Aaron Burr (1716-1757) Collection, 1750-1761: Finding Aid

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# Aaron Burr (1716-1757) Collection, 1750-1761: Finding Aid

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Aaron Burr was born on January 4, 1716, to Daniel and Elizabeth Burr in Upper Meadows, Connecticut. He excelled in languages and sciences at Yale College, from which he graduated in 1735. He stayed at Yale for an additional year to study theology, supported by the Berkeley Foundation, during which he became involved in the colonial revival of religion led by Jonathan Edwards.

Burr converted to the Calvinistic belief in the absolute sovereignty of God and was ordained a minister in 1736 by the Presbyterian Church of Newark. He was well known for his reasonable and thoughtful sermons, which contrasted starkly to those of his contemporary revival leaders. Burr also began teaching local boys Latin, Greek, and other liberal arts and became a popular educator.

Burr and fellow "New Side" Presbyterians from the Middle Colonies who favored revivals (as opposed to the "Old Side" Presbyterians and Anglicans from New England) felt that they were in need of an educational institution to train ministers in their philosophies as well as to provide general education to gentleman scholars. Several "New Side" ministers began planning a college and raising funds, and were able to obtain a charter for the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) in 1746. The institution was to be an institution for higher learning for all men, not only those interested in joining the Presbyterian clergy.

John Dickinson was appointed by the trustees of the college to be its first president, but he died only four months after assuming the position. Burr was chosen to be his successor and became a driving force behind the institution, establishing its location, educational standards, and reputation. He was involved in all aspects of the college, regularly teaching classes and tutoring students, as well as supervising construction and raising funds. Burr was president of the college from November 1748 until his death.

Burr continued to fulfill his ministerial duties in Newark during his time as president. He married Esther Edwards, daughter of preacher Jonathan Edward, in 1752. The couple had two children, Aaron and Sarah. Burr died on September 24, 1757.

Description

Consists of Burr manuscripts, correspondence, and documents dating from the period (1748-1757) he was president of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton. Included are original manuscripts of sermons, a Latin oration, and letters and documents, as well as photostats and copies of additional material. There is a contemporary silhouette of Burr as well as a letter, dated 1761, presenting a bill to his estate.

Arrangement

The collection has been organized into three series: 1. Writings; 2. Correspondence--A. By, B. To, C. About; 3. Pictorial Material.

Series I: Writings, 1748-1753
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 through the Ask Us! form. 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 is the result, over time, of a departmental policy of gathering together different small accessions relating to a specific author. Holograph pages of Burr's sermons were the gift of Mrs. Eli Whitney, widow of the inventor of the cotton gin.

Appraisal

No appraisal information is available.

Processing and Other Information

Preferred Citation

Citations should be as follows: Aaron Burr (1716-1757) Collection, Box #, Folder #, Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Works Cited

The Dictionary of American Biography (New York:, 1977 ) was consulted during preparation of the biographical note.

Encoding


Descriptive Rules Used
Subject Headings

- College presidents--New Jersey--Princeton--18th century
- Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.--Clergy--18th century
- Princeton University--Presidents--18th century
- Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.--Clergy--18th century
- Princeton (N.J.)--History--18th century--Sources
- Sermons, American--18th century
- Silhouettes--18th century
- American history/Colonial
- Religion
- Princeton University
Series I: Writings, 1748-1753

Size: 7 folders

Description: Consists for the most part of contemporary copies of sermons, but includes over 30 holograph pages in Burr's extremely fine script.

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by title or form, and then chronologically.

- Catalogue of books left by Rev. Aaron Burr, undated
  Description: AD, 4 pp.: catalogue of the books and other materials left by Aaron Burr, including diaries, bibles, and theological and philosophical texts

- "Laws and Customs of New Jersey College", 1748 November 9
  Description: TD, 3 pp.: transcript of Burr's minutes of a meeting of the trustees, describing the requirements for admission, graduation, religious worship, moral conduct, attendance, and expenses for students at the New Jersey College [now Princeton University]. Also includes typed copy.

- Latin Oration, 1752 September 19
  Description: AMs, 20 pp.: an oration delivered by Burr in Newark, written by unknown hand

- Sermon, 1750 January 1
  Description: AMs, 22 pp.: on Gen. 12.[6]. Includes small card with brief biographical notes on Burr, written by unknown person.

- Sermon, 1753 April 26
  Description: AMs, 16 pp., written by unknown hand

- Sermon, undated
  Description: AMs, 24 pp.: on prosperity, written by unknown hand

- Sermons, undated
  Description: AMss, 31 pp.: holograph pages of sermons in Burr's very small script

Series II: Correspondence, 1746-1764

Size: 15 folders

Description: Letters by, to, and about Burr. Some photostats and typed transcriptions are included.
Subseries 2A: Letters by Aaron Burr, 1746-1764

Size: 12 folders

Description: Consists of letters by Aaron Burr to individuals such as Philip Doddridge, William Hogg, and Johnathan Sergeant, as well as others.

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Belcher, Jonathan (1682-1757), undated

Description: ALS (photostat.), 5 pp.: a letter regarding the payment of troops. Includes a list which may have accompanied the letter to furnish two levies, one to go to the frontiers of Sussex, the other to go into the continental Jersey Brigade and to pay in proportion to their several taxables

Doddridge, Philip (1702-1751), 1750 May 31

Description: ALS, 4 pp.: a letter regarding theology, matters of the college, and moral philosophy. Includes complete photocopy of original

Doddridge, Philip (1702-1751), circa 1746-1750

Description: TL, 3 pp.: April 1748, a transcript of a letter from Burr to Dodderidge regarding sermons and an account of the progress made on the construction of the college; TL, 3 pp.: October 8, [1749], a transcript of a postscript from Burr to Dodderidge regarding the infirmary; TL, 3 pp.: October 8, 1749, a transcript of a letter from Burr to Dodderidge regarding the circumstances of the college and its students; TL, 3 pp.: a transcript of a letter from Burr to Dodderidge regarding the affairs of the college; TL, 2 pp.: October 12, 1749, a transcript of a letter from E. Pemberton to Dodderidge regarding affairs of religious influence; TL, 1 p.: January 30, 1746/7, a transcript of a letter from Jona Dickinson to Theophilus Howell regarding the proposal to erect a college in New Jersey

Governor Assistants and Deputies, 1754 May 10

Description: ALS (photostat.), 3 pp.: a letter acknowledging the aid of the province of Connecticut to the foundation of the College of New Jersey. Includes a TLS from the Connecticut state librarian who sent the letter

Hogg, William, 1755 December 3

Description: ALS, 3 pp.: a letter concerning the construction of Nassau Hall. Includes three distinct cards describing the letter and a complete photocopy of the original

Hogg, William, 1756 May 10
Subseries 2B: Letters to Aaron Burr (1750-1757) Collection, 1750-1761: Finding Aid

Description: ALS, 2 pp.: a letter thanking Hogg for his work for the college, written on behalf of the trustees of the college

Sergeant, Johnathan, 1757 August 22
Description: TL, 1 p.: transcription of order to Sergeant to pay Aaron Miller and charge the payment to the college account

Sergeant, Johnathan, 1755 May 1
Description: ALS, 1 p.: order to Sergeant to pay J. S. Morrow from the college account

Sergeant, Johnathan, 1757 January 21
Description: ALS, 1 p.: order to Sergeant to pay Caleb Wheeler from the college account

Smith, John, 1754 August 6
Description: ALS (photostat.), 2 pp.

Williams, Mrs, 1746 October 26
Description: ALS (photostat.), 2 pp.

Whitefield, George (1714-1770), 1757 February 16
Description: ALS, 4 pp.: a letter describing Burr's duties at the college, the religious beliefs of the students, the adjustment to the new location of the college, and the recipient's affairs

Subseries 2B: Letters to Aaron Burr, 1757

Size: 1 folder
Description: Consists of letters received by Aaron Burr from John Ward.
Arrangement: Not arranged according to any arrangement scheme.

Ward, John (1707-1787), 1757 October 14
Description: ALS, 2 pp.: a letter and invoice for books for the College of New Jersey

Subseries 2C: Letters About Aaron Burr, 1761

Size: 1 folder
Description: Consists of letters regarding Aaron Burr from David Vanhorne.
Arrangement: Not arranged according to any arrangement scheme.

Vanhorne, David (d. ca. 1775), 1761 August 10
Series III: Pictorial Material ... (Continued)

Description: ALS, 1 p.: a letter to Johnathan Sergeant enclosing a bill (AD, 1 p.) for the author's share of Burr's estate

Series III: Pictorial Material, undated

Size: 1 folder

Description: Consists of a silhouette of Aaron Burr.

Arrangement: Not arranged according to any arrangement scheme.

Silhouette, undated

Description: small contemporary silhouette of Aaron Burr, approximately 3 x 1.5 inches, with his signature