

Zaccheus Collins correspondence, 1805-1827

ANSP.Coll.129

Finding aid prepared by Garrett Boos

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia

2010.12.07

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Summary Information

Repository	Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia
Creator	Collins, Zaccheus, 1764-1831
Title	Zaccheus Collins correspondence
Date [inclusive]	1805-1827
Extent	1.25 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Zaccheus Collins (1764-1831) was a plant collector and herbarium owner from Philadelphia. Collins was an esteemed botanist and was often consulted by a majority of botanical writers, though he never published anything himself. He was also an avid collector and his herbarium contained a nearly complete collection of the plants from the vicinity of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. His correspondents also sent him various specimens from their research in the southern states, particularly South Carolina and Georgia. The collection contains letters that are entirely botanical in nature, coming from 55 individuals, and presents a cross section of the botanists and their problems in the early 19th century. There is significant correspondence from Henry Muhlenberg (1753-1815), Frederick Augustus Hall Muhlenberg, Stephen Elliott (1771-1830) and Dr. Jacob Bigelow (1787-1879), as well as many other important botanists of the era.</p>

Preferred Citation note

[Description and date of item], [Box/folder number], Coll.129, Zaccheus Collins correspondence, 1805-1827, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

Biographical/Historical note

Zaccheus Collins (1764-1831) was a plant collector and herbarium owner from Philadelphia. Collins was an esteemed botanist and was often consulted by a majority of botanical writers, though he never published anything himself. He was also an avid collector and his herbarium contained a nearly complete collection of the plants from the vicinity of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. His correspondents also sent him various specimens from their research in the southern states, particularly South Carolina and Georgia.

Collins, born in 1764, was a Quaker merchant and an active philanthropist. He was particularly interested in botany, and especially cryptogamic plants (organisms that do not produce seeds and include algae, fungi, mosses, and ferns). Throughout his career, he “accumulated a large herbarium primarily through his own collecting in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, by exchange and as gifts from other leading botanists of the day,” (Stuckey). Through his extensive network of prominent botanists, gifts of specimens arrived from South Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, Missouri, the Mississippi River and westward.

His professional relationships with other collectors and botanists included William Baldwin, W. P. C. Barton, Jacob Bigelow, Isaac Cleaver, Caspar Wister Eddy, Stephen Elliot, Eli Ives, Henry Muhlenberg, Thomas Nutall, Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, H. Steinhauer, and John Torrey. Both Dr. William Baldwin and Henry Muhlenberg accumulated herbariums (collections of preserved plant specimens) and their shared interests resulted in a great deal of correspondence between them and Collins.

He was highly esteemed by his contemporaries, and, according to [], “the letters of the most eminent botanists of that time show how highly they valued his knowledge and how eagerly they sought his advice upon all doubtful questions in their science,” (Redfield). Thomas Nutall honored him by naming *Collinsia* for him and is described “to have been a sort of lifetime achievement award,” (Yosemite National Park).

During his lifetime, Collins was a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society and the Philadelphia Linnean Society. Collins die on June 12, 1831 after spending more than six months incapacitated by paralysis. At the time of his death, he was serving as a vice-president of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

Bibliography:

Redfield, Mr. “Botanical Correspondence of Zaccheus Collins.” *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, Vol. 28 (1876), pp. 81-82.

Stuckey, Ronald L. “The First Public Auction of an American Herbarium including an Account of the Fate of the Baldwin, Collins, and Rafinesque Herbaria.” *Taxon*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Aug., 1971), pp. 443-459.

Yosemite National Park. “Tincture Plant (*Collinsia tinctoria*),” <http://www.yosemitehikes.com/wildflowers/tincture-plant/tincture-plant.htm> (accessed November 30, 2011).

Scope and Contents note

The collection contains letters that are entirely botanical in nature, coming from 55 individuals, and presents a cross section of the botanists and their problems in the early 19th century. There is significant correspondence from Henry Muhlenberg (1753-1815), Frederick Augustus Hall Muhlenberg, Stephen Elliott (1771-1830) and Dr. Jacob Bigelow (1787-1879), as well as many other important botanists of the era. The collection is arranged in six series.

The first series, "Academy information on the collection," contains two indexes of the correspondence, created by Academy staff. While all of the information is valuable to users of the collection, the Botanical correspondence calendar found in Box 1, Folder 1 is the most important. This document contains item level description of each letter in the collection, detailing author, date, location, and abstract of content. Researchers should view this folder prior to using any part of the collection.

The series "Correspondence with Reverend Henry Muhlenberg" contains sixty letters dating from 1812 to 1815. Henry Muhlenberg (1753-1815), a minister and botanist "to whom American botany has been so much indebted," (Redfield) collected a herbarium about which he and Collins corresponded. Researchers should view Box 1, Folder 1 for details on individual letters.

The series "Correspondence with F. A. Muhlenberg" contains correspondence regarding the transfer of his father's herbarium to the American Philosophical Society and dates from 1815 to 1816. This correspondence follows the death of his father, Henry Muhlenberg, in 1815. Frederick Augustus Hall Muhlenberg was a physician. Researchers should view Box 1, Folder 1 for details on individual letters.

"Correspondence with Stephen Elliott" dates from 1813 to 1821. Stephen Elliott (1771-1830) was a botanist, a legislator and a farmer from South Carolina. He wrote an important text on American botany, *A Sketch of the Botany of South-Carolina and Georgia*, which was published as two volumes in 1821 and 1824. Elliot corresponded not only with Collins, but also with Muhlenberg. Researchers should view Box 1, Folder 1 for details on individual letters.

The fifth series "Correspondence with Dr. Jacob Bigelow of Boston," dates from 1814 to 1818. Dr. Jacob Bigelow (1787-1879) was a botanist and a physician and a professor at Harvard University. He was the author of *An Introduction to Physiological & Systematical Botany*, 1814; *Florula bostoniensi*, 1814 and 1824; and *American Medical Botany*, three volumes, 1817-1820. Researchers should view Box 1, Folder 1 for details on individual letters.

"Correspondence with various botanists and organizations," dates from 1814 to 1827, and consists of one or two letters from various botanists and organizations. The organizations are local to Philadelphia and include the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia and the American Philosophical Society. Individual botanist with whom he correspondence include William Baldwin, W. P. C. Barton, William Bartram, John A. Brereton, Adolphe Brongniart, Archibald Bruce, Isaac Cleaver, R. Conyngham, Thomas Cooper, José Correia da Serra, J. Cryder; William Darlington, Daniel Drake, J. Duby, Caspar Wistar Eddy, George Gibbs, Horace H. Hayden, Charles G. Hiffell, William J. Hooker, David Hosack, Alex von Humboldt, Jabez Hustis, Eli Ives, W. H. Keating, Matthias Joseph Kelly, John Eatton LeConte, John S. Lowry, John Lyon, Jas. MacBride, F. Andrew Michaux, Samuel L. Mitchill, Alfred S. Monson, Thomas

Nuttall, Daniel Parker, E. L. Philip, J. K. Potts, Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, William Rauch, L. D. Schweintz, Benjamin Silliman, H. Steinhauer, W. E. Stuve, William Swainson, John Torrey, William Turner, John Vaughan, Jas. W. Wallace, and N. Wallich. Researchers should view Box 1, Folder 1 for details on individual letters.

According to Mr. Redfield, "it cannot be expected that these letters of sixty years ago can add any new botanical facts to our stock; but they have great interest as illustrating the early history of botanical science in our land, and as revealing to us the obstacles which the students of that day encountered in the scarcity of books and in the difficulty of communication."

Bibliography:

Redfield, Mr. "Botanical Correspondence of Zaccheus Collins." *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, Vol. 28 (1876), pp. 81-82.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia 2010.12.07

Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use note

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Custodial History note

Deposited by General Parker, executor of Z. Collins' estate, April, 1843, the collection having been collated, indexed and bound by the Academy.

Processing Information note

The creation of the electronic guide for this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

Finding aid entered into the Archivists' Toolkit by Garrett Boos.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Genre(s)

- Correspondence

Occupation(s)

- Botany

Personal Name(s)

- Bigelow, Jacob, 1786-1879
- Collins, Zaccheus, 1764-1831
- Muhlenberg, Henry, 1755-1815

Subject(s)

- Botanists
- Herbaria

Academy information on the collection

Collection Inventory

Academy information on the collection

Botanical correspondence calendar 1982

	Box	Folder
Text	1	1

Papers 1821-1827

	Box	Folder
Text	1	2

Material about botanical correspondence 1952

	Box	Folder
Text	1	3

Susquehanna bank notes 1815, 1820, 1821

	Box	Folder

Correspondence with Reverend Henry Muhlenberg

Text	1	4
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Botanical correspondence index, title pages, chapter heads circa 1840s

	Box	Folder
Text	1	5

Correspondence with Reverend Henry Muhlenberg 1812 March 9-1815 May 19

Letters 1-10 1812 March 19-November 6

	Box	Folder
Text	1	6

Letters 11-20 1812 December 28-1813 July 17

	Box	Folder
Text	1	7

Letters 21-30 1813 July 26-December 8

	Box	Folder
Text	1	8

Correspondence with Dr. F. A. Muhlenberg

Letters 31-40 1813 December 13-1814 July 12

	Box	Folder
Text	1	9

Letters 41-50 1814 July 19-November 3

	Box	Folder
Text	1	10

Letters 51-61 1814 November 14-1815 May 2

	Box	Folder
Text	1	11

Correspondence with Dr. F. A. Muhlenberg 1815 May 24-1816 October 23

Letter #s 62-70 1815 May 24-1816 January 21

	Box	Folder
Text	1	12

Correspondence with Professor Stephen Elliot

Letter #s 71-80 1815 January 27-1816 March 5

	Box	Folder
Text	1	13

Letter #s 81-88 1816 March 21-October 23

	Box	Folder
Text	1	14

Correspondence with Professor Stephen Elliot 1813 October 25-1821 October 12

89-103 1813 October-1821 October

	Box	Folder
Text	2	1

Correspondence with Dr. Jacob Bigelow of Boston 1814 October 24-1818 August 3

Letters 104-112 1814 October 24-1816 May 11

	Box	Folder

Correspondence with various botanists and organizations

Text

2

2

Letters 113-122 1816 May 26-1818 August 3

Text

Box**Folder**

2

3

Correspondence with various botanists and organizations 1814 May 14-1827 March 11

Caspar Eistar Eddy, Isaac Cleaver and Henry Steinhauer (Letters 123-135) 1814 May 14-1816 August 27

Text

Box**Folder**

2

4

Henry Steinhauer, John LeConte and Daniel Steinhauer (Letters 136-148) circa 1816 November-1818 October 5

Text

Box**Folder**

2

5

William P. C. Barton (Letters 149-164) circa 1818- 1823

Box**Folder**

Correspondence with various botanists and organizations

Text	2	6
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Thomas Nuttall (Letters 167-178) circa 1812-1822

	Box	Folder
Text	2	7

Eli Ives and Alfred S. Monson (Letters 179-188) 1817 August 14-1819 October 8

	Box	Folder
Text	2	8

William Baldwin (Letters 189-200) 1817 September 1-1818 October 15

	Box	Folder
Text	2	9

William Baldwin (Letters 201-212) 1818 November 13-1819 March 1

	Box	Folder
Text	3	1

John Torrey (Letters 213-223) 1818 June 5-1823 August 17

Correspondence with various botanists and organizations

	Box	Folder
Text	3	2

Letters to various botanists and organizations (Letters 225-240, 224 omitted in numbering) 1804 May 20-1814 July 11

	Box	Folder
Text	3	3

Letters to various botanists and organizations (Letters 241-255) 1815 December 3-1819 March 11

	Box	Folder
Text	3	4

Letters to various botanists and organizations (Letters 256-270; 265 was renumbered and is now 259A) 1819 March 10-1819 September 6

	Box	Folder
Text	3	5

Letters to various botanists and organizations (Letters 271-285) [1819] September 6-1820 October 18

	Box	Folder

Correspondence with various botanists and organizations

 Text

3

6

Letters to various botanists and organizations (Letters 286-296) 1823 June 15-1827 March 11

 Text

Box**Folder**

3

7