

Connecticut Historical Society
museum & library

Samson Occom Papers

A Guide to the Samson Occom Papers at the Connecticut
Historical Society

Collection Overview

Repository:	Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
Creator :	Occom, Samson, 1723-1792
Title :	Samson Occom Papers
Dates :	1727-1808
Extent :	0.50 linear foot (1 box)
Abstract :	Collection consists correspondence, a diary and sermons, as well as some papers of Joseph Johnson.
Location :	Ms Occom
Language:	English

Biographical Sketch

Samson Occom was born in 1723 in a Mohegan community near New London, Connecticut. At the age of sixteen he was deeply influenced by the preaching of the Reverend James Davenport and other evangelical preachers of the "Great Awakening" and became a Christian. From 1743 to 1747 he was a pupil of Eleazar Wheelock, of Lebanon, Connecticut, a noted missionary who trained young Native American men to be ministers to their own people.

In 1749 Occom became schoolmaster and minister to the Montauk tribe on eastern Long Island. It was there that he met and married Mary Fowler, a Montauk Indian. Together they had ten children. Although he lacked formal theological training (he had not gone to college on account of his poor eyesight), he was ordained by the Presbytery of Long Island in 1759.

At the behest of Wheelock, in 1761 and again in 1763 Occom went to preach among the Oneida tribe in upstate New York. Occom also went to England in 1765 at his mentor's request for a two year speaking tour to raise money for a charity school for Indians in New England. He preached three hundred sermons and raised nearly twelve thousand pounds in contributions.

On his return to America, Occom found his family in poverty, despite assertions from Wheelock that they would be well looked after. Occom also discovered that Wheelock intended to use the money he had raised in England to fund what would become Dartmouth College instead of an Indian Charity School. This led to a parting of the ways between the two men.

In the 1770s, Samson Occom and Joseph Johnson developed a plan to lead their people and other New England Indians to a new home among the Oneida where they could lead Christian lives in peace. They obtained land in north central New York State from the Oneida but it was not until 1785 that the town of Brothertown was founded. Occom eventually moved his family to Brothertown, where he served as minister and advisor. He died there on July 14, 1792.

Scope and Content

Collection consists of correspondence to and from Samson Occom, a diary and a donation book from his trip to Great Britain. There are several sermons and speeches, both by Occom and his son-in-law, Joseph Johnson, as well as some papers of the Mohegan tribe, and letters and household accounts of Samson's wife, Mary.

Materials are organized into seven series, and four sub-series, based on form and creator.

Series I: Correspondence Consists of letters to and from Samson Occom.

Series II: Sermons Consists of sermons believed to be written by Samson Occom; some are by his son-in-law, Joseph Johnson.

Series III: Diary Consists of Samson Occom's diary for the year 1787.

Series IV: Donation Book Consists of a record of donations from Samson Occom's trip to England to gather funds for Wheelock's Indian Charity School.

Series V: Mohegan Tribal Records Consists of agreements and minutes of meetings of the heads of the tribe called to consult on Mohegan affairs.

Series VI: Mary Occom Papers contains two sub-series, Correspondence and Household Accounts. *Correspondence* consists of a letter to Mary Occom from D. Fowler. *Household Accounts* contains records of household purchases.

Series VII: Joseph Johnson Papers contains two sub-series. The first, *Correspondence and Petitions*, consists of correspondence to, from and concerning Joseph Johnson; petitions to the Provincial Congress of the

Colony of New York and the people of Albany, NY; and speeches and sermons.

Speeches consists of "A speech to the Indians," and petitions to the people of Schenectady and New Haven to forgo drinking liquor.

Materials in this collection are arranged chronologically in each series to compliment access points from the card catalog.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions on access to the collection.

Use Restrictions

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

Subject Headings

Personal Names

Johnson, Joseph
Occom, Mary.
Occom, Samson
Wheelock, Eleazar

Subject Headings

Correspondence
Diaries -- 1787
Diaries -- Great Britain -- 1787
Home economics -- Accounting
Indians of North America.
Sermons

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 November, 1998.

Original finding aid and EAD instance was compiled by Stephen Yearl in November, 1998. Updated to EAD2002 by CHS Staff in December 2010.

Accruals

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

Related Material

An index of catalog cards is available to aid access to this collection. Access is through writer, recipient and date. The card catalog is located in the library reading room. The reader is also directed to the Print Room and Museum for non-documentary materials.

Contents:

I. Correspondence

Box	Folder	
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1	1	Letters to, Samson Occom and letters concerning American Indian affairs. 1727-1760 (5 items) Conservation note: remove glued paper strip
1	2	Correspondence, primarily to Samson Occom. 1761-1765 (14 items)
1	3	Correspondence, primarily to Samson Occom. 1766 (18 items)
1	4	Correspondence, primarily to Samson Occom. 1795-1799 (22 items)
1	5	Correspondence, primarily to Samson Occom. 1769-1770 (10 items)
1	6	Correspondence, primarily to Samson Occom. 1771-1772 (15 items)
1	7	Correspondence, primarily to Samson Occom. 1773 (22 items) Conservation note: several items need encapsulation

1	8	Correspondence, primarily to Samson Occom. 1774-1775 (9 items) Conservation note: several items need encapsulation
1	9	Correspondence to and from Samson Occom. 1776-1780 (15 items)
1	10	Correspondence to and from Samson Occom. List of deaths in Mohegan in 1784 1781-1785 (10 items) Conservation note: Several items in need of repair/ encapsulation
1	11	Correspondence to and from Samson Occom. Letter from Samson and Mary to their son Benoni. 1786-1790 (10 items)
1	12	Correspondence to and from Samson Occom. 1791-1792 (4 items)
1	13	Correspondence to and from Samson Occom. Petitions to Governor of New York. [before 1792] (12 items)

II. Sermons

Box Folder

1	21	Sermons. 1753-1760 (3 items)
1	22	Sermons. 1772-1774 (6 items)
1	23	Joseph Johnson Sermons. 1805-1807 (5 items)
1	24	Sermons 17--? (12 items)
1	25	Sermons. 17--? (12 items)
1	26	Sermons. 17--? (6 items)

III. Diary

Box Folder

1	14	Diary. 1787 (1 item)
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IV. Donation Book

Box Folder

1	15	Donation book. 1766-1767 (1 item)
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V. Mohegan Tribal Records

Box Folder

1	16	Mohegan records: agreements and minutes. 1766 (1 item)
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VI. Mary Occom Papers

A. Correspondence

Box Folder

1	17	Letter to Mary Occom from D. Fowler. 1766 (1 item)
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B. Household Accounts

Box Folder

1 18 List of household purchases. 1766 (1 item)

VII. Joseph Johnson Papers

A. Correspondence

Box Folder

1 19 Correspondence and petitions. 1773-1776 (12 items)

Conservation note: items need tape removed;
other items are in a very fragile condition.

B. Speeches

Box Folder

1 20 Speeches 1774 (3 items)