

Yale University Library
Lewis Walpole Library

Guide to the W. S. Lewis Collection of George Selwyn Correspondence

LWL MSS 39



by Sandra Markham

March 2022

154 Main Street
P.O. Box 1408
Farmington, CT 06034-1408
860-677-2140
860-677-6369

walpole@yale.edu

<https://walpole.library.yale.edu>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition	3
Custodial History	3
Conditions Governing Access	4
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Processing Information	4
Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis (1895-1979)	4
George Augustus Selwyn (1719-1791)	4
Scope and Contents	5
Arrangement	5
Collection Contents	6
Series I: Letters to Selwyn, 1739–1787	6
Series II: Letters from Selwyn, 1764–1788	10
Selected Search Terms	11

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Lewis Walpole Library
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CALL NUMBER: LWL MSS 39

CREATOR: Lewis, W. S. (Wilmarth Sheldon), 1895-1979

TITLE: W. S. Lewis Collection of George Selwyn Correspondence

DATES: 1739–1788

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.84 linear feet (2 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English; French

SUMMARY: The collection consists of letters sent to George Selwyn by nearly one hundred friends, associates, and family members; they range in content from short formal notes of invitation to long and descriptive letters from friends in his social and political circles. Also present are five letters written by Selwyn to colleagues and unidentified recipients.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/lwl.mss.039>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/lwl.mss.039>.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Bequest of Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis (Yale 1918), 1979.

Custodial History

The collection was assembled by Wilmarth Lewis over two decades from a variety of sources. The bulk of the material was purchased in two lots: 114 letters from Henry Sotheran & Co. on June 8, 1928,

and 40 letters from Maggs Bros. (Sotheby's sale, lot 243, October 27, 1947). Additional purchases were made from G. H. Last in 1932, and Winifred A. Myers, Ltd. in 1940, among others. Three letters from John Selwyn were a gift from Herman W. Liebert in November 1948. Specific acquisitions information is held in the library's file for the collection.

Prior to November 2021 the material in LWL MSS 39 had been interfiled in the Lewis Walpole Library Manuscript Miscellany (LWL MSS MISC).

Conditions Governing Access

This material is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The W. S. Lewis Collection of George Selwyn Correspondence is the physical property of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the W. S. Lewis Librarian/Executive Director.

Preferred Citation

W. S. Lewis Collection of George Selwyn Correspondence. The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Typed transcriptions were created for many of the letters in the collection, some of which were then corrected and annotated by Wilmarth Lewis. In 2022 most of the transcripts were photocopied on acid-free paper and the originals discarded, but those with extensive manuscript annotations by Lewis were retained in their folders.

Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis (1895-1979)

Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis was born in Alameda, California, on November 14, 1895, the son of Miranda Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis and Azro Nathaniel Lewis. He attended the Thacher School in Ojai, California, and Yale University (Class of 1918). He met Annie Burr Auchincloss in Farmington, Connecticut, in 1923, and the couple were married in 1928. Together they spent three decades building a collection of books, prints, paintings, manuscripts, and decorative arts related to Horace Walpole, his circle, and his time, and formed a research library at their home in Farmington. Wilmarth Lewis died in Hartford on October 7, 1979; he left his home and collections to Yale University by bequest.

George Augustus Selwyn (1719-1791)

George Augustus Selwyn was the son of Colonel John Selwyn and his wife Mary Farrington Selwyn of Matson, near Gloucester, England. He was educated at Eton College—where he met and befriended Horace Walpole—and studied at Hart Hall, Oxford for a period before undertaking a grand tour of Europe in 1742-43. Selwyn held several minor government positions as well as a seat in Parliament but was best known as a London club man and a wit. Upon the death of both his father and older brother in 1751 George Selwyn inherited the family's estate at Matson, and their London home in Cleveland Court, St James's, where he died on January 25, 1791.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of letters sent to George Selwyn by nearly one hundred friends, associates, and family members; they range in content from short formal notes of invitation to long and descriptive letters from friends in his social and political circles. Also present are five letters written by Selwyn to colleagues and unidentified recipients.

Prominent among the correspondents are his father Colonel John Selwyn (1688–1751) and his agent Vincent Mathias who wrote to George Selwyn while he was on his grand tour. In combination, their twenty-one letters focus on finances: Colonel Selwyn sent questions such as “Why are you not at Leyden & why are you to keep the most extravagant company you can be with,” while Mathias served as a go-between delivering messages from father to son about expenses and making sure Selwyn’s bills were covered. Mathias was the brother of the artist Gabriel Mathias (1719-1804), and he was, as well, a go-between for Selwyn and the painter in one March 1742 letter. Colonel Selwyn also warned his son away from William Maynard (1721-1772), a schoolmate of Selwyn’s at Oxford, whose own colorful letters to Selwyn give an indication why a father might have concern.

While many of the correspondents in the collection are represented by single letters and notes, others provide a greater window on Selwyn’s relationships: fellow London club man and wit George James “Gilly” Williams (1719-1805) has nineteen lengthy letters, and the Reverend Samson Harris (1727-1763) of Stonehouse near Gloucester, in his twenty-nine letters, kept Selwyn apprised of all the latest local news and political gossip in addition to improvements being made to the buildings and grounds at Matson House, Selwyn’s estate nearby. Another area colleague, John Harcourt (1716-), wrote five letters from his home Dan-y Park near Crickhowell in South Wales. Four long letters from Anthony Morris Storer (1746-1799) describe his activities while visiting Frederick Howard, Earl of Carlisle, at Dublin Castle in 1781, and there are five from Selwyn’s school friend Henry Reade (1716-1762). Six letters from Anne Liddell FitzRoy FitzPatrick, Countess of Upper Ossory (1737-1804) and two from Marie du Deffand (1697-1780) affirm Selwyn’s friendship with those noted women in the Walpole circle.

In his dramatic letter of October 22, 1754, Robert Mackreth (1726-1819) recounted the accidental suicide of Henry Douglas, Earl of Drumlanrig and son of the Duke of Queensbury, at age 32. The most charming item in the collection is a short note from a Miss Tichborne written on a nine of hearts playing card that had been split open to receive her message and addressed to Selwyn on the verso. While business and finance are mentioned in several of the letters, there is only one invoice in the papers: the Oxford cordwainer Sampson Remmett billed Selwyn for eight pairs of leather shoes including red and yellow slippers.

Arrangement

Organized into two series: I. Letters to George Selwyn, 1739-1787. II. Letters from George Selwyn, 1764-1788.

Collection Contents

Series I: Letters to Selwyn, 1739–1787

0.84 linear feet (2 boxes)

Series 1 is arranged in alphabetical order.

b. 1, f. 1	Atholl, John Murray, Duke of, 1729-1774	circa 1754, 1755
b. 1, f. 2	Barrington, William Wildman Barrington, Viscount, 1717-1793	1752 October 4
b. 1, f. 3	Barthelemy, M.	1787 August 23
b. 1, f. 4	Bathurst, Allen Bathurst, Baron, 1684-1775	undated
b. 1, f. 5	Bower, Archibald, 1686-1766	1747?
b. 1, f. 6	Brudenell, Robert	undated
b. 1, f. 7	Bundy, El., Mrs. Note in an unidentified hand, signed by Mrs. Bundy.	1753 October 6
b. 1, f. 8	Burke, Edmund, 1729-1797	1783 July 19
b. 1, f. 9	Burroughs, Henry	1742 July 9
b. 1, f. 10	Craufurd, J.	1781, undated
b. 1, f. 11	Craven, William Craven, Baron, 1737 or 1738-1791	1784 December 6
b. 1, f. 12	Damer, John	1742
b. 1, f. 13	Dolman, B.	1752 December 21
b. 1, f. 14	Downe, Henry Pleydell Dawnay, Viscount, 1727–1760	1752?
b. 1, f. 15	Drumlanrig, Henry Douglas, Earl of, 1722–1754	1743 September 3
b. 1, f. 16	Du Deffand, Marie de Vichy Chamrond, marquise, 1697-1780 Two letters in French, in the hand of du Deffand's secretary Jean-François Wiart.	1774, 1779
b. 1, f. 17	Dumoulin, Nicolas	1742
b. 1, f. 18	Eaton, Peter	[1742]
b. 1, f. 19	Ekins, Jeffery, 1731–1791 With a postscript in the hand of Frederick Howard, Earl of Carlisle.	1781 January 27
b. 1, f. 20	Ely, Bishop of	undated
b. 1, f. 21	Emily, E. The writer is likely Rev. Edward Emily (1740-1792), Dean of Derry from 1781 to 1783.	1781
b. 1, f. 22	Fane, John	1756 January 5

b. 1, f. 23	Flint, George	1742 August 14
b. 1, f. 24	Fox, Charles James, 1749-1806	1768-1789
b. 1, f. 25	Gem, Richard, 1716-1800	1781 January 15
b. 1, f. 26	Goodchild, Jonathan	1753 September 26
b. 1, f. 27	Granom, Ann	[1742]
b. 1, f. 28	Hamond, Andrew Snape, Sir, 1738-1828	undated
b. 1, f. 29	Harcourt, John, 1716-	1742-1756
b. 1, f. 30	Harris, Gabriel	1753
b. 1, f. 31	Harris, Samson, 1727-1763	1751-1760
b. 1, f. 32	Harris, William	1753 November 25
b. 1, f. 33	Hatsell, Mr.	[1782]
b. 1, f. 34	Hayward, T.	1781 March 15
b. 1, f. 35	Hayward, Thomas, 1706-1781	1751 December 5
b. 1, f. 36	Hervey, Thomas, 1699-1775	1754
b. 1, f. 37	Hewett, Lady Wife of Sir William Hewet, of Headley, Yorkshire.	1753 November 6
b. 1, f. 38	Hoare, Henry	undated
b. 1, f. 39	Hobart, Mrs.	undated
b. 1, f. 40	Holland, Henry Fox, Baron, 1705-1774	1755 November 11
b. 1, f. 41	Kirk, Robert	1753
b. 1, f. 42	Langford, William, 1744 or 1745-1814	1781 March 29
b. 1, f. 43	Leighton, Charlton	undated
b. 1, f. 44	Linnell, William, approximately 1703-1763	1754 October 12
b. 1, f. 45	Locke, Wadham	1753
b. 1, f. 46	Lyttelton, Charles, 1714-1768	1748 May 20
b. 1, f. 47	Lyttelton, Richard, 1718-1770	1742
b. 1, f. 48	Macartney, Jane Stuart, Lady, approximately 1748-1828	1781
b. 1, f. 49	Mackreth, Robert, Sir, 1726-1819	[1754] October 22

b. 1, f. 50	Masham, Samuel	1754
b. 1, f. 51	Maskall, John	1753 October 6
b. 1, f. 52	Mathias, Vincent	1742
b. 1, f. 53	Maynard, William, Sir, 1721-1772	1740-1755
b. 1, f. 54	Monson, George, Sir, 1730-1776	1755, 1756
b. 1, f. 55	Montfort, Thomas Bromley, Baron, 1733-1799	undated
b. 1, f. 56	Moore, William	1753 January 17
b. 1, f. 57	Newcastle, Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of, 1693-1768	1755 December 20
b. 1, f. 58	Newton, Richard, 1676-1753	1748-1752
b. 2, f. 1	Payne, Ralph	1782 June 26
b. 2, f. 2	Pelham, Henry	1751 November 13
b. 2, f. 3	Pillissier, François Amie, -1784	1742 March 18
b. 2, f. 4	Portal, Joseph[?]	1753 November 10
b. 2, f. 5	Portland, William Bentinck, Duke of, 1709-1762	[1752?] June 6
b. 2, f. 6	Poulett, John Poulett, Earl, 1708-1764	Between 1751 and 1756?
b. 2, f. 7	Powell, Thomas	1742
b. 2, f. 8	Pulteney, William, Viscount Pulteney, 1731-1763	[1755]
b. 2, f. 9	Queensberry, Charles Douglas, Duke of, 1698-1778	1755 December 11
b. 2, f. 10	Queensberry, William Douglas, Duke of, 1725-1810	[1758]
b. 2, f. 11	Reade, Henry, approximately 1716-1762	1739-1742
b. 2, f. 12	Remmett, Sampson	1741 March 12
b. 2, f. 13	Rigby, Richard, 1722-1788	1752, 1782, undated
b. 2, f. 14	Rochefort, Jean Anne Vincent de Larlan de Kercadio, Comte de, 1717-1771	1759 October 20
b. 2, f. 15	Sandwich, John Montagu, Earl of, 1718-1792	1754-1755
b. 2, f. 16	Saunders, J.	1753 January 1
b. 2, f. 17	Sawyer, Joseph	1742
b. 2, f. 18	Selwin, Charles, 1716?-1794	1754-1755

b. 2, f. 19	Selwin, Richard	[1742]
b. 2, f. 20	Selwyn, Charles Jasper, 1726-1794	1753 May 12
b. 2, f. 21	Selwyn, John, Colonel, 1688-1751	1742
b. 2, f. 22	Selwyn, John, approximately 1709-1751	1742 December 23
b. 2, f. 23	Selwyn, Mary	1753 January 25
b. 2, f. 24	Seward, Thomas, 1708-1790	1740 May 1
b. 2, f. 25	Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of, 1711-1771	1751 November 28
b. 2, f. 26	Shafto, J.	1755, undated
b. 2, f. 27	Simpson, J.	1741 February 27
b. 2, f. 28	St. John, H.	undated
b. 2, f. 29	Stafford, Granville Leveson-Gower, Marquess of, 1721-1803	undated
b. 2, f. 30	Stephenson, William	[1747 April 9]
b. 2, f. 31	Storer, Anthony Morris, 1746-1799	1781
b. 2, f. 32	Streatfeild, G.	[1742 March]
b. 2, f. 33	Sydney, Thomas Townshend, Viscount, 1733-1800	[1752 February], undated
b. 2, f. 34	Talbot, W.	[1742]
b. 2, f. 35	Thomas, R.	1782 March 6
b. 2, f. 36	Tichborne, Miss	undated
b. 2, f. 37	Townshend, Charles, 1725-1767	1755 September 4
b. 2, f. 38	Townshend, Mary	1781, 1786, undated
b. 2, f. 39	Upper Ossory, Anne Liddell FitzRoy FitzPatrick, Countess of, 1737 or 1738-1804	[1780-1784], undated
b. 2, f. 40	Westphaling, H.	1753 September 12
b. 2, f. 41	Williams, George James ("Gilly"), 1719-1805	1742-1755
b. 2, f. 42	Unidentified correspondents Two short and unsigned notes In French.	undated

Series II: Letters from Selwyn, 1764–1788*5 Folders*

Series II is arranged in chronological order.

b. 2, f. 43	To unidentified recipient Selwyn asks for funds to be paid to Vincent Mathias	1764 December 21
b. 2, f. 44	To William Ponsonby, Earl of Bessborough Accompanied by engraved group portrait: George Selwyn, the Hon. Richard Edgcumbe, & Gilly Williams, after Sir Joshua Reynolds; W. Greatbach, sculp. (1891)	1766 January 4
b. 2, f. 45	To unidentified recipient	1780 April 6
b. 2, f. 46	To Frederick, Lord North Not in Selwyn's hand; apparently a contemporary copy.	1780 August 22
b. 2, f. 47	To unidentified recipient	1788 August 19

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

Social networks -- Great Britain

Geographic Names

Great Britain -- Social life and customs -- 18th century

Genres / Formats

Invoices

Playing cards

Names

Du Deffand, Marie de Vichy Chamrond,
marquise, 1697-1780

Harris, Samson, 1727-1763

Maynard, William, 1721-1772

Reade, Henry, 1716-1762

Selwyn, George Augustus, 1719-1791

Selwyn, John, 1688-1751

Storer, Anthony Morris, 1746-1799

Upper Ossory, Anne Liddell FitzRoy FitzPatrick,
countess of, 1737 or 1738-1804

Williams, George James, 1719-1805