

American Antiquarian Society

Manuscript Collections

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**NAME OF COLLECTION:**

Osborn, Sarah, Letters, 1743-1770; 1779

**LOCATION:**

Mss. boxes "0"

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**SIZE OF COLLECTION:**

8 folders (92 items [99 pieces])

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**SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:**

For biographical information on Osborn, see *AND*, vol. 16. See accompanying sheet for additional information.

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**SOURCE OF COLLECTION:**

Unknown

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**COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:**

Sarah Osborn (1714-1796) was born in London, England, the daughter of Benjamin and Susanna Hagggar. She arrived in New England in 1722 with her family, who eventually settled in Newport, R.I., in 1729. In 1731, she married Samuel Wheaten ( -1733), who died at sea two years later. She started teaching school to support her family in 1734, and in 1737, was admitted to the Congregational Church in Newport.

In 1741, Sarah Hagggar Wheaten founded a female religious society that she headed until her death more than fifty years later. In 1742, she married Henry Osborn ( - ), a merchant who suffered economic setbacks shortly thereafter. In 1744, Mrs. Osborn resumed teaching, once again to support her family. She taught continuously until the mid-1770s; since she had seventy or more students on occasion (including eight to ten boarders) she employed assistants.

In addition to her female religious society and teaching activities, she catechized her students in the evenings, as well as conducted religion classes for young men and Newport African-Americans. She persisted in teaching until her health weakened shortly before the Revolution. She remained a lifelong friend of Susanna "Susa" Anthony (1726-1791).

Her letters to the Rev. Joseph Fish (1705/06-1781) of North Stonington, Conn., in the period 1743 to 1770, are filled with religious reflection and speculation on the state of her soul. There is also, however, much information on her teaching activity, as well as her involvement in her female religious society and her prayer meetings with Newport African-Americans and the young men of the community. Her school and prayer meetings were popular, and she not only supported herself in this fashion, but also achieved a position of respect if not leadership in Newport. A final letter, in 1779, recounts the British occupation of and withdrawal from Newport.

See Contents List.

2 May 1975  
revised 28 March 1986  
revised 26 February 2010

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Contents List

Manuscript Box

Folder 1	undated (12 items)
Folder 2	1743 - 1753 (13 items)
Folder 3	1754 - 1755 (15 items)
Folder 4	1756 - 1760 (14 items)
Folder 5	1761 - 1763 (14 items)
Folder 6	1764 - 1766 (12 items)
Folder 7	1767 (11 items)
Folder 8	1768 - 1779 (8 items)

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**Additional Information**

**Studies focusing on materials in this collection:**

Kujawa, Sheryl, "A Precious Season on the Throne of Grace: Sarah Haggard Wheaton Osborn, 1714-1796," Diss. Boston College, 1993.

Kujawa, Sheryl, "The Great Awakening of Sarah Osborn and the Female Society of the First Congregational Church in Newport," *Newport History*, 65 (4), Spring 1994, p. 133-153.

Lacey Barbara E., "The Bonds of Friendship: Sarah Osborn of Newport and the Reverend Joseph Fish of Stonington, 1743-1779," *Rhode Island History*, 45 (4), November 1986, p. 127-136.

Norton, Mary Beth, "'My Resting Reaping Times:' Sarah Osborn's Defense of her 'Unfeminine' Activities, 1767," *Signs*, 2 (2), Winter 1976, p. 515-529.

**Location of associated materials:**

Sarah Osborn's diaries are located at Yale University, the Newport Historical Society, and the Connecticut Historical Society.

Sarah Osborn's correspondence is located in the Samuel Hopkins papers at the Andover Newton Theological School; the Simon Grantz collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; and the Silliman Family papers at Yale University.