pp., April 14, 1807, by unknown person to James Wilkinson
- ALS (facsimile), 2 pp., August 2, 1813, by Timothy Pickering to Daniel Clark
- ALS (facsimile), 2 pp., January 15, 1816, by [Jackson] to John Armstrong
- ALS (facsimile), 2 pp., February [28], 1828, by Burr to Captain A. Partridge
- ALS (photostat), 1 p., July 17, 1829, by Burr to Rev. Dr. John Maclean
- ADS (facsimile), 8 pp., undated, "Our Treatment of Aaron Burr", signed "A. [Rittoe]"
- TLS, 1 p., October 2, 1903, by W. K. Bixby to Hon. Judge Jacob Klein requesting printing/distribution of Burr's private European journals

Printed Matter, 1802, 1875, 1958

Size: 2 folders

Description: Series consists of an engraving, a newspaper article describing Burr's funeral, and part of a pamphlet.

Arrangement: Not arranged according to any arrangement scheme.

Miscellaneous, 1771-1958

Description:
- Engraving (two copies), 1802, of Aaron Burr; part of a January-February 1958 pamphlet, The Month at Goodspeed's, containing a reference to a document written by Burr as aide to Gen. Israel Putnam, 8 pp.

Macdonald, J. M., Rev, 1875 May 26

Description:
· Macdonald's newspaper article, "Confession of Aaron Burr," discussing details of Burr's funeral