



Guide to the Wesley family papers, 1726-1889 and undated

This collection guide was produced in **2012**.

This PDF version was created on **April 3, 2026**.

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

askRL@duke.edu

URL: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

Table of Contents

Summary	3
Background	4
Arrangement	4
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	6
Names and Subjects	7
Collection Inventory	7
Correspondence Series, 1726-1862 and undated	7
Miscellaneous Series, 1735-1738 and undated	13
Volumes Series, 1791-1889	14

Summary

Collection Title:

Wesley family papers, 1726-1889 and undated

Creator:

Wesley family

Abstract:

The brothers John Wesley (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788) were Church of England clergymen and two of the founders of Methodism; Sarah Wesley (1726-1822) and Sarah Wesley (1759-1828) were the wife and daughter of Charles Wesley. The Wesley family papers span the years 1726-1889 and mainly comprise the correspondence of John and Charles Wesley, with single items from the wife and daughter of Charles, both named Sarah; there is also an inventory of John Wesley's library taken at the time of his death, 1791, and a photograph album, 1889, of English sites related to the Wesleys and the history of Methodism. Correspondence discusses John Wesley's life as a student at Lincoln College, the administration of Kingswood School, the brothers' mission to Georgia in the 1730s, and Methodism's eventual separation from the Church of England. Correspondents and people mentioned in the letters include the Countess of Huntingdon, George Whitefield, James Oglethorpe, Joseph Benson, and Samuel Bradburn.

Extent:

3 Linear Feet
46 Items

Physical Location:

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

Language:

Material in English

Collection ID:

RL.01367

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1n72b>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Wesley Family Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Background

Scope and Content

The Wesley family papers, 1726-1889 and undated, comprise correspondence, poems, sermons, affidavits, and other documents of the brothers John Wesley (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788), both Church of England clergymen and two of the founders of Methodism; of Sarah Wesley (1726-1822), wife of Charles; and of Sarah Wesley (1759-1828), daughter of Charles and Sarah.

John Wesley's letters discuss his life as a student at Lincoln College; the administration of Kingswood School, Bath; his conflict with the Countess of Huntingdon; his involvement with the funeral sermon for George Whitefield and Whitefield's estate; and various other topics including the appointment of ministers. Charles Wesley's letters discuss details of the Wesley brothers' experiences on their mission to Georgia, including their relationship with James Oglethorpe, and his regrets over the Methodists' separation from the Church of England. Correspondents and persons mentioned include Samuel Wesley (brother of John and Charles), Eliza Bennis, Joseph Benson, Samuel Bradburn, James Kenton, and Samuel Lloyd.

Other materials include an inventory of John Wesley's library at the time of his death; a signed affidavit concerning a major chapel of British Methodism, opened in Nottingham in 1783; a photograph album of places in England associated with the Wesley family and the history of Methodism; and some infant baptismal clothing (a christening gown) attributed to the Wesley family.

Original correspondence housed in Box 1 available by prior request only. Use copies are in Box 2.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Arranged in three series: **Correspondence**, **Miscellaneous**, and **Volumes**.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

askRL@duke.edu

URL: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

Access Restrictions

Collection is open.

However, collection may contain materials to which the Acknowledgment of Legal Responsibilities and Privacy Rights form applies. Patrons must sign this form before using this collection.

In addition, most original manuscripts in the collection are restricted except for use under direct staff supervision. Patrons must use photocopies of originals.

All or portions of this collection may be housed off-site in Duke University's Library Service Center. Consequently, there may be a 24-hour delay in obtaining these materials.

Please contact Research Services staff before visiting the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library to use this collection.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Acquisition Information

The Wesley family papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as purchases from 1952-1998.

Processing Information

Processed by Michael Shumate, Chloe Rockow, March 2012

Encoded by Michael Shumate, Chloe Rockow, March 2012

Addition 2012-0187 added by Paula Jeannet

Addition 2016-0219 interfiled by Alice Poffinberger

Accession(s) described in this finding aid: 1952 to 1998, 2012-0187, 2016-0219.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Material

The following Rubenstein Library collections hold additional correspondence, writings, and other documents relating to the Wesley Family:

- [**Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana and British Methodism, 1536-1996 and undated, Wesley Family Series.**](#) Contains the letters of John, Charles, and other Wesley family members, the poetry of Sarah Wesley (1759-1828), and Wesley family portraits.
- <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/bakerfrank/>. The Subject Files, Wesley Family Files contain additional background material on each family member, as well as many transcribed and copied letters from archives around the world.
- <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/wesleyworks/>. Working papers of the Wesley Works Editorial Project (WWEP). The Letters Series contains extensive files related to John Wesley's incoming and outgoing correspondence, including many photocopies.
- Two small sub-collections of the Baker Wesleyana collection hold Wesley autographs. The <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000849830> contains a John Wesley letter, and the <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000872564> hold original letters of John, Charles, and both Sarah Wesleys.
- Other Rubenstein Library collections holding Wesley family letters and manuscripts include the <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000881993>; the [E. R. \(Eugene Russell\) Hendrix Papers, 1764-1914](#); and the [Presidents of the Wesleyan Conference, 1770-1900](#).

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Names and Subjects

- Missions -- Georgia
- Private libraries -- England -- Catalogs
- Methodist Church -- Clergy
- Methodist Church -- History
- Methodist Church -- Great Britain -- History
- Photograph albums
- Methodist Church -- Sermons
- Methodists -- Biography
- England -- Church history
- Nottingham (England) -- Church history
- Whitefield, George, 1714-1770 -- Estate
- Wesley, Sarah, 1759-1828
- Wesley, Sarah, 1726-1822
- Wesley, Samuel, 1691-1739
- Wesley, John, 1703-1791
- Wesley, Charles, 1707-1788
- Wesley family
- Benson, Joseph, 1749-1821
- Oglethorpe, James Edward, 1696-1785
- Church of England -- Relations -- Methodist Church
- Lloyd, Samuel
- Bradburn, Samuel, 1751-1816
- Lincoln College (University of Oxford) -- Students
- Kenton, James
- Kingswood School (Bath, England)
- Huntingdon, Selina Hastings, Countess of, 1707-1791

Collection Inventory

Correspondence Series, 1726-1862 and undated

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Scope and Contents note

Arranged in chronological order in Box 1; except as indicated, all items are signed autograph letters. Use copies are in Box 2, together with provenance

information for certain items. Miscellaneous other materials, mainly comprising printed materials and photocopies, are appended at the end of the series.

Access Restrictions:

[ATTENTION: originals housed in Box 1 available by prior request only. Use copies are in Box 2.]

Wesley, John, Lincoln College, Oxon,
contemporary copy, to the Rev. Mr. [Samuel]
Wesley, [Jr.], Gt. Dean's Yard, Westminster, 1726
Apr. 4 (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 1

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Lincoln College, Oxon, contemporary copy, to the Rev. Mr. \[Samuel\] Wesley, \[Jr.\], Gt. Dean's Yard, Westminster, 1726 Apr. 4](#)

Scope and Contents note

Encloses two poems, mentions receiving a note for twelve pounds from his father, gives his impression of the students at Lincoln, and reports three recent local happenings.

[John Wesley], Oxon, to Bishop Potter (?),
1734/5 Mar. 4 [contemporary copy?] (online
item available)

Box 1 > Folder 2

Digital Object: [\[John Wesley\], Oxon, to Bishop Potter \(?\), 1734/5 Mar. 4 \[contemporary copy?\]](#)

Wesley, John, Bristol, to Samuel Lloyd, 1751
June 19 (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 3

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Bristol, to Samuel Lloyd, 1751 June 19 \[Original missing; copy\]](#)

Scope and Contents note

Instructs Lloyd in ways in which to improve depth and consistency of his spiritual commitment.

Processing Information:

[Original missing; use copy available.]

Wesley, John, Bristol, to Samuel Lloyd, 1751 July
3

Box 1 > Folder 4

Scope and Contents note

Concerning rumors of misconduct among the students at Kingswood School, a Methodist public school in Bath.

Processing Information:

[Original missing; no use copy available.]

Wesley, Sarah (Gwynne), Bristol, to Samuel Lloyd, [Birmingham?], 1755 Mar. 31 (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 5

Digital Object: [Wesley, Sarah \(Gwynne\), Bristol, to Samuel Lloyd, \[Birmingham?\], 1755 Mar. 31](#)

Wesley, Charles, Chancery Lane, to Samuel Lloyd, Devonshire Square, 1755 May (unsigned, endorsed "Revd. Ch. Wesley 1755 rec'd the 26 May") (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 6

Digital Object: [Wesley, Charles, Chancery Lane, to Samuel Lloyd, Devonshire Square, 1755 May \(unsigned, endorsed "Revd. Ch. Wesley 1755 rec'd the 26 May"\)](#)

Wesley, Charles, James Street, to Samuel Lloyd, Devonshire Square, 1760 Feb. 22 (unsigned) (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 7

Digital Object: [Wesley, Charles, James Street, to Samuel Lloyd, Devonshire Square, 1760 Feb. 22 \(unsigned\)](#)

Wesley, John, Bristol, to Abraham Andrews, n.p., 1768 Aug. 20 (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 8

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Bristol, to Abraham Andrews, n.p., 1768 Aug. 20](#)

Wesley, John, Bristol, to [Eliza] Bennis, n.p., 1769 Sept. 18 (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 9

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Bristol, to \[Eliza\] Bennis, n.p., 1769 Sept. 18](#)

Wesley, Charles, Chesterfield Street by Marybone(?), to [?], 1769 Dec. 4 (endorsed in the hand of Samuel Lloyd) (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 10

Digital Object: [Wesley, Charles, Chesterfield Street by Marybone\(?\), to \[?\], 1769 Dec. 4 \(endorsed in the hand of Samuel Lloyd\)](#)

Wesley, J[ohn], London, to Joseph Benson, Edmond(?) Hall, Oxon, 1770 Nov. 30 (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 11

Digital Object: [Wesley, J\[ohn\], London, to Joseph Benson, Edmond\(?\) Hall, Oxon, 1770 Nov. 30](#)

Scope and Contents note

Wesley states that after feeling for several years that it was his duty to do so, he told Lady Huntingdon that she thought herself of more importance than she was. She actively protested against the minutes of Wesley's conference that were published in 1770. He also writes about the large congregations at the Tabernacle and Tottenham Court Chapel, probably for his funeral sermon on George Whitefield. He also mentions the disposal of two houses and others where Whitefield had preached.

Provenance: see use copies in Box 2 for provenance.

Wesley, John, Bristol, to Walter Churchey, Near the Hay, Brecon(?), Gloster[...torn], 1777 Aug. 4
(online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 12

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Bristol, to Walter Churchey, Near the Hay, Brecon\(?\), Gloster\[...torn\], 1777 Aug. 4](#)

Scope and Contents note

Glued to the same sheet is a poem written on May 22, 1819. It concerns the receipt of a picture of Wesley on a piece of glass from the windows of his coach.

Wesley, John, to Henry Brooke ("Harry"),
Bristol, 1777 Sept. 27

Box 1 > Folder 23

Wesley, John, endorsed affidavit, 1782 July 29
(online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 13

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, endorsed affidavit, 1782 July 29](#)

Scope and Contents note

Description supplied by Frank Baker: "a very important [document] relating to one of the major chapels of British Methodism, built to seat 1000, opened by Wesley and Dr. Thomas Coke in 1783, and described by Wesley as 'one of the most elegant in England.' This replaced the original Octagon chapel in Nottingham. It became a centre of controversy after Wesley's death. The leader of the Methodist New Connexion dissenting offshoot, Alexander Kilham, was buried there...it illustrates the way in which at this time Wesley and Coke were striving to pull together under Methodist control properties which had been erected under Methodist auspices but were under the control of local trustees. This is a guarantee that if Methodism helps to liquidate the debt on the building it will in fact be conveyed to the Connexion."

Wesley, Charles, n.p., copy to Dr. Chandler,
London, 1785 Apr. 28, 1862, and undated
(online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 14

Digital Object: [Wesley, Charles, n.p., copy to Dr. Chandler, London, 1785 Apr. 28, 1862, and undated](#)

Scope and Contents note

Two different handwritten transcriptions, one dating to 1862 and the other undated, though probably 19th century. Published in the New York Gazette, the letter is largely autobiographical, telling how his brother John persuaded him to become ordained and to accompany him and James Oglethorpe to Georgia. There, John took charge in Savannah while he worked in Frederica. While waiting for an opportunity to preach to the Indians he served as secretary to Oglethorpe and also secretary of Indian Affairs. Ill health resulting from exposure forced him back to England within six months; John returned the next year. He goes on to describe his work in the Methodist Society he had founded at Oxford, discusses how he and John tried to prevent breaking with the Church of England, and regrets the separation that eventually took place.

Wesley, John, [?], to [?], London, 1787 Jan. 17
[Original missing; no use copy.]

Box 1 > Folder 15

Wesley, John, Bristol, to Samuel Bradburn,
Moorfields, London, 1788 Mar. 13 (online item
available)

Box 1 > Folder 16

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Bristol, to Samuel Bradburn, Moorfields, London, 1788 Mar. 13](#)

Scope and Contents note

Concerning Charles Wesley's illness (Charles died on March 29).

Wesley, John, Near York, to Capt. Richard
Williams, at [?] near Truro, Cornwall, 1788 June
24 (online item available)

Box 1 > Folder 17

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Near York, to Capt. Richard Williams, at \[?\] near Truro, Cornwall, 1788 June 24 Box 1](#)

Wesley, John, Bristol, to Joseph Benson, at the
Preachinghouse in Hull, 1788 Sept. 17 (online
item available)

Box 1 > Folder 18

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Bristol, to Joseph Benson, at the Preachinghouse in Hull, 1788 Sept. 17](#)

Scope and Contents note

Discusses the futility of trying to interpret by reason what is only known by revelation, and criticizes the theological writings of John William Fletcher and Isaac Watts. With a typewritten transcription by an unknown author (located in Box 2).

Wesley, John, n.p., to [or about?] James Kenton[?], n.p., 1789 Apr. (online item available) Box 1 > Folder 19

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, n.p., to \[or about?\] James Kenton\[?\], n.p., 1789 Apr.](#)

Scope and Contents note

Description supplied by Frank Baker: "unpublished and previously unknown to me. It promises to be of some importance. Kenton is apparently James Kenton, an old friend of the Wesley family, author of printed 'Scripture Cards' and of Elegies on both the Wesley brothers, and a witness at young Samuel Wesley's wedding. Wesley is apparently writing to some governor of his old school of the Charterhouse, which also, as a Carthusian foundation, ran some almshouses for needy brethren, whom Wesley sometimes visited. Wesley seems to be seeking charity for Kenton himself."

[Note on identification: Baker's log of Wesley letters (see Wesley Works Archive, Box 81) describes this letter as to a "rich layman" and "re Jas. Kenton," not to him.]

Wesley, John, Bristol, to Jasper Robinson, at the Preachinghouse in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, 1790 Sept. 11 (online item available) Box 1 > Folder 20

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, Bristol, to Jasper Robinson, at the Preachinghouse in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, 1790 Sept. 11](#)

Wesley, John, [?], to Mrs. Eliza Bennis, Limerick, Ireland, undated [Original missing; no use copy] (online item available) Box 1 > Folder 21

Digital Object: [Wesley, John, \[?\], to Mrs. Eliza Bennis, Limerick, Ireland, undated \[Original missing; no use copy\]](#)

Scope and Contents note

Accompanying this letter is one by Mrs. Bennis's granddaughter regarding the letter by Wesley. Bennis was one of the first five members of the Methodist Society in Limerick, Ireland.

Tooth, [Eliza?], Hoxton Square, to Miss [Sarah] Wesley, Gloster Place, Portman Square, 1825
Apr. 29 (online item available) Box 1 > Folder 22

Digital Object: [Tooth, \[Eliza?\], Hoxton Square, to Miss \[Sarah\] Wesley, Gloster Place, Portman Square, 1825 Apr. 29](#)

Unidentified items (online item available) Box 1

Digital Object: [Unidentified](#)

Digital Object: [Unidentified](#)

Scope and Contents note

Two severely faded items that may or may not correspond to items cited above as missing. They were found originally behind the JW to Bradburn of 1788 Mar. 13, and in front of CW to Chandler, 1785 Apr. 28.

Use copies for items in Box 1, 1726-1860 Box 2

Scope and Contents note

Includes provenance data for some items; additional data may also be available in the Collection Control File--consult with Research Services staff.

Wesley, John, London, to Thomas McGeary, London and n.p., 1786 Sept. 25 and 1787 Feb. 15 Box 2

Scope and Contents note

Two typewritten transcriptions of in Kingswood School, Bath, England; they discuss human pride and the search for a schoolmaster for Kingswood School.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Miscellaneous Series, 1735-1738 and undated

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Scope and Contents note

Includes clippings, photocopies of Charles Wesley's sermons, and artifacts.

A clipping of a poem by Charles Wesley Box 2

Wesley, Charles, ten sermons (photocopies), 1735-1738 Box 2

Infant baptismal clothing, undated (online item available)

Box 4

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

Digital Object: [Infant baptismal clothing, undated](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Volumes Series, 1791-1889

"An Inventory of the Books, Tracts, Pamphlets &c belonging to the Late Reverend John Wesley," 1791 (online item available)

Box 3

Digital Object: [An Inventory of the Books, Tracts, Pamphlets belonging to the Late Reverend John Wesley, 1791](#)

Scope and Contents note

Listings of materials begins in 1791 with annual updates from 1805-1816 as works were moved. Contains a deed of transference.

Access Restrictions:

[ATTENTION: Original may need reformatting or conservation prior to patron access. Please consult Research Services staff before coming to use this material. A photocopy of this volume, made at the time of purchase, is filed under "Bookroom inventory" in the Frank Baker Papers, Subject Files, Alphabetical Files II]

"Footsteps of John Wesley," photograph album of various places in England associated with the Wesleys and Methodism, unknown provenance, [1889?]

Box 5

[Return to Table of Contents](#)