

Collinson-Bartram Papers, 1732-1773
1732-1773
Mss.B.C692.1

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Bartram, John, 1699-1777
Creator	Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768
Title	Collinson-Bartram Papers, 1732-1773
Date [inclusive]	1732-1773
Call number	Mss.B.C692.1
Extent	0.25 Linear feet 37 items.
Extent	48 items.
Location	LH-MV-C-3
Language	English
Container	1
Abstract	<p>This collection is principally letters to Collinson about seeds, plants, and gardens from seed cultivators and owners of country estates, including Cadwallader Colden, John Hanbury, Lord and Lady Petre, the Duke of Norfolk, the Duke of Richmond, Sir Hans Sloane, and Daniel Solander. There are also several letters of John Bartram to William Bartram and Philip Miller.</p>

Background note

Peter Collinson (1694–1768) was an English merchant and botanist. He was a partner in his father's London trading business, and he remained a merchant throughout his life. However, at a young age, he also developed a passion for botany. He eventually wrote numerous essays on natural history topics for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and he contributed many reports to the Society of Antiquaries and to the Royal Society, of which he was a member. His extensive network of correspondents in Europe and North America placed Collinson at the nexus of the community of eighteenth century European and American natural scientists.

Peter Collinson was born in London, the son of the Quaker and London cloth merchant Peter Collinson and his wife Elizabeth Hall. Young Peter's love of plants apparently stemmed from a garden owned by relatives with whom he lived as a boy and which he later inherited. However, Collinson is known less for his own original contributions to natural science than for his tireless support of the work of others. His publications and affiliation with the Royal Society brought him in contact with many eminent European naturalists and scientists of his day, including Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), Stephen Hales (1677-1761), and J. J. Dillenius (1684-1747). He also knew the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778, APS 1769), who named horse balm (*Collinsonia canadensis*) after him. Collinson was always supportive of the work of ordinary gardeners and plantsmen, such as Philip Miller (1691-1771), the gardener of the Chelsea Physic Garden, and the nurseryman James Gordon, who helped maintain the extensive gardens of Lord Petre, Collinson's close friend and patron of scientific endeavors.

Collinson's numerous contacts with fellow botanists placed him at the center of a large network of mid-eighteenth century European and American naturalists. It was through his family's extensive trade in the cloth business with North America that he got to know a number of Americans. They included Alexander Garden (1730-1791, APS 1768), Cadwallader Colden (1688-1776, APS 1768), Benjamin Franklin and John Bartram (1699-1777, APS 1768).

Collinson and Bartram were particularly close friends. In the early 1730s, Bartram wrote to Collinson soliciting the post of king's botanist in North America. While Collinson was not able to secure the position for another three decades, the two men arranged for Bartram to send seeds and seedlings to British subscribers. This group eventually numbered more than sixty men and included some of the most prominent botanists and landscape designers in Britain. Moreover, beginning in 1733, the two men engaged in a lively exchange of ideas and specimen that lasted until Collinson's death in 1768. Collinson communicated many of Bartram's studies to the Royal Society, which published Bartram's observations in the *Philosophical Transactions*. The naturalist John Fothergill (1712-1780, APS 1770) one of Collinson's close friends, wrote that the "eminent naturalist, John Bartram, may almost be said to have been created such by my friend's assistance." John Bartram's son William acknowledged Collinson's crucial role in his father's career, noting that "it was principally through the interest of Collinson that he [John Bartram] became acquainted, and entered into correspondence with, many of the most celebrated literary characters in Europe, and was elected a member of the Royal Society of London, of Stockholm, etc." Collinson, who maintained his own extensive garden, introduced several American plants into Britain, including the

American alder, three species of azalea, black birch, hemlock, sugar maple, mountain laurel, and many medicinal herbs.

Collinson and Franklin also maintained a long friendship marked by an active correspondence. Their shared interests included the discovery of mastodon bones in North America and, more famously, topics related to electricity. In fact, it was Collinson who introduced Franklin's ideas on electricity to the Royal Society; the Society not only published them but also recognized Franklin's work with the Copley medal in 1753. Franklin admired Collinson's qualities as a scientist and as a man. He wrote that "if we may estimate the goodness of a man by his disposition to do good, and his constant endeavors and success in doing it, I can hardly conceive that a better man has ever existed."

Collinson's interests in North American matters also included the promotion of crop experiments in the colonies. In addition, he was an early patron of the American Philosophical Society, though not a member, and for many years served as purchasing agent for the Library Company of Philadelphia.

In 1724 Peter Collinson married Mary Russell. They had two children.

Scope & content

This collection consists of 47 items dated between 1731 and 1773, with the bulk of material from the 1740s and 1760s. The collection consists of letters and two diary entries related to Collinson's interest in plants, and his role in procuring specimen and seeds for a number of notables in England. Most of the letters refer to requests for plants and seeds, specimens received or expected, or information about matters pertaining to natural history.

There are several letters by Lord and Anne Petre regarding the collection of plants, including orders and billing. They include a bill for plants by Lorenzo Costa (1741) made out to Lord Petre, with a letter by Petre and a note by Philip Miller. Also included is a letter by Anne Petre regarding a catalogue that Miller was supposed to have delivered to Collinson (1743), as well as several letters by her that deal with the accounts of individuals who had ordered or received plants, including the Duke of Richmond, the Duke of Norfolk, and John Hanbury (1743). The letters by Anne Petre also refer to her sending items to "her good friend" Collinson, such as a turkey and pigs, and on one occasion she requests him to get some damask for her son's new coat.

Additional material that documents Collinson's interest in plants are the letters he exchanged with his "botanical friends." A letter by the Duke of Norfolk to Collinson speaks fondly of the way Lord Petre thought of Collinson and thanks him for "the assistance & encouragement you are so liberal in to the advancement of planting & improvements" (1743). "The Old Patron of Gardening & Planting" wrote in a letter to Lord Montfort (1765) that he had supplied a number of people with "Boxes of Seeds for near 40 years past & given my Time & Trouble, without the least profit or advantage." In addition, a letter by Cadwallader Colden apologizes that his preoccupation with public affairs has prevented him from sending seeds; he also refers to Peter Kalm's visit to Albany as well as the "Leghorn Voyage" [1748]. A playful letter by Guilerma Bowles of Spain assures Collinson of the favorable reception his letter received from the "lordship" (1764).

Other correspondence that discusses topics related to botany include a letter by John de Ponthieu (1765), who sends greetings to all his "botanical friends," as well as the correspondence with H. Trelawny and Mr. Gordon (1761), Thomas Bolton (1764), Thomas Tofield (1764), Charles Carlisle (1765), and Lady Kildare (1765). Two letters by Charles Hamilton testify to the exchange of plants and seeds that Collinson participated in (1753), and letters by Collinson to Robert Moore, the Duke of Richmond, and the Earl of Bute, in which he discusses a variety of topics, reflects his interest in natural history generally (1762). The letters to Richmond and Bute are written on the same piece of paper, which also includes a diary entry by Collinson for June 1 and 2, 1764. In it, he refers to the Society of Friends, Doctor Fothergill, a visit to an art exhibit, and his experiments with the bark of the willow.

Of particular interest are a letter by John Bartram to Philip Miller [1759], a letter from Collinson to John Bartram (1763) and a personal letter from John Bartram to "Dear son Billy" Bartram (1771). Also included is a bill of sale of a "Negroe Woman named Jenny" between William Gabie and Thomas Robeson, and, on the same sheet, between Robeson and William Bartram, and between W. Bartram and his brother George Bartram (all dated 1772).

Also of note is a letter from Collinson to Lord Hyde, in which he mentions Benjamin Franklin and refers to the political situation in Pennsylvania (1764). Another reference to Franklin can be found in the letter from Daniel Solander who writes about his intention to accompany Franklin on an upcoming visit to Collinson (1767). A letter by Mr. Holland evidently asks Collinson to use his influence with Thomas Rouse to gain an appointment for the Lord's grandson (1768).

The collection also includes several pages from Collinson's diary or commonplace book, dated 1762, in which he refers primarily to his plants. However, this item also includes several entries that list notable events of 1709 and 1710, including the arrival of the Palatines ("Lived in Tents"), the plague, the "wrongful" execution of Charles Dean, and the knighting of Charles Wagner.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Scientific Correspondence

Subject(s)

- Gardening -- England.
- Gardens -- England.
- Horticulture -- England.
- Horticulture -- United States.
- Natural History
- Plants, Cultivated.
- Science and Technology
- Seed industry and trade -- England.
- Seed industry and trade -- United States.

Other Descriptive Information

While the APS has a number of Collinson collections on microfilm, its primary source holdings contain only thirty-seven letters written to Peter Collinson. The majority of the letters discuss natural history. There is a letter written about the culture of bathing in Wales in the 1730s. There is also extended correspondence between Collinson and Lady Petre on the botanical gardens on the Petre's estate and a series of letters from Spanish officials in the Caribbean relaying information to Collinson. There is also a notable amount of correspondence between Collinson and various nobility discussing horticultural issues.

The collection is listed as having a lot of Collinson-Bartram correspondence, but the majority of the collection involved correspondence from people other than Bartram to Collinson. Nonetheless, the

collection offers insight on Peter Collinson's influence on horticulture and botany in the eighteenth century.

Collection Inventory

Papers

Dale, Francis d.1733

Jan. 20, 1731

Letter to P[eter] Collinson

Extract of L. in Collinson's hand. On same sheet with letter from Peter Collinson to Lord Monfort, July 11, 1765.

Hanbury, John , 1664?-1734

Aug. 13, 1732

8 1/2" x 6

Letter to P[eter] Collinson

1/2"

Scarborough, A.L.S. 4p. Contains note in Collinson's hand.

**Petre, Robert James Petre, Baron,
1713-1742**

July 26, 1737

12 3/4" x 8"

Receipt to Sir John Webb

D.S.: Petre, Anne Petre 1p.

Costa, Lorenzo

Aug. 15, 1741

Bill to Lord Petre

D. 1p. On reverse is receipt from Costa to Lady Petre; May 16, 1743; payment received through hands of Peter Collinson. Enclosed with letter from Petre to Philip Miller; September 21, 1741.

**Petre, Robert James Petre, Baron,
1713-1742**

Sept. 21, 1741

7 1/2" x 5

Letter to Philip Miller

1/2"

A.L.S. 1p. and add. In re bill of Lorenzo Costa, which is enclosed. Contains note from Philip Miller to [Peter Collinson].

Sloane, Hans, Sir, 1660-1753

March 21, 1741/42

9" x 7 1/4"

Letter to Peter Collinson

Papers

A.L.S. 1p. and add. In re shells.

Miller, Philip, 1691-1771 1742

Letter to [Peter Collinson]

ca.1742 A.L.S. 1p. On same sheet with letter from Petre to Miller; September 21, 1741.

Norfolk, Edward Howard, Duke of, March 7, 1742/43 7 1/2" x 6"
1686-1777

Letter to Peter Collinson, London

A.L.S. 1p. and add., end. in PC's hand.

Norfolk, Edward Howard, Duke of, June, 1743 12 1/4" x 7"
1686-1777 3/4"

Letter to Peter Collinson

ca. A.L.S. 1p. and add., end. by PC

Petre, Anne Radcliffe Jan. 10, 1743 7 1/4" x 6"

Letter to Peter Collinson, London

A.L.S. 2p. and add., end. in C's hand. Interesting seal.

Petre, Anne Radcliffe April 12, 1743 7 1/4" x 6"

Letter to Peter Collinson, London

A.L.S. 3p. and add., end. by PC.

Petre, Anne Radcliffe April 17, 1743 7 1/4" x 6"

Letter to Peter Collinson, London

A.L.S. 2p. and add.,end. by PC.

Petre, Anne Radcliffe July 14, 1743 9" x 7 1/4"

Letter to Peter Collinson, London

Dagnams, A.L.S. 2p. and add. and end. by PC.

Petre, Anne Radcliffe Aug. 1, 1743 12" x 7"

Letter to Peter Collinson, London

Papers

Dagnams, A.L.S. 1p. and add.

Petre, Anne Radcliffe	Aug. 10, 1743	7" x 6"
Letter to Peter Collinson, London		

Dagnams, A.L.S. 2p. and add., end. by PC.

Petre, Anne Radcliffe	Sept. 30, 1743	6 3/4" x 5 3/4"
Letter to Peter Collinson, London		

Dagnams, A.L.S. 1p. and add.

Petre, Anne Radcliffe	Oct. 27, 1743	7" x 5 3/4"
Letter to Peter Collinson, London		

Dagnams, A.L.S. 1p. and add.

Colden, Cadwallader, 1688-1776	Feb.17, 1748?	
Letter to [Peter Collinson]		

Portion of A.L. 2p. and end. by P.C. For date of letter see P. Collinson's probable reply, February 24, 1748 - Colden Papers, v.4, 103 (NYHSP)

Hamilton, Charles, 1691-1754	Jan. 22, 1753	9 1/4" x 7 1/4"
Letter to [Peter Collinson ?]		

Brook street, A.L.S. 1p.

Hamilton, Charles, 1691-1754	Oct. 28, 1753	
Letter to [Peter Collinson]		

A.L.S. 1p., end. by PC.

Bartram, John, 1699-1777	Feb. 18, [1759]	12 1/2" x 7 1/2"
Letter to [Philip] Miller		

A.Dr. of L. 2p. Contains also draft of a second letter dated February 1759.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	1761	
Letter to Mr. Gordon		

Papers

ca. A.L.S. 1p. On same sheet with letter from H. Trelawny to PC, July 9, 1761.

Trelawny, H, d.1762	July 9, 1761	9" x 7 1/2"
Letter to [Peter] Collinson, Butshead (?)		

A.L.S. 3p. P.4 contains letter from P. Collinson to Mr. Gordon.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	Aug.7-10, 1762	9" x 7"
[Pages from diary or commonplace book]		

A.D. 4p.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	April 22, 1762	8" x 6 1/2"
Letter to Rob[er]t Moore		

London, A.L.S. 3p.

Richmond and Lennox, Charles Lennox, Duke of, 1735-1806	May 19, 1762	9" x 7 1/4"
Letter to [Peter Collinson]		

Goodwood, A.L.S. 2p. Contains also: Draft of letter from Collinson to the Duke of Richmond, January 23, 1764; draft of letter from Collinson to

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	Feb.14, 1763	9" x 7 1/4"
Letter to the Earl of Bute		

A.Dr. of L. 1p. On same sheet with letter from the Duke of Richmond to PC, May 19, 1762.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	June 1-2, 1763	9" x 7 1/4"
Diary		

A.D. 1p. On same sheet with letter from the Duke of Richmond to PC, May 19, 1762.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	April 7, 1763	8x6-1/2
Letter to John Bartram		

London, A.L.S. 3p.and add. Concerning the peace and Pitt. Sale of seeds and shipment of seeds. Refers to Franklin.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	Jan. 23, 1764	
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Papers

Letter to the Duke of Richmond

A.Dr. of L.S. with initials. On same sheet with letter from the Duke of Richmond to Collinson, May 19, 1762.

Bolton (?), Thomas

Sept. 4, 1764

9" x 7 1/2"

Letter to P[eter] Collinson, London

Warlay Clough, A.L.S. 3p. and add. Contains notes by P. Collinson.

Tofield (?), Thomas

Sept. 15, 1764

9" x 7"

Letter to Peter Collinson

Balby, A.L.S. 2p. and add. and end. and notes by PC.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768

Dec. 11, 1764

7 1/2" x 6

Letter to Lord Hyde

3/4"

A.Dr. of L.S. with initials 1p. Commotions caused by the Presbyterians in Pennsylvania resulting in defeat of Mr. Franklin in Assembly.

Bowles, William, 1705-1780

Dec. 17, 1764

8 1/4" x 5

Letter to Peter Collinson, London

3/4"

Madrid, A.L.S: Guilermo Bowles. 3p. and add. Contains draft of Collinson's reply of February 4, 1766.

Ponthiell (?), John de

June 1, 1765

9 1/2" x 7

Letter to Peter Collinson

1/4"

Grenades, A.L.S. 3p. and add., end. by PC.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768

July 11, 1765

11 1/4" x 7

Letter to Lord Monfort (?)

1/4"

A.Dr. of L.S. 1p. Contains also an extract of a letter from Francis Dale to Collinson, January 20, 1731, in Collinson's hand.

Carlisle, Charles

Aug. 29, 1765

8" x 6"

Letter to [Peter] Collinson

Papers

Rose castle, A.L.S. 3p., end. by PC.

Kildare, Lady	Sept. 28, 1765	9 1/4" x 7"
Letter to [Peter] Collinson		

A.L.S. 3p. Contains draft of Collinson's reply, October 26, 1765, on p.4.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	Oct. 26, 1765	
Letter to Lady Kildare		

A.Dr. of L. 1p. On same sheet with letter from Lady Kildare to Collinson, September 28, 1765.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	Feb. 4, 1766	
Letter to [William Bowles]		

A.Dr. of L. On same sheet with letter from Bowles to PC. December 17, 1764.

Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768	1766	Photocopy.
B C692.2 An Account of the Introduction of American Seeds into Great Britain		

Original Location

Original in British Museum.

Knowlton, Thomas, 1691-1781	July 13,14,17, 1767	8" x 6 1/4"
Letter to Peter Collinson, London		

A.L.S. 4p., add. Mentions Mr. [John ?] Bartram.

Solander, Daniel Charles, 1733-1782	July 15, 1767	12" x 7 1/4"
Letter to [Peter Collinson]		

London, A.L.S. 2p. Mentions Dr. Franklin

Holland, Henry Fox, Baron, 1705-1774	June 11, 1768	9" x 7 1/4"
Letter to Peter Collinson, Middlesex		

Holland house, A.L.S. 2p. and add. Seal Contains copy, in PC's hand, of a letter from Thos. Rous[e] to Peter Collinson, June 18, 1768.

Rouse, Thomas	June 18, 1768	
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Papers

Letter to P[eter] C[ollinson]

Hackney, Copy of L in PC's hand. On same sheet with letter from Ld. Holland to Peter Collinson, June 11, 1768.

Bartram, John, 1699-1777

April 25, 1771

7 1/2" x 6"

Letter to William Bartram

A.L.S. 1p. and add.

Gabie, William

1772 February

1.0 Item(s)

Bill of sale for a slave

North Carolina, D.S. 1p. On the reverse of this document, the ownership of Jenny is transferred from Robeson, to William Bartram; Wilmington, February 20, 1772; and in turn from Wm. Bartram to George Bartram; Phila., March 20, 1773.

Bill of sale for a slave. , 1772 February

[\[http://diglib.amphilsoc.org/fedora/repository/text:2422\]](http://diglib.amphilsoc.org/fedora/repository/text:2422)

**Petre, Robert James Petre, Baron,
1713-1742**

undated

9" x 7 1/2"

Letter to [Peter Collinson]

Wednesday. A.L.S. 1p.
