

Guide to the William Woolsey Johnson Papers

MS 954



compiled by Susan Grigg and Thomas J. Connors

September 1984

Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
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CALL NUMBER: MS 954

CREATOR: Johnson, William Woolsey, 1841-1927

TITLE: William Woolsey Johnson papers

DATES: 1783-1903

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.25 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers consist almost entirely of family correspondence among Johnson, his wife, children, and parents, including letters from Johnson as a student at Yale University. Among the family correspondents is Theodore Dwight Woolsey, an uncle of Johnson's. Also in the papers are account books (1877-1894) and a small amount of correspondence with friends and professional associates.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0954>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0954>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased in 1955 from F. H. Sweet and William Saunders; gift of Charles F. Johnson, 1999.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

William Woolsey Johnson Papers (MS 954). Manuscripts and Archives. Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

WILLIAM WOOLSEY JOHNSON

Born at Owego, Tioga County, New York, June 23, 1841. Entered college from Owego

Father, Charles Frederick Johnson, a gentleman farmer in Tioga County; son of Robert Charles Johnson (B.A. 1783, M.A. 1786 and Columbia 1788) and Catherine (Bayard) Johnson; grandson of William Samuel Johnson (B.A. 1744, M.A. and Harvard 1747, honorary M.A. Columbia 1761, D.C.L. Oxford 1766, LL.D. Yale 1788), delegate to Stamp-Act Congress 1765, member of Continental Congress 1784-1787, and of U. S. Constitutional Convention 1787, president of Columbia College 1787-1800, and U. S. senator 1789-1791; great-grandson of the Rev. Samuel Johnson (B.A. 1714, M.A. Oxford 1723, M.A. Cambridge 1723, D.D. Oxford 1743), first Protestant Episcopal minister in Connecticut and first president of King's (Columbia) College 1754-1763; descendant of the Rev. Robert Johnson, who came from England and was one of the settlers of Guilford, Conn., in 1639. Mother, Sarah Dwight (Woolsey) Johnson; daughter of William Walton and Elizabeth (Dwight) Woolsey; niece of President Timothy Dwight (B.A. 1769); granddaughter of Timothy Dwight (B.A. 1744); great-granddaughter of the Rev. Jonathan Edwards (B.A. 1720); descendant of George Woolsey, who came from England to New Amsterdam in 1623, was subsequently at Plymouth, Mass., until 1647, and then settled in Flushing, Long Island. Yale relatives include: William Johnson (B.A. 1748) (great-great-uncle); Samuel W. Johnson (B.A. 1779) (great-uncle); and William S. Johnson (B.A. Union 1816, honorary M.A. Yale 1819), Edwards Johnson (B.A. 1823), John B. Dwight, '40, James M. B. Dwight, '46, Timothy Dwight, '49, Henry E. Dwight, '52, T. Bradford Dwight, '59, and Winthrop E. Dwight, '93 (cousins).

Prepared for college under a private tutor; first prize in mathematics Freshman year, prize for mathematical solutions Sophomore year, first and second prizes Senior year; oration appointments Junior and Senior years; member Phi Beta Kappa; graduate member Wolf's Head. He received his B.A. in 1862.

After two years in the Nautical Almanac office at Cambridge; six as Assistant Professor in the Naval Academy at (Newport but soon removed to) Annapolis; two as Professor of Mathematics in Kenyon College; and nine in like office in St. John's College, Annapolis, Johnson again (1881) entered the Naval Academy, this time as full Professor. He was a professor at U. S. Naval Academy from 1881 until his retirement in 1921; in 1913 was given a commissioned rank in the Navy by a special act of Congress and upon his retirement held the rank of Commodor. There he remained. He went abroad several times in the summer; and once for a year's leave of absence, including in his stay both summer vacations. At that time (1886-1887) all his family were with him, keeping house for the most part in Cambridge, England. He was busied meanwhile on his book on *Differential Equations*. He was a member of the Council of the American Mathematical Society; a member of the London Mathematical Society; a Corresponding member of the

British Association for the Advancement of Science; and a member of the American Association. — A list of his books follows, and then part of a private letter to Morse.

An Elementary Treatise on Analytical Geometry, embracing Co-ordinate Geometry and an Introduction to Geometry of Three Dimensions. Lippincott. 1869.

A Treatise on the Differential Calculus. Wiley. 1879. (In this work, Johnson was associated with one of his colleagues.)

A Treatise on the Integral Calculus. Part I. Wiley. 1881.

Curve Tracing in Cartesian Co-ordinates. Wiley. 1882.

A Treatise on Differential Equations. 1889. Also the chapter on this subject in *Higher Mathematics*, published by Wiley, in 1896.

The Theory of Errors and Method of Least Squares. 1890. *Mechanics.* 1895.

Many of Johnson's papers have been printed in the (English) *Messenger of Mathematics* and *Quarterly Journal of Mathematics*; in the *Analyst*, the *American Journal of Mathematics*, the *Bulletin* of the American Mathematical Society; and in the *Proceedings* of the United States Naval Institute and of the London Mathematical Society.

He was one of the founders of New York Mathematical Society, which later became American Mathematical Society, and of whose council he was a member; member London Mathematical Society; corresponding member British Association for the Advancement of Science; former Fellow of American Association for the Advancement of Science; member Protestant Episcopal Church.

Married August 12, 1869, in Annapolis, Susannah Leverett, daughter of the Rev. Breed Batcheller (B.A. Dartmouth 1835) and Sarah Miller (Leverett) Batcheller. Children: Charles William Leverett (B.A. Johns Hopkins 1891, Ph.D. 1896) and Theodore Woolsey (B.A. Johns Hopkins 1892, M.E. Stevens Institute of Technology 1896). Mrs. Johnson died March 12, 1916.

Death due to bronchopneumonia and the infirmities of age. Buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Baltimore. Survived by two sons, four grandchildren, one great-granddaughter, and a brother, Charles F. Johnson, '55. Married, August 12, 1869, to SUSANNAH LEVERETT BATCHELLER, of Annapolis.

Scope and Contents

The William W. Johnson Papers consist of ten inches of correspondence, personal financial records, and miscellaneous items spanning from 1858 to 1903. Most of the letters were exchanged among members of the family principally William W. Johnson, his wife and children, and his parents, brother, and sisters. The largest groups of letters were sent to his parents from Yale (1858-1862) and to his future wife from the U.S. Naval Academy (1867-1869). There are also many notes and postcards from family members in Europe in the 1880s and 1890s. The non-family correspondence consists mainly of a sprinkling of letters to William W. Johnson from friends and professional associates, including Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1866 May 22) and Albert Francis Judd. The financial records include household accounts kept by Johnson's wife, Susannah Leverett (Batcheller) Johnson.

The William W. Johnson Papers were purchased from F.H. Sweet and William Sanders in 1955; gift of Charles Fredrick Johnson, 1999.

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1858-1903

.75 linear feet (2 boxes)

Correspondence

Johnson, William Woolsey (1841-1927; Y 1862)

| | | |
|------|---|-----------------------|
| b. 1 | to his parents, his sister Katherine, and his brother Charles | 1858-1862 |
| b. 1 | to his sister and his future wife | 1867-1869 |
| b. 1 | to his wife | 1879-1882 |
| b. 1 | to his wife and sons | 1883-1887 |
| b. 1 | to various persons named above | undated |
| b. 1 | from friends and professional associates | 1863-1901, undated |

Johnson, Susannah Leverett Batcheller (wife of WWJ)

| | | |
|------|--|-----------------------------|
| b. 1 | to her sons | 1883 |
| b. 1 | from friends | 1869, 1882-1887 |
| b. 2 | Johnson, Charles William Leverett (1870-; son of WWJ)/ to his parents | 1881-1887, 1894-1903 |
| b. 2 | Johnson, Theodore Woolsey (1872-; son of WWJ)/ to his parents | 1881-1886, 1894 |
| b. 2 | Johnson, Charles Frederick (1804-1870; father of WWJ)/ to WWJ | 1864-1868 |
| b. 2 | Johnson, Sarah Dwight (Woolsey) (1805-1870; mother of WWJ)/ to WWJ | 1862-1869, undated |
| b. 2 | Johnson, Charles Frederick (1836-1931; brother of WWJ)/ to WWJ | 1864-1865, undated |
| b. 2 | Johnson, Anna Muirson (1840-; sister of WWJ)/ to WWJ | 1863-1867, undated |
| b. 2 | Johnson, Katherine B. (sister of WWJ)/ to WWJ | 1862-1866, 1878, undated |
| b. 2 | Batcheller, Sarah Miller (Leverett) (mother-in-law of WWJ)/ to her daughter Susannah | 1882-1886, undated |
| b. 2 | Batcheller, Charles G. (brother-in-law of WWJ)/ to his sister Susannah | 1872-1877, undated |
| b. 2 | Brewer, Hattie C., and family/ to Susannah Leverett (Batcheller) Johnson | 1886-1887, undated |
| b. 2 | Carmalt, Laura Woolsey (Johnson) (1837-1923; cousin of WWJ)/ to WWJ | 1863, undated |
| b. 2 | Woolsey, Theodore Dwight (1801-1889; uncle of WWJ)/ to WWJ | 1862, 1868 |

Correspondence (continued)

| | | |
|------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| b. 2 | Unidentified and miscellaneous | 1866-1887, undated |
|------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|

Other Papers

Johnson, William Woolsey

| | | |
|------|-------------------|-----------|
| b. 2 | Cash account book | 1877-1884 |
|------|-------------------|-----------|

| | | |
|------|-----------|-----------|
| b. 2 | Bank book | 1886-1887 |
|------|-----------|-----------|

Johnson, Susannah Leverett (Batcheller)

| | | |
|------|------------|-----------|
| b. 2 | Dance bids | 1866-1867 |
|------|------------|-----------|

| | | |
|------|------------------------|-----------|
| b. 2 | Household account book | 1892-1894 |
|------|------------------------|-----------|

| | | |
|------|---|------|
| b. 2 | Johnson, Charles William Leverett/ Certificates of good conduct | 1886 |
|------|---|------|

| | | |
|------|---------------|---------|
| b. 2 | Calling cards | undated |
|------|---------------|---------|

Accession 1999-M-088: Additional Material

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | Correspondence of Charles Frederick Johnson, Jr. (1836-1931, Yale B.A. 1855) to his parents | Circa 1850-1868 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Photocopy of Yale B.A. degree awarded to Robert Charles Johnson | 1783 |

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Educators
Science

Geographic Names

Europe -- Description and travel

Genres / Formats

Account books

Occupations

Mathematicians

Names

Brewer, Hattie C.
Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, 1823-1911
Johnson, Anna Muirson, 1840-
Johnson, Charles Frederick, 1804-1882
Johnson, Charles Frederick, 1836-1931
Johnson, Charles William Leverett
Johnson, Katherine B.
Johnson, Sarah Dwight, 1805-1870
Johnson, Susannah Leverett Batcheller
Johnson, William Woolsey, 1841-1927
Judd, Albert Francis, 1838-1900
Woolsey, Theodore Dwight, 1801-1889

Families

Johnson family

Corporate Body

Yale University -- Students