

Catharine Wistar Bache Papers
1788-1822
Mss.B.B124

American Philosophical Society
2003
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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Bache, Catherine Wistar, 1770-1820
Title	Catharine Wistar Bache Papers
Date [inclusive]	1788-1822
Call number	Mss.B.B124
Extent	0.25 Linear feet
Location	LH-MV-C-1
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Catherine Wistar Bache (1805-1886) was the point of connection between two of Philadelphia's most illustrious families of the late eighteenth century. Daughter of the physician Caspar Wistar, in November 1797 she married Dr. William Bache, who was the son of Richard Bache and the grandson of Benjamin Franklin.</p> <p>Primarily letters to Mrs. Bache (wife of Dr. William Bache) of Philadelphia, from Mrs. David Hosack (nee Mary Eddy), Mrs. Elizabeth Trist, and Mary Jones. The letters are personal and concern family life, activities of husbands, etc., with many references to Caspar Wistar. There are comments on diseases, education (at William and Mary College), war, and politics. References are also made to the deaths of Richard Bache and Caspar Wistar, and to Benjamin Franklin's Stockado (a musical instrument).</p>

Preferred Citation

Cite as: Catherine Wistar Bache Papers, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

Catherine Wistar Bache (1770-1820) was the point of connection between two of Philadelphia's most illustrious families of the late eighteenth century. She married Benjamin Franklin's grandson Dr. William Bache (1773-1820) in November 1797.

Catherine Wistar Bache was born in Philadelphia in 1770, to Richard Wistar and Sarah Wyatt. Her brother was Caspar Wistar (1761-1818, APS 1787), a physician and professor of anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania

In 1797 Catherine married the physician William Bache, son of Richard Bache and Benjamin Franklin's daughter Sarah "Sally" Franklin. The following year yellow fever struck the city. In part because of fear of the epidemic, which killed William's brother Benjamin, and also because of the urging of their friend Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826, APS 1780), the couple decided in early 1799 to move from Philadelphia to Albemarle County, Virginia. In 1800, after a stay of several months at Monticello, they moved into their new house in Franklin, Virginia.

When the farm proved inadequate to support the family, they began to experience financial difficulties. As a result, William Bache sought a government appointment from President Jefferson. In 1802 he was appointed to care for sick American seamen in New Orleans. Meanwhile Catherine Wistar Bache and their children moved back to Philadelphia. They were reunited in 1803 when William was appointed Surveyor of the Port of Philadelphia, a position he held until his death in 1820.

Catherine Wistar Bache died in Philadelphia only three months after her husband, in November 1820. The couple had four children, Sarah Bache (1798-1820), Benjamin Franklin Bache (1801-1881), Emma Mary Bache (1803-1813), and Catherine Wistar Bache (1805-1886).

Scope & content

The papers of Catharine Wistar Bache consist of 114 letters written by and to Catharine Wistar Bache, wife of Dr. William Bache of Philadelphia. Bache's major correspondents include Mary Eddy Hosack (wife of the physician David Hosack), Elizabeth Trist, and Mary Trist Jones. Primarily personal in nature, these letters discuss family and husbands, and contain numerous references to Catharine's father, Caspar Wistar, as well as to Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Other letters discuss yellow fever and other diseases, education at William and Mary College, the war, and politics, and one letter refers to Benjamin Franklin's "sticcado" (a musical instrument).

The Trists were intimate friends of Thomas Jefferson. As a representative to the Continental Congress, Jefferson lodged at the home of Mary House, whose daughter Elizabeth Trist took on the role of surrogate mother for Jefferson's daughter. After the death of her own husband, Trist moved to Monticello with her son.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 2003

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Acquired from Marian Carson, 1967.

Processing Information

Reformatted by rsc, 2003.

Related Materials

Related Material

At the APS, see also the numerous collections related to Benjamin Franklin and to various members of the Bache family. The Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts at Princeton University houses a collection of Bache and Wistar Family Correspondence (call no. C0381).

The APS also houses the papers of Sarah Bache Hodge, daughter of Catherine and William Bache.

Indexing Terms

Corporate Name(s)

- William and Mary College

Genre(s)

- Family Correspondence

Personal Name(s)

- Bache, William, 1773-1820
- Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790
- Hosack, David, 1769-1835
- Hosack, Mary Eddy, d. 1824
- Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826
- Jones, Mary Trist
- Kemper, Jackson, 1789-1870
- Madison, James, 1751-1836
- Trist, Elizabeth
- Wistar, Caspar, 1761-1818

Subject(s)

- Early National Politics
- Marriage and Family Life
- Native America
- Philadelphia History
- Social Life and Custom
- United States--History--War of 1812
- United States--Politics and government--1783-1809
- War of 1812
- Women's History
- Yellow fever--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia

Other Descriptive Information

This relatively small collection contains rich correspondence often directed to Catherine Wistar Bache, the daughter of prominent doctor Caspar Wistar and wife of Richard Bache's son. The collection is one of the many to the Bache-Franklin collections at the APS. This specific collection contains numerous letters from other women, often wives and mothers, to Catherine. There are a few letters to Caspar Wistar and William Bache (Catherine's husband), which often discuss current events, specifically Anthony Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794 and the Whiskey Rebellion. The letters to Catherine discuss current affairs, such as the Yellow Fever epidemic and the War of 1812. More often, however, the letters relate family and personal matters. The letters primarily discuss husbands, family activities, children, and other such topics. Some of the early letters also touch upon gender relations and courtship. For instance, a male correspondent wrote Catherine that he has not received any letters from his "female correspondents"

and was thus hoping “to renew the friendly intercourse,” and Mary Eddy discussed flirtations. The correspondence in this collection spans more than thirty years, and therefore also provides insight on the changing concerns of Catherine as a young single woman, wife, and mother. William Bache was sent to Louisiana in 1803 in an official post overseeing a hospital. Discussion of moving to Louisiana is included in the collection, during which references to “Captain Lewis” are made, likely Meriwether Lewis. Because of her position in society, these letters often provide portraits and anecdotes of prominent figures.

Catharine Wistar Bache Papers

Collection Inventory

Catharine Wistar Bache Papers	1788-1822	114 items
to Miss Catharine Wistar.	1788 January 27	
to Catharine Wistar	1788 September 14	
to Catharine Wistar	1793 June 4	
to Catharine Wistar	1793 June 17	
to Catharine Wistar	1793 June 23	
to Catharine Wistar	1793 July 22	
to Catharine Wistar.	1793 August 23	
to Catharine Wistar	1793 November 14	
to Catharine Wistar	1794 August 5	
to Dr. William Bache.	1794 November 2	
to Dr. William Bache.	1794 November 8	
to Dr. William Bache.	1795 May 13	
to Catharine Wistar	1795 July 14	
to Catharine Wistar	1795 July 30	
to Dr. Caspar Wistar.	1796 April 23	
to Caspar Wistar	1796 June 11	
to Catharine Wistar	1796 July 21	
to Catharine Wistar	1796 July 27	

Catharine Wistar Bache Papers

to Catharine Wistar	1796 October 26
to Catharine Wistar	1797 April 3
to Hannah Wahn	1797 July 8
Contract (copy)	1797 September
to Catharine Wistar	1797 November 7
to Catharine Wistar	1797 November 20
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1797 December 28
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1798 February 4
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1798 July 13
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1799 November 17
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1800 September 8
to William Bache	1802 November 29
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1803 April 8
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1803 June 27
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1803 August 4
to Dr. William Bache	1803 August 18
to Dr. William Bache	1803 August 27
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1803 September 7
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1804 October 8
to Dr. William Bache	1804 October 22
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1807 April 8

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to Catharine Wistar Bache	1807 July 2	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1808 November 30	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1809 June 17	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1809 June 30	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1809 July 5	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1809 July 10	
to Catharine Wistar Bache, 1809 July 10		
	[http://diglib.amphilsoc.org/fedora/repository/text:2390]	
to Catherine Wistar Bache	1809 September 15	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1809 September 28	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1809 October 17	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	[1809] October 24	
to Catharine Wistar Bache, [1809] October 24		
	[http://diglib.amphilsoc.org/fedora/repository/text:2389]	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 April 23	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 May 29	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 June 8	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 July 1	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 July 17	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 August 17	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 August 17	Box Oversize
to Catharine Wistar Bache	[1810] September 15	

Catharine Wistar Bache Papers

to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 December 28	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1810 December 29	
to Catherine Wistar Bache	1811 February 20	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1811 March 24	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1811 May 7	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1811 July 6	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1811 July 14	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	[1811] October 18	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1812 February 1	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1812 May 3	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1812 June 25	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1812 September 12	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1812 September 28	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1812 November 25	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1813 February 1	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1813 February 17	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1813 July 7	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1813 November 23	Box Oversize
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1813 December 13	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1814 August 22	
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1814 December 21	

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to Catharine Wistar Bache	1815 July 12
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1815 November 23
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1816 April 24
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 January 17
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 June 10
Hosack, Mary Eddy Wistar to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 June 23
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 July 2
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 July 7
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 September 12
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 September 20
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 November 12
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1817 December 31
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1818 January 31
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1818 February 15
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1818 February 18
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1818 October 17
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1818 December 5
to Catharine Wistar Bache	1818 December 17
to Catherine Wistar Bache	1820 April 25
to Catharine Wistar Bache	undated
to Catharine Wistar Bache	undated

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to Catharine Wistar undated

to Catharine Wistar undated

Other Descriptive Information

January 6

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

December 20

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

October 10

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

May 3

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

June 24

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

May 6

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

Thursday

Catharine Wistar Bache Papers

to Catherine Bache undated

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

Tuesday

to Catharine Wistar Bache undated

Other Descriptive Information

wednesday noon

to "My dear Aunt" undated
