

Connecticut Historical Society  
museum & library

Oliver Wolcott, Sr. Papers

A Guide to the Oliver Wolcott, Sr. Papers at the Connecticut  
Historical Society

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Collection Overview

<b>Repository :</b>	Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
<b>Creator :</b>	Wolcott, Oliver, 1726-1797
<b>Title :</b>	Oliver Wolcott Papers
<b>Dates :</b>	1638 - 1834
<b>Extent :</b>	1.75 linear feet (4 boxes)
<b>Abstract :</b>	Collection consists of correspondence to and from Oliver Wolcott, legal and legislative papers, and some correspondence of his family members.
<b>Location:</b>	Manuscript stacks
<b>Language:</b>	English

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Biographical Sketch

Oliver Wolcott was born in Windsor, Connecticut, on November 20, 1726, the youngest son of Roger Wolcott (1679-1767) and Sarah (Drake) Wolcott (1684?-1748). On January 21, 1755 he married Laura (Lorraine, Lorrain) Collins (1732-1794), the daughter of Daniel and Lois (Cornwall) Collins of Guilford. He graduated from Yale in 1747 and received a captain's commission from Governor George Clinton of New York in the same year. He served with the army in border action between English and French colonists in King George's War (the War of the Austrian Succession, 1744-1748).

Returning home in 1748, he studied medicine with his brother, Dr. Alexander Wolcott. Before he was established in practice, however, he moved to Litchfield, where his father owned property, and became Litchfield's first sheriff (1751-1771). Wolcott was a representative of the town in the General Assembly, and in 1774 he was chosen an Assistant or Councilor, a position to which he was annually elected until 1786. While a member of the Council, he was also Chief Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the County, and for many years he was Judge of the Court of

Probate for the district of Litchfield. He served in the militia in every grade of office from Captain to Major-General.

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the Assembly appointed Wolcott as commissary to supply stores and provisions for the troops. In July 1775, he was named one of the commissioners of Indian affairs for the northern department. He met representatives of the Six Nations at Albany and helped settle the Wyoming Valley and the New York-Vermont boundary questions.

Wolcott was first elected a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1775, and except in 1779 when he was not chosen, he attended from three to six months every winter or spring until 1783. He was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. In July 1776 he brought to Litchfield from New York the lead statue of King George the III which was melted into bullets for the war effort.

As Brigadier-General in August 1776, Wolcott commanded the fourteen militia regiments sent to New York to reinforce General Putnam on the Hudson River. In December he was put in charge of the 6th Militia Brigade in northwestern Connecticut, and in September 1777, he led a force of volunteers from his brigade to join Horatio Gates' army against Burgoyne. As a Major-General in 1779, he was responsible for the defense of the Connecticut seacoast, and in May 1780, he was added to the Council of Safety, the state executive committee for the prosecution of the war.

At the end of the war Wolcott resigned from the Congress and returned home to Litchfield. He served as commissioner at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784 to make peace with the Six Nations, but he resigned from that post in the following year. In 1787 he was chosen Lt. Governor of Connecticut and was a member of the state convention which accepted the Constitution. In 1789, Wolcott helped conclude a treaty with the Wyandottes which extinguished their title to the Western Reserve.

On the death of Governor Samuel Huntington in January 1796, Wolcott succeeded to the governorship, and he held that office until his death the following year. He was president of the Connecticut Society of Arts and Sciences and the recipient of an honorary degree from Yale.

Oliver and Laura Wolcott had five children, four who survived infancy. Oliver Wolcott died December 1, 1797 and is buried in Litchfield, Connecticut.

Note: There is a discrepancy in a number of accounts of Oliver Wolcott's life as to his date of birth. Some sources list his birth date as November 20, and others as December 1, 1726. This discrepancy is caused by the change from the Julian to Gregorian calendar, the latter which was adopted in the American colonies in 1752. Oliver Wolcott, Jr., in the Biographical Sketch of his father, lists his father's birthrate at November 26, 1726.

## Scope and Content

Collection consists predominantly of correspondence to and from Oliver Wolcott, legal and legislative papers, printed material, and the Oliver Wolcott, Jr. Papers.

### Arrangement

Materials are organized into five series, based on form.

**Series I. Correspondence** consists of letters to and from Oliver Wolcott, and supporting material. military correspondence, letters and supporting documents concerning negotiations with Native Americans, and relations between the military and the colonists. Also included are correspondence and related material concerning local government, the Continental Congress, current events, and some family letters. Military correspondence includes commissions, orders, dispatches, military maneuvers, troop movements, military intelligence, casualty lists, accounts, exchanges of prisoners, and parole letters. Correspondence between Oliver and Laura Wolcott, and Oliver Wolcott and his children, discusses military, government, personal and family matters, and current news. Also included are undated letters to Laura Wolcott and letters and supporting documents from Wolcott's descendants. Correspondents include: his wife Laura (Lorraine) Collins Wolcott (1732-1794), Chauncey Goodrich (1759-1815), Samuel Holden Parsons (1737-1789), Jonathan Trumbull, Sr. (1710-1785), Israel Putnam (1718-1790), Roger Sherman (1721-1793), Andrew Ward (1727-1799), and George Washington (1732-1799).

**Series II: Legal Papers** consists of a copy of a transcription of Oliver Wolcott's Bill to the Estate of Joseph Yale. Original is owned by Wolcott G. Lane.

**Series III: Legislative Papers** consists of the original constitution of Connecticut, Resolutions of Litchfield Town Meeting and the Connecticut general Assembly, and proclamation.

**Series IV: Printed Material** consists of one page from The Connecticut Courant.

**Series V: Oliver Wolcott, Jr. Papers** consists of a biographical sketches of Henry and Oliver Wolcott written by Oliver Wolcott Jr.

Materials in the Correspondence series follow the 1848 physical binding into four volumes. Other series are arranged chronologically to compliment access points from the card catalog.

## **Restrictions**

### **Access Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on access to the collection. Some material is fragile so the researcher is initially directed to microfilm copies

### **Use Restrictions**

Use of the material requires compliance with the Connecticut Historical Society's Research Center regulations.

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## **Subject Headings**

### **Personal Names**

Goodrich, Chauncey  
Parsons, Samuel Holden  
Putnam, Israel  
Sherman, Roger  
Trumbull, Jonathan  
Ward, Andrew  
Washington, George

### **Subjects**

Concord, Battle of, 1775.  
Iroquois Indians Treaties.  
Lexington, Battle of, 1775.

### **Geographic Names**

United States History Revolution, 1775-1783 Prisoners, Exchange of.  
United States History Revolution, 1775-1783 Secret service.

### **Genre Forms**

Holographs; holographs, signed; printed forms completed in manuscript.

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## **Administrative Information**

### **Preferred Citation**

Item, Collection Title, Collection number (Box #, Folder #). Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

### Processing Details

Collection was processed by Marilyn Paul-Lewis under an NHPRC grant (#89-003) in April 1999. EAD finding aid updated to EAD2002 in December 2010.

### Accruals

The collection is open, but additional material is not expected.

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### Related Material

An index of catalog cards is available to aid access to this collection and material in other collections. Access is through writer, recipient and date. The card catalog is located in the Research Center reading room.

A microfilm copy of the collection is available for researchers.

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### Contents:

#### I. Correspondence

##### Box Folder

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | 1 | Vol. I Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott and Laura (Lorrain) Wolcott; Wolcott's military commissions and supporting correspondence; documents concerning relations with Native Americans at the beginning of the American Revolution; an account of the Battle of Lexington and Concord. 1747-1775 (18 items) |
| 1 | 2 | Vol. I Letters from Oliver Wolcott; two copies of transcriptions of Oliver Wolcott's letters (originals at Yale University); list of cartridges made from statue of King George III. 1776 (8 items)  |
| 1 | 3 | Vol. I Oliver Wolcott's letters, orders, and military commissions; letters to Laura (Lorrain) Wolcott. 1776 (9 items)  |
| 1 | 4 | Vol. I Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott; two copies of transcriptions of Oliver Wolcott's letters (originals at Yale University); List of Prisoners in Burgoyne's Army. September - December, 1776 (6 items)   |
| 1 | 5 | Vol. I Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott; Oliver Wolcott's commission as brigadier general; deposition of Lt. Thomas Catlin   |

		(prisoner of war). January - May, 1777 (10 items)
1	6	Vol. I Letters to Oliver Wolcott; military orders and dispatches; resolutions of Yale College Corporation, July 10, 1777 June - July, 1777 (13 items)
1	7	Vol. I. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott; military orders, dispatches, and casualty lists August, 1777 (19 items)
1	8	Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott concerning military matters and relations with Native Americans September, 1777 (17 items)
1	9	Vol. I. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; military orders; resolution of the Connecticut General Assembly; election results. October - December, 1777 (8 items)
1	10	Vol. I. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; copy of transcription of letter from Oliver Wolcott to Governor Trumbull (Original at Yale University). 1778 (6 items)
1	11	Vol. I. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; a Return of the Quantity of Wheat, Rye, and Indian corn in the State of Connecticut, May 6, 1779. January - June, 1779 (3 items)
1	12	Vol. I. Letters to from and concerning Oliver Wolcott. July, 1-11, 1779 (13 items)
1	13	Vol. I. Letter primarily to Oliver Wolcott. July 12 - 17, 1779 (14 items)
1	14	Vol. II. Letters to Laura Wolcott from Oliver Wolcott. 1767 - 1775 (4 items)
1	15	Vol. II. Letters to Laura Wolcott from Oliver Wolcott. Jan. - June, 1776 (14 items)
1	16	Vol. II. Letters to Laura Wolcott from Oliver Wolcott. July - December, 1776 (13 items)
1	17	Vol. II. Letters from Oliver Wolcott to his wife, Laura, and children. 1777 (17 items)
<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	
2	1	Vol. II Letters from Oliver Wolcott to his wife, Laura, while at Yorktown. 1778 (15 items)
2	2	Vol. II. Letters from Oliver Wolcott to his wife, Laura, and his children. 1781 - 1782 (11 item)
2	3	Vol. II. Letters from oliver Wolcott to his wife, Laura, and his children; copy of a transcription of a letter to Matthew Griswold. 1785 - 1787 (16 items)
2	4	Vol. II. Letters from Oliver Wolcott to his wife, Laura, while in New York and New Haven. 1785 (16 items)
2	5	Vol. III. Letters primarily to Oliver Wolcott. July 18 - 20, 1779 (11 item)
2	6	Vol. III. Letters and copies of letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. July 21 - 23, 1779 (10 items)
2	7	Vol. III. Letters Primarily to Oliver Wolcott. July 24 - 25, 1779 (9 items)

- 2 8 Vol. III. Letter primarily to Oliver Wolcott July 26 - 28, 1779 (8 items)
- 2 9 Vol. III. Letters primarily to Oliver Wolcott from John Trumbull, Andrew Ward, Samuel Parsons, and John Glover. July 29 - 31, 1779 (9 items)
- 2 10 Vol. III. Letters primarily to Oliver Wolcott; concerning prisoner exchanges, and resolutions concerning plundering. August 1 - 3, 1779 (12 items)
- 2 11 Vol. III. Letters primarily to Oliver Wolcott; copy of letter to Andrew Ward; list of payments for espionage services August 4 - 13, 1779 (13 items)
- 2 12 Vol. III. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; letters concerning the Council of Safety; letters concerning the exchange of prisoners. August 14 - 24, 1779 (11 item)
- 2 13 Vol. III. Letters primarily to Oliver Wolcott; Wolcott's copies of his letters; letter re. John Townsend's parole agreement. August 25 - 31, 1779 (5 items)
- 2 14 Vol. III. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; results of nomination for Council, October 1779. September - December, 1779 (11 item)
- 2 15 Vol. III. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; copies and extracts of letters; extract of minutes of meetings; Amount of Orders drawn on Pay Table Office (May 25, 1779 - January 1, 1780. January - August, 1780 (9 items)

**Box Folder**

- 3 1 Vol. III. Letters and supporting documents concerning the financing of the Revolutionary War. September - December, 1780 (5 items)
- 3 2 Vol. III. Copies and transcriptions of Oliver Wolcott's letters; copy of a report of a committee of Congress, "Statement of the Publick Account of the United States. 1781 (10 items)
- 3 3 Vol. III. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; letters and supporting documents concerning Vermont's statehood. 1782 (7 items)
- 3 4 Vols. III & IV. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; A Copy of Instructions...to Negotiate with the Indian Nations (October, 1783). 1782 - 1783 (8 items)
- 3 5 Vol. IV. Letters to Oliver Wolcott; documents concerning relations with Native Americans (Six Nations); Oliver Wolcott's appointment as Commissioner to hold a treaty with the Indians. 1784 (9 items)
- 3 6 Vol. IV Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott; letter to Laura Wolcott; extract of Treaty with Native Americans. 1785 - 1786 (11 item)
- 3 7 Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott; extract of engineer's instructions; letter to Laura Wolcott. 1789 - 1795 (9 items)
- 3 8 Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. January - February, 1796 (11 item)
- 3 9 Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. March, 1796 (9 items)
- 3 10 Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. April, 1796 (9 items)

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| 3 | 11 | Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. May, 1796 (12 items)   |
| 3 | 12 | Vol. IV. Letters and copies of letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. June - October, 1796 (11 item)   |
| 3 | 13 | Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. December, 1796 (8 items)   |
| 3 | 14 | Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott; Court Martial of Captain Timothy Gates. January - March, 1797 (11 item)  |
| 3 | 15 | Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. April - June, 1797 (7 items)   |
| 3 | 16 | Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott. July - August, 1797 (18 items)   |
| 3 | 17 | Vol. IV. Letters to and from Oliver Wolcott.; Oliver Wolcott Jr.'s design for a monument to his grandmother, Lois Collins. September - November, 1797 & 1825 (10 items) |

**Box Folder**

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| 4 | 1 | Letter from John S. Wolcott concerning portraits of Oliver Wolcott, and Oliver Wolcott, Jr.; Resolution in the Senate concerning the Oliver Wolcott portraits. 1834 (2 items) |
| 4 | 2 | Vol. IV. Letters from Lois Stone concerning Chidsey Cornwall, Laura Wolcott's sister-in-law; Letter to Mrs. Wolcott from Sally Trumbull. [16--?] - [17--?] (2 items)          |

**II. Legal Papers**

**Box Folder**

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| 4 | 3 | Bill of Oliver Wolcott to the Estate of Joseph Yale (copy), March 2, 1799. 1799 (1 item) |
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**III. Legislative Papers**

**Box Folder**

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|---|---|--|
| 4 | 4 | Original Constitution of Connecticut (Articles of Government); Resolutions of Litchfield Town; Resolutions of the Continental Congress concerning relations with Native Americans. 1638 - 1797 (8 items) |
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**IV. Printed Material**

**Box Folder**

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|---|---|---|
| 4 | 5 | Page from The Connecticut Courant, June 23, 1766. 1766 (1 item) |
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**V. Oliver Wolcott Jr. Papers**

**Box Folder**

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|---|---|--|
| 4 | 6 | Biographical sketch of Henry and Oliver Wolcott. January 18, 1819 (1 item) |
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