

Sarah Franklin Bache Papers

1768-1807

Mss.B.B1245

American Philosophical Society

2002

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Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Background note	5
Scope & content	6
Administrative Information	7
Related Materials	7
Indexing Terms	7
Other Descriptive Information	8
Collection Inventory	10
Sarah Franklin Bache Papers.....	10

Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808
Title	Sarah Franklin Bache Papers
Date [inclusive]	1768-1807
Call number	Mss.B.B1245
Extent	0.25 Linear feet
Location	LH-MV-C-1
Language	English
Container	1
Abstract	<p>Sarah Franklin Bache (1743-1808), a Revolutionary War patriot and daughter of Benjamin Franklin, led an active public life according to the standards of womanhood in the late eighteenth century. As the daughter of Benjamin Franklin she had an unusual access, for a woman, to the political life in revolutionary Philadelphia. Although her primary role was of caretaker of her family and home, Bache played an active role in the Revolution through her relief work and as her father's political hostess. The Sarah Franklin Bache papers consist of incoming and outgoing correspondence ranging from 1768 to 1807 mostly of a personal nature to and from friends and relatives. The correspondence of her relatives includes her nephew William Temple Franklin, her brother William Franklin and her children.</p>

Preferred Citation

Cite as: Sarah Franklin Bache papers, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

Sarah Franklin Bache was born in Philadelphia on 11 September 1743 to Benjamin Franklin and Deborah Read. Sarah, known as Sally throughout her life, had a typical education for a girl of her status in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. She had a great love of reading and music and was considered a skilled harpsichordist.

On 29 October 1767 Sally married Richard Bache in spite of her family's misgivings about his financial situation. It was Franklin's wish that Sally not marry Bache until his financial situation stabilized out of fear that Bache was only marrying for money. Nevertheless, Sally was devastated and Deborah Franklin allowed the wedding to take place against Franklin's wishes. It was not until Sally gave birth to her first child and Franklin met Bache that he truly accepted the marriage. Bache never became a successful businessman even though Franklin gave the couple several loans and helped them set up several stores in Philadelphia. Franklin was forced to support Sally and her family that included eight children for the rest of his life.

Throughout her life, Sally was interested in political matters and thought of herself as a committed Whig. She closely followed the events leading up to the Revolution and through her relief work supported the war by helping to raise money for the Continental Army. She is best known for her involvement in the Ladies Association of Philadelphia. She took over leadership of the association in 1780 and supervised the sewing of 2,200 shirts for the American soldiers.

In 1785 Benjamin Franklin returned to Philadelphia and spent his remaining years in the care of Sally and her family. When Franklin died he left most of his estate to Sally and her husband, including a miniature portrait of Louis XVI surrounded by diamonds, which she sold, against his wishes, to finance a trip to London. In 1794 the family moved to a farm outside of Philadelphia on the Delaware River, but Sally missed the city and returned in 1807 for medical treatment. She died the following year.

Scope & content

The Sarah Franklin Bache papers are a significant resource for the study of the life of Sarah Franklin Bache the daughter of Benjamin Franklin and the study of the life of the Franklin family. The collection consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence to and from Sarah Franklin Bache between 1768 and 1807 regarding her everyday activities and her personal affairs.

The papers reflect her life as a young married woman, her growing family, and the health and life of her children. The papers also touch on the health and whereabouts of her father, including condolences on his death. Her trip abroad taken after her father's death is also represented through her letters.

In addition, her correspondence illustrates important events in Philadelphia history, such as the Revolution and the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1793. A particular letter to George Washington reflects her relief work, more specifically her hand in the sewing of 2,200 shirts for American soldiers. There are a few letters concerning the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 in which there is discussion on the number of friends and relatives that died as a result of the disease.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 2002

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Accessioned, 1968.

Processing Information

Recatalogued by Leigh McCuen, 2002.

Related Materials

Related Material

See also the Benjamin Franklin Papers (B F85), the Benjamin Franklin Bache Papers, 1779-1793 (B B122), and the Bache Family Papers, 1770-1923 (B B121)

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Family Correspondence
- Political Correspondence

Geographic Name(s)

- Philadelphia (Pa.)-History--Revolution, 1775-1783.

Personal Name(s)

- Bache, Richard, 1737-1811
- Chaumont, Jacques-Donatien Leray de, 1725-1803
- Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790
- Franklin, William, 1731-1813
- Greene, Catherine Ray, 1731-1794
- Hewson, M. S., (Mary Stevenson)
- Hill, Henry, 1732-1798
- Murray, Judith Sargent, 1751-1820
- Washington, George, 1732-1799

Subject(s)

- American Revolution
- Early National Politics
- International Affairs
- Marriage and Family Life
- Medicine
- Philadelphia History
- Social Life and Custom
- Women's History
- Yellow fever--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--18th century.

Other Descriptive Information

The Sarah Franklin Bache Papers, along with the various other Bache family papers, provides great insight into the family relations of the extended Franklin family. The correspondence in this collection ranges from 1768-1807 and thus traverses a number of significant historical events. Much of the correspondence relates to family life and is personal in nature. The letters provide a clear picture of Sally as the central figure in the Franklin family, corresponding with all members of the family, including her brother William after he had been disowned by his father. Notably, most of the letters are to and from other women, showing that Sally was also a central figure in a network of prominent women in the Atlantic World and early republic who corresponded about their lives and current events.

The correspondence touches on a range of subjects, private and public. Sally's desire to marry Richard Bache against her father's wishes is discussed in a letter from Margaret Hewson Stevenson (Franklin's confidante and landlady in London) to Sally. Sally also corresponded with George Washington in the midst of the Revolutionary War and conveyed to him information and support. A number of letters to Sally provide details on the yellow fever epidemic that hit the east coast in 1793. Much of the later correspondence deals with child rearing and family matters. This correspondence also often touches on

political matters of both national and international concern. Sarah's networks crossed the Atlantic, and many of her letter writers were Britons, demonstrating how transatlantic networks continued to exist after American independence.

Among the many prominent letter writers to Sarah is Judith Murray, an early advocate for women's rights. Murray's letter is particularly detailed. It discusses Murray's financial and family affairs, discusses the performance of one of her plays in Boston, and then asks Sarah for her support in bringing the play to the Philadelphia stage.

Biographical Note: Sarah Franklin Bache was the daughter of Benjamin and Deborah Franklin. Sally, as she was called throughout her life, was a close confidante of her father. In his later years, she lived at Franklin Court with her family and helped Franklin in his old age.

Sarah married Richard Bache in 1769. Bache was born in England and immigrated to the colonies to try his hand as a merchant. He started in New York with little success and then headed to Philadelphia to try his hand there. Bache met with mixed success in Philadelphia, and Franklin was concerned that his interest in Sally was primarily for financial reasons. Although Franklin disapproved of the marriage, the couple wed, and Franklin eventually supported their marriage. The Baches' received financial assistance from Franklin throughout his life, and Franklin took their son Benjamin Franklin Bache under his wings as a protégé.

Sally was an active and prominent Philadelphian. She took part in the Stamp Act protests, led a volunteer association of women who outfitted Continental soldiers with supplies during the revolutionary war, and supported her son's endeavor as the printer of the anti-Federalist newspaper *Aurora*.

Sarah Franklin Bache Papers

Collection Inventory

Sarah Franklin Bache Papers	1768-1807	Box 1
Hewson, M. S., (Mary Stevenson) ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1768 February 24	2p.
Hewson, M. S., (Mary Stevenson) ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1772 August 29	3p.
Hall, Florence ALS to "My dear Couz." [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	1775 May 25	4p.
Mrs. S. Peters ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1778 April 25	1p.
Franklin, William, 1731-1813 ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1779 June 1	3p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to Washington, George	1780 December 26	1p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to Franklin, William et al.	[ca. 1782]	3p.
A. Potts ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1783 March 3	2p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to Chaumont, Jacques - Donation Leroy de	1784 December 14	1p.
Greene, Catharine ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1785 August 20	2p.

Sarah Franklin Bache Papers

Oconner, Eliza Harriot ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1787 June 14	1p.
A. Barry ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1789 May 18	3p.
Baynton, John and Baynton, Susanna ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1790 June 27	1p.
Newenham, Edward ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1790 August 10	2p.
Franklin, William, 1731-1813 ALS to [?]	1791 February 24	8p.
Simond, Frances ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1792 May 1	2p.
Ferguson, Eliza ALS to [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	1792 May 12	2p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to Bache, William	1792 December 3	1p.
Bache, Richard ALS to Bache, William	1792 December 3	2p.
Currie, Mary ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1793 March 6	1p.
Bass, P. ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1793 May 22	3p.
[Richard Bache's sister] ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1793 July 17	4p.
M[aria Stover] ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1793 October 7	4p.

Sarah Franklin Bache Papers

Bryson, James ALS to [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	1793 October 25	2p.
Hoffner, Phoebe ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1794 January 1	3p.
[A. Pole] ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1794 April 2	3p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to Bache, William	1794 June 29	2p.
M. Penn ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1794 July 25	4p.
A. Pole ALS to [Bache, Richard]	1795 March 13	8p.
Murray, Judith Sargent, 1751-1820 ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1795 June 19	3p.
Story, Mary ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1796 January 2	3p.
[Richard Bache's sister] ALS to Bache, Richard	1796 April 4	4p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to Bache, William	[1796] August 24	3p.
Hill, Henry, 1732-1798 ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1798 July 23	2p.
Viny, Lucy ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1798 July 24	3p.
Francis, Anne ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1799 March 24	4p.

Sarah Franklin Bache Papers

Lenox ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1800 April 1	3p.
Latrobe, Mary E. ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1800 July 26	3p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to Bache, William	1801 May 13	3p.
Latrobe, Mary E. ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1801 September 5	2p.
Housbrooke, Theophilus ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1803 June 18	4p.
Caldwell, E. H. ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1803 November 8	2p.
Simond, Frances ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	1804 December 7	2p.
Francis, Anne ALS to [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	1807 March 11	2p.
Mease, Isabella ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	May 1	2p.
Lenox, Mrs. Robert ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	August 25	4p.
Clifton, Anna Maria ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	August 26	1p.
F[rancis], A[nne] ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	n.d. [Tuesday]	2p.
Wincheley, J. ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	n.d. [Thursday Evening]	2p.

Sarah Franklin Bache Papers

[?] ALS to Bache, Sarah Franklin	n.d. [Saturday evening]	3p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to [Bache, William]	n.d.	4p.
Bache, Sarah Franklin, 1743-1808 ALS to [?]	n.d.	4p.
Hewson, M. S., (Mary Stevenson) ALS to [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	n.d.	2p.
Meade, H. C. ALS to [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	n.d.	2p.
[?] ALS to [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	n.d.	6p.
[?] ALS to [Bache, Sarah Franklin]	n.d.	4p.
