WESLEY, JOHN, 1703-1791.
John Wesley collection, 1738-1791

Emory University
Pitts Theology Library
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Atlanta, GA 30322
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Wesley, John, 1703-1791.
Title: John Wesley collection, 1738-1791
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 153
Extent: 0.4 cubic ft. (1 box)
Abstract: Consists of correspondence to and from John Wesley, and two miscellaneous items.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access
Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction
All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Citation
[after identification of item(s)], John Wesley Collection, Archives and Manuscript Dept., Pitts Theology Library, Emory University.

Processing

Collection Description

Biographical Note
John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was born on June 17, 1703 at Epworth, Lincolnshire, England, and died on March 2, 1791 in London. He was the second son of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. John Wesley graduated from Christ Church, Oxford University, in 1724. He was ordained deacon in 1725, elected a fellow of Lincoln College in 1726, and ordained a priest in the Church of England in 1728. Wesley returned to Oxford in 1729 to fulfill the residential

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requirements of his fellowship. While there he joined his brother Charles and others in a religious group that was derisively called the "Methodists" because of their emphasis on study and devotion.

In 1735 Wesley went to Georgia to oversee the spiritual lives of the colonists and to act as missionary to the Indians. His attempts in both areas were unsuccessful, and he returned to England in 1737. Following a personal religious experience in 1738 Wesley began preaching the doctrine of salvation by faith. As a result of this and his enthusiasm, he was soon rejected by the Church of England. He began an itinerant ministry preaching to the unchurched and organizing them into Methodist societies.

Following the end of the American Revolution in 1738 Wesley took it upon himself to ordain preachers to serve in the United States. This marked the complete severance of his connections to the Church of England and the establishment of Methodism as an independent denomination. Wesley continued to oversee the growth and development of the Methodist church until his death in 1791.

Scope and Content Note
This collection consists primarily of correspondence to and from John Wesley dating from 1738 to 1791. Most of the letters are written by Wesley and concern church business and personal spiritual development. Few of the addressees are mentioned by name. Included in the correspondence are two letters written to John Wesley by his brother Charles, one of which is a notice of the expulsion of Michael Fenwick. Fenwick was a Methodist lay preacher who had a mutual animosity with Charles. The majority of the correspondence consists of photostat copies with a few original letters. Prominent correspondents include Ann "Nancy" Bolton, Matthew Lowes, and Peter Garforth.

The first miscellaneous item is titled, "Captain Robert Williams Affidavit Against the Rev'd Mr. John Wesley with Sundry Papers and Letters Related Thereto." The affidavit concerns Wesley's failed romantic relationship with Miss Sophie Hopkey during the time he was in Georgia and describes his repeated attempts to meet with her in private after her marriage to William Williamson. As a result of his actions, Wesley was tried by a grand jury, indicted, and released on bail. Before the trial was held, Wesley left Savannah "in a clandestine manner" and returned to England. Included is a pasted-in print copy of the excerpt from Wesley's diary that is a response to Captain Williams' statement and a handwritten copy of a letter written by Wesley to Williams.

The second item is an undated fragment consisting of a list of thirty-eight names and the church offenses they committed, including drunkenness, gaming, racing, dancing, railing, and scolding. The number of those expelled is totaled at the bottom.
## Container List

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<td>Letters, 1738-1752</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Letters, 1753</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Letters, 1757-1760</td>
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<td>Affidavit, 1739</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Church discipline fragment, undated</td>
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