

Moses Brown Papers

Digital

1713-1840

3 boxes (1.5 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 930

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In the early Republic, Moses Brown emerged as an ardent abolitionist, a social reformer, and one of the best known philanthropists in his native Providence, R.I. A Baptist who converted to the Society of Friends in 1774, Brown had made a fortune as a merchant, partly in the triangular trade, but a crisis of conscience brought on by the ghastly results of an attempted slaving voyage in 1765 and the death of his wife in 1773 led him to reexamine his life. Withdrawing from most of his business affairs, Brown joined the Society of Friends and emancipated his slaves. He was a founder of the Providence Society for the Abolition of Slavery in 1786 and a strong voice for peace, temperance, and universal education.

A small, but rich archive of the personal papers of Moses Brown, this collection centers on Brown's activities in antislavery, peace, and educational reform and his connections to the Society of Friends between the 1760s and 1830s. In addition to significant correspondence with major figures in early antislavery cause, including Anthony Benezet, George Benson, William Dillwyn, and Warner Mifflin, and some material relating to the Providence Society for the Abolition of Slavery, the collection includes outstanding content on peace activism. In addition to materials from Moses Brown, the collection includes letters to Moses' son Obadiah Brown and some fascinating letters and manuscripts relating to Moses' friend and fellow Friend, Job Scott.

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Natural sciences

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Quakers

Rhode Island

Social justice

Spiritual change

Background on Moses Brown

Moses Brown, a reformer who was himself reformed, stood among Rhode Island's most prominent Quakers at the turn of the nineteenth century. Known as a merchant, philanthropist, and ardent abolitionist, Brown was born on Sept. 23, 1738, the youngest of six children of James Brown and his wife Hope (Power). A life-long resident of Providence and a Baptist by birth, Moses was in many ways a dyed in the wool member of the city's elite. His great-great-grandfather Chad Brown was among the earliest English settlers in the colony and one of the signatories to the Providence Compact of 1637, and his grandfather James Brown I was pastor to the First Baptist Church. The generation of Moses' parents made their own distinctive mark, led by his father James who blazed the way to family wealth through trafficking in molasses, rum, and slaves in the triangular trade. James organized what may have been the first slaving expedition out of Providence, sending his ship *Mary* to the African coast in 1735-1736, making little in profit. The Browns were never major slave traders, at least by the standards of the colony, but neither were they were reluctant to try.

Before he had turned seven months old in 1739, Moses lost his father at sea and was taken into the care of his uncle Obadiah. Like James, Obadiah was a pillar of the mercantile community in Providence, and like James, he made himself a wealthy man. At 13, Moses joined his uncle as an apprentice in Obadiah Brown & Co., and when he attained his majority, he, like his four elder brothers, was made a partner. One of the first merchants in the city to trade directly with England, bypassing his more substantial neighbors in Boston and Newport, Obadiah was also an early investor in the whaling industry, opening a spermaceti candle factory prior to 1751, and he supported a diverse operation that ran from distilling rum to producing iron. Having served as supercargo aboard the *Mary* during its African voyage, Obadiah had few qualms about attempting to traffick in human cargo. In 1759, he organized a slaving expedition to Africa, only to have his ship, the aptly named *Wheel of Fortune*, fall prey to French privateers.

Upon Obadiah's death in 1762, shares in his firm were divided among the four Brown brothers -- Nicholas, John, Joseph, and Moses -- and the firm was reorganized as Nicholas Brown & Co. Like his brothers, Moses became a slave owner and a willing participant in the high-risk, high-reward triangular trade, although the brothers' fortunes in that line were little better than those of the Browns who went before. In 1765, their ship *Sally* returned to port having fended off a shipboard insurrection and reported that 109 of the 196 African captives had died by violence, disease, suicide, or starvation during the Middle Passage. Learning a financial lesson if not exactly a moral one, three of the four Brown brothers never again took part directly in the slave trade, and John's eagerness to continue investing in slaving voyages eventually led to the dissolution of the brothers' partnership in 1769. Even then, each of the brothers continued to be willing to trade goods produced by enslaved people and to sell to slave traders and slave owners.

When Moses married his cousin Anna Brown (Obadiah's daughter) in 1764, still in his mid-twenties, he was already enjoying the fruits of wealth and social influence. While raising a family that included a daughter Sarah (1764-1794) and sons William (1768-1799), Moses (1768-1797), Obadiah (1771-1822), and Edward (1772-1780), Brown stepped up his public commitments. Selected as a Deputy in the Rhode Island General Assembly (1764-1771) during an increasingly fractious time between colony and metropole, he aligned himself with the nascent revolutionary cause, becoming a member of the committee to oppose the Stamp Act in 1765. His brother John was even more ardent in his opposition to the crown, leading the party of Rhode Islanders in 1772 that famously torched the British schooner *Gaspee*, which had run aground while conducting anti-smuggling operations.

In local affairs, Moses emerged as the principal advocate for relocating the Rhode Island College from Warren, where it had been founded, to Providence in 1769, and he and his brothers backed their support by donating the land on which the new college would be built. Brown pursued his own status as a learned man, taking part in observations on the Transit of Venus in 1769,

making observations on lightning bugs, and even recording the course of kine pox among his own children after inoculating them in 1808.

The path on which Moses set out, however, took a sharp after his wife Anna died in 1773. The disaster of the *Sally* had already led Brown to question the course of his life and the influence of Quaker writers like Anthony Benezet fueled his doubts, but Anna's death led Brown into a period of intense scrutiny of his political and social views. After a period of deep self-reflection, he refashioned himself, withdrawing from most business concerns and joining the Society of Friends formally in 1774. He signaled his new commitments by manumitting the men and women he held in bondage, paying them for their services. "I saw my slaves with my spiritual eyes as plainly as I see you now," he wrote late in life, "and it was given to me as clearly to understand that the sacrifice that was called for of my hand was to give them liberty."

This liberation set Brown into active agitation against slavery. He and his brother John became bitter antagonists, waging a years-long debate in both private and public over the morality of slavery. At the same time, Moses plied his fellow merchants with moral suasion and lobbied reluctant legislatures in New England to abolish the slave trade, distributing and printing antislavery literature and carrying on a close correspondence with other abolitionists in the United States and England. Brown helped to found the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave-Trade in 1786, one year before the state banned the slave trade, focusing its energies -- despite little support from political circles -- on punishing violations of the act.

In 1788, Brown renewed his efforts in business, entering a partnership with a cousin, Smith Brown, and William Almy, who later married Moses' daughter Sarah. Having learned of English innovations in powering textile mills, Almy and the Browns hired Samuel Slater in 1790 to construct the nation's first water-powered spinning mill in Pawtucket, R.I.: an event that is often credited with bringing the industrial revolution to America. For Moses, the mill was in part an attempt to lure investment away from the slave trade and toward domestic manufacture, though he appears to have been unaware of the irony that cotton mills became primary consumers of the king crop of the slaveholding South.

Brown's philanthropy and activism spread widely from its antislavery base. In addition to supporting the peace movement, temperance, and Indian rights, among other causes, and he was an avid supporter of the Society of Friends. Brown was called upon often to support construction of new meeting houses in New England and he was particularly strong in educational causes. In addition to his efforts on behalf of the future Brown University, Brown was a valued supporter of the African Union Meeting and School-House and helped found the Yearly Meeting School on Aquidneck Island in 1784 as well as the New England Yearly Meeting Boarding School when it reopened in Providence in 1819. The school was named in his honor in 1904.

After Anna's death, Moses remarried twice, to Mary Olney (1743-1794) and Phebe Lockwood (1747-1808). Although he lived well into his nineties, Brown remained active in reform causes until the end of his life. He died in 1832 shortly before his 96th birthday. He had outlived all three of his wives, all of his children, and three of four step-children.

Scope of collection

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Originally organized in three series, the collection has been reorganized into a single series

Inventory

Abolition and slavery

1763-1840

25 folders

Abolition and slavery: Bills of sale for captives

1762-1766

Box 1: 1

Receipt from Abraham Whipple to Nicholas Brown & Co. for purchase of 'one Negro girl named Deuse'

1763 Nov. 19

Receipt for 1,100 old tenor for purchase of a slave.

Receipt from Allin Brown to Moses Brown for 'a certain Negro man named Caesar who I promise to Deliver to him on order or Demand'

1764 June 8

Receipt for employ of an enslaved man, Caesar. A note by Moses Brown reads: "A.B. was to pay the execution on which Caesar was to be sold. . ." and 'August 28th 1765, "Recd ye above Named Negro back."

Receipt from Gershom Wilmarth to Moses Brown for purchase of Caesar

1764 June 8

Receipt of a note for L34/17/9 for purchase of an enslaved man, Caesar, "about Twenty two years of age which Negro belong'd to Allen Brown Esq of providence and wass by me taken by Execution..." Also includes note from Allin Brown, 1764 June 8, selling and delivering Caesar to Moses Brown. On verso is a note in Moses Brown's hand: "Allen Brown, of a Negro. Freed by manumission."

Receipt from Moses Brown to Mary Brown for 'for a Negro Girl Named Pegg'

1766 Sept. 8

Promise to pay \$70 for enslaved woman, Pegg.

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipt with Adam (paving work)

1785

Box 1: 2

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipts with Benno

1774-1785

Box 1: 3

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipts with Cesar Brown

1800-1801

Box 1: 4

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipts with Cudge Brown

1776-1812

Box 1: 5

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipt with Eve

1779

Box 1: 6

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipt with Pegge

1805

Box 1: 7

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipt with Phillis

1778

Box 1: 8

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipts with Prime Hopkins

1777-1785

Box 1: 9

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipt with Tom

1778

Box 1: 10

Abolition and slavery: Brown, Moses. Receipts with Yarrow

1777-1779

Box 1: 11

Abolition and slavery: Francis, Thomas (free man of color held in Savannah as alleged fugitive slave)

ca.1840

Box 1: 12

Note relaying news that a free colored man, Thomas Francis of Newport, son of Violet Francis, is being held in jail in Savannah "on suspicion of being a runaway slave. He has been there in chains six months & wishes Capt. Cooke to make some exertions to obtains his release -- refers to Robert Lawton of Newport."

Abolition and slavery: Gilbert, Nicholas (agreement with Linder to work for his liberation from slavery)

1799

Box 1: 13

Agreement between Nicholas Gilbert on Newport and Lindor, an African American man held in prison, in which Lindor agrees to serve on two India voyages for Gilbert's client Poulain Audinet, "and at the expiration there of to be considered allowed by him & his Constituents as a free man and to have and Enjoy his Liberty accordingly without any further claim." On verso in a copy of Audinet, wife of William Audinet of Guadeloupe, granting Gilbert power of attorney (1799-04-26) to reclaim Lindor as an escaped slave. Witnessed by Joshua Lindley and Moses Brown.

Abolition and slavery: Greene, Caleb. Manumission certificate for stake in enslaved men Peter and Venter

1774

Box 1: 14

"Under a sense of the Oppression and Injustice of Buying and selling of men as Slaves and Desire to Remove far as may be, the Evil Practice thereof," Greene divests himself of a one quarter interest in "a certain Indian or Mulatto of what Nation he may be, Called and known by the Name of Peter" and a one half interest in "a Negro Man Named Venter." Witnessed by Moses Brown and Job Scott.

Abolition and slavery: Johnson, Joseph. Invoice to Moses Brown "to schooling his Negro Cudge"

1769

Box 1: 15

Promise to pay \$70 for enslaved woman, Pegg.

Abolition and slavery: List of colored persons remaining unclaimed. . . In the Brig Samoset

1817

Box 1: 16

Abolition and slavery: Names of slaves in Moses Brown's family

1771-1775

Box 1: 17

Abolition and slavery: New England Yearly Meeting of Friends epistle

1790

Box 1: 18

Abolition and slavery: news clippings

1784-1788, 1836

Box 1: 19

Abolition and slavery: Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave-Trade. Constitution. Providence, R.I. : s.n.

1789

Broadside

Box 1: 20

Abolition and slavery: State of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations. In General Assembly. June session, 1790. : an act to incorporate certain persons by the name of the Providence Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. Providence, R.I. : J. Carter

1790

Printed

Box 1: 21

Printed act of incorporation for the Providence Society for the Abolition of Slavery.

Abolition and slavery: Providence Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Letter from George Benson
ca.1831

Box 1: 22

Abolition and slavery: Providence Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Membership list
1822

Box 1: 23

Abolition and slavery: Providence Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Standing Committee report
1793

Box 1: 24

Sister society in Philadelphia confirms the story of Olver Fry, "his claim to liberty, and there is a prospect of other evidence being attained sufficient to answer the design of the Society."

Abolition and slavery: Thompson, Nancy. Dispute with former master

1812

Box 1: 25

African American: Brown, Moses. Note requesting assistance for the bearer, 'a colored man'

1835 Oct. 27

Box 1: 26

African American: Short history of the African Union and School House. Providence : Brown and Danforth
1821

Pamphlet

Box 1: 27

Moses Brown's copy with his signature on the title page and a note added at end of text: "N.B. The whole of this book I never read or heard read til since printed, the last paragraph was read to me by Henry Jackson who I suppose to be the compiler & writer and I proposed to leave my name out but he tho't best to Continue it in, -- I had rather it had been omitted as I dont approve of singing meeting and some other parts yet if it suits the Colored people I shall not Oppose them. 1822 1st mo. 4th. Moses Brown.

African American: Subscription for evening school for people of color

1805

Box 1: 28

Signed by Brown with a pledge of \$20

Almy, William: Warrant against debts of Warwick Manufacturing Company

1835

Box 1: 29

Almy & Brown. Accounts and receipts

1792-1821

Box 1: 30

Baker, Rachel. Dreaming and waking, case of Rachel Baker

ca.1814

Box 1: 31

Brown, Mary: Note approving Moses Brown's remarriage to Phebe Lockwood

1799

Box 1: 32

Brown, Moses: Account of the progress of the kine pox with the children

1808

Box 1: 33

Brown inoculated his children and others using quills provided by Dr. Manchester.

Brown, Moses: Memorandum book

1830

Box 1: 34

Brown, Moses: Miscellaneous notes

1785-1832

Box 1: 35

Brown, Moses: Notes on Benjamin Rush's essay respecting Bible societies

1791

Box 1: 36

Brown, Moses: Notes on globes

ca.1822

Box 1: 37

Brown, Moses: Notes on or from James Yates on the Unitarian and Trinitarian controversy

1819

Box 1: 38

Brown, Moses: Notes on William Craig Brownlee's book

1824

Box 1: 39

Brown, Moses: Observations on lightning bugs

1802

Box 1: 40

Brown, Moses: Observations on the Transit of Venus

1769

Box 1: 41

Brown, Obadiah: Receipts

1754-1776

Box 1: 42

Colley, Thomas: Sermon publicly delivered. . . At a youh's meeting of the people called Quakers in High Street meeting house, Philadelphia

1787

Box 1: 43

Correspondence (Moses Brown)

1773-1829
71 folders
Almy, William
1795-1813
Box 1: 44
Assessors of Rate
1778
Box 1: 45
Barker, A.
1826 Dec. 5
Box 1: 46
Benedict, David
1824 Apr. 6
Box 1: 47
Benezet, Anthony
1780
Box 1: 48
Benson, George
1773
Box 1: 49
Benson, George
1830
Box 1: 50
Benson, George
1831
Box 1: 51
Benson, George
1832
Box 1: 52
Benson, George
1833-1835
Box 1: 53
Birkbeck, Morris
1786
Box 1: 54
Carpenter, Caleb
1776
Box 1: 55
Churchman, George
1810 Sept. 7
Box 1: 56
Collins, Micajah
1809-1819
Box 1: 57
Congdon, Nicholas
1829 Oct. 17
Box 1: 58
Congregational Churches Committee
1791
Box 1: 59
Davis, Timothy
1776-1783
Box 1: 60
Delaplain, Joseph
1784-1793
Box 1: 61
Dillwyn, William
1786
Box 1: 62

Distressing case of N.C. "I am glad to hear that our simple Endeavours to exite a more general abhorrence of Negro Slavery have been met, in so many Places, Encouragement to persevere in them." Awaits action within the Meeting for Sufferings... "until then we must patiently wait and be satisfied with the Fruits which have already appear'd without being discouraged at the little prospect there is, at present, of annihilating the African Slave Trade." Many "poor Black people" have resorted to London after the American Revolution "and many of them being in a very destitute Condition, Government has determined to settle a little colony of them on some part of the Coast of Africa... I have many fears for the poor creates, and that the same diabolic spirit which first gave birth to the Slave Trade, will be employed to frustrate the good Designs of the present Plan..." News of Friends.

Drinker, John

1780

Box 1: 63

Elliot, Samuel

1788-1792

Box 1: 65

Letter from Moses Brown to Samuel Elliot

1788 Jan. 15

Sending a copy of act passed in Connecticut (banning the slave trade); now turning to New Hampshire where Guinea Traders may be using New Hampshire to "clear their vessels"

Letter from Moses Brown to Samuel Elliot

1792 Oct. 25

Re: Taunton case.

Letter from Moses Brown to Samuel Elliot

1792 Nov. 23

The Abolition Society has approved support for the Taunton case.

Forster, Josiah

1826

Box 1: 66

Forster, Sophronia

1818-1819

Box 1: 67

Greene, Caleb

1822 Apr. 30

Box 1: 68

Greene, Rowland

1832 Apr. 24

Box 1: 69

Hadwen, Benjamin

1820

Box 1: 70

Hicks, Elias

1793

Box 1: 71

Hopkins, Samuel

1788

Box 1: 72

Howland, Daniel

1783-1785

Box 1: 73

Howland, Thomas

1828 Oct. 26

Box 1: 74

Johnson, Daniel

1821 Apr. 20

Box 1: 75

Lawton, Isaac

1779-1789

Box 1: 76

Manning, Joseph

1769

Box 1: 77

Mifflin, Warner

1787 Dec. 3

Box 1: 78

Returning from the Yearly Meeting in North Carolina. State of the Meeting, Friends are likely to "sustain great loss by rushing into government matters, divers being elected Members of the Assembly." Yearly Meeting agreed to submit a petition to the Assembly "representing the situation of the Oppressed Affricans, that is that of North Carolina which is the only state in the union which has Laws to prevent the Liberation I believe. here about 60 Negroes set free by friends has been taken and sold into slavery by an Act of Assembly yet in force..."

Mitchell, Mary

1820-1821

Box 1: 79

Murray, John

1786

Box 1: 80

Osborn, John

1813-1836

Box 2: 1

Pemberton, James

1780-1797

Box 2: 2

Pemberton, John

1780-1781

Box 2: 3

Pierce, Abigail

1826 May 22

Box 2: 4

Pratt, Micajah C.

1822 Apr. 20

Box 2: 5

Prior, Edmund

1797

Box 2: 6

Rickman, William

1773

Box 2: 7

Rodman, Samuel

1804-1821

Box 2: 8

Rotch, Lydia

1804

Box 2: 9

Rotch, William

1776-1788

Box 2: 10

Rotch, William

1792-1804

Box 2: 11

Rotch, William

1806-1828

Box 2: 12

Routh, Martha

1794

Box 2: 13

Sands, Daniel

1788-1795

Box 2: 14

Scott, Job

1787-1793

Box 2: 15

Sherman, Job

1801

Box 2: 16

Slocum, William

1812

Box 2: 17

Smith, Susan

1820

Box 2: 18

Stabler, Edward

1819

Box 2: 19

Starbuck, Samuel

1771-1773

Box 2: 20

Thompson, Thomas

1821 Nov. 12

Box 2: 21

Thornton, Elisha

1794

Box 2: 22

Thurber, Samuel

1801

Box 2: 23

Tobey, Samuel B.

1826 Dec. 10

Box 2: 24

Townsend, John

1787

Box 2: 25

Turpin, William

1779

Box 2: 26

Wagstaff, Thomas

1781-1792

Box 2: 27

Watson, Jane

1794

Box 2: 28

Wickes, Lydia

1803

Box 2: 29

Wickes, Sylvester

1804

Box 2: 30

Williams, William

1812

Box 2: 31

Wilson, William

1773-1809

Box 2: 32

Worcester, Noah

1826 Aug. 23

Box 2: 33

Unidentified

undated

Box 2: 34

Correspondence (Obadiah Brown)

1788-1822

42 folders

Adamson, William

1813

Box 2: 35

Almy, William

1803-1819

Box 2: 36

Arnold, O. and A.

1817

Box 2: 37

Arnold, Thomas

1817

Box 2: 38

Barker, James

1818

Box 2: 39

Bates, Barnabus

1817-1820

Box 2: 40

Brayton, Robert

1819

Box 2: 41

Clapp, Enoch

1817

Box 2: 42

Dean, Lydia

1819

Box 2: 43

Dockray, John B.

1815

Box 2: 44

Dudley, Edward

1814

Box 2: 45

Earl, John

1815

Box 2: 46

Eddy, Thomas

1822

Box 2: 47

Greene, Anna M.

1817

Box 2: 48

Hopkins, Jerard J.

1819

Box 2: 49

Howland, Thomas

1818

Box 2: 50

Kite, Benjamin and Thomas

1818

Box 2: 51

Mott, Adam and Anna

1818

Box 2: 52

Mott, Richard

1815

Box 2: 53
Murray, John
1815
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Patten, William
1818
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Pope, Jonathan D.
1814
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Pratt, Micajah C.
1822
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Purinton, Betsey
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Rand, Benjamin H.
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Robinson, James
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Rodman, Samuel
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Rotch, Mary
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Rotch, William
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Ruggles, M.
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Sayre, Samuel
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Sessions, Harvey
1817
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Shane, William G.
1814
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Shearman, Abraham, Jr.
1818-1819
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Shearman, James
1820
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Sherman, Job
1810
Box 2: 70
Slater, Samuel
1814
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Smith, David
1817
Box 2: 72
Stroud, Daniel

1809
Box 2: 73
Thornton, Elisha
1788
Box 2: 74
Williams, John E.
undated
Box 2: 75
Worcester, Noah
1816-1819
Box 2: 76
Education
1782-1828
15 folders
At a meeting of the Boarding School Committee [Rules for a school at Westttown]
1796
Pamphlet
Box 2: 77
At a meeting of the School Committee of the Town of Providence
1786
Broadside
Box 2: 78
Brown, Obadiah. Gifts at opening of school
1814
Box 2: 79
Friends' Academy, New Bedford
1817
Flier
Box 2: 80
Friends' Academy, New Bedford: appointing Obadiah M. Brown and Samuel Rodman to Trustees
1813
Box 2: 81
From the Meeting for Sufferings for New England. . . Providence : John Carter
1782
Pamphlet
Box 2: 82
Mott, Benjamin and Sarah Robinson. Report on visitation to schools
1798
Box 2: 83
New England Yearly Meeting: Appointment of School Committee
1782
Box 2: 84
New England Yearly Meeting School Committee: Extracts of minutes
1784-1803
Box 2: 85
New England Yearly Meeting School Committee: Extracts of minutes
1795-1801
Box 2: 86
Smithfield Monthly Meeting School Committee, Minutes
1777
Box 2: 87
New England Yearly Meeting School subscription list
1780
Box 2: 88
Some observations relating to the eastablishment of schools. . . By the New England Yearly Meeting School Committee
1778
Box 2: 89
Tuition receipts
1783-1828

Box 2: 90

Yearly Meeting 1794, A report from the general meeting for Ackworth School, held in London
1796

Pamphlet

Box 2: 91

Field, William: Invoice for work at spermaceti works

1761

Box 3: 1

Financial: list of rateables

1767, 1830

Box 3: 2

Financial: receipts

1809-1836

Box 3: 3

Land records

1713-1829

5 folders

Deeds (mostly relative to New England Yearly Meeting of Friends lands)

1747-1771

Box 3: 4

Deeds

1774-1797

Box 3: 5

Deeds

1800-1829

Box 3: 6

Plat maps and surveys

1744-1771

Box 3: 7

Record of road to the ferry

1713

Box 3: 8

Lawton, Isaac: A biographical sketch of the life of Isaac Lawton, by Mary Brown

1822

Box 3: 9

Library: A catalogue of books belonging to Moses Brown's Library

1784

2 versions

Box 3: 10

Library: A list of books belonging to Mary Brown

1795 Feb. 2

Box 3: 11

Manning, Joseph: Order for flour from widow Hope Brown

ca.1763

Box 3: 12

Miscellaneous materials about the collection

Box 3: 13

Newitt, Samuel: Account of the Bibles and testaments delivered. . . To the poor of Tiverton

1817

Box 3: 14

Osborn, John. Letter from John P. Willis, Lindley Murray, John Wood, and Solomon Griffith on the Hicksite controversy

1824 Apr. 28

Box 3: 15

Peace

1816-1832

5 folders

Newspaper clippings

1832

Box 3: 16

On universal peace (from the London Herald of Peace, no. 36)
1831 Jun 11
Box 3: 17
Peace Society of Windham County
1832
Box 3: 18
Proceedings of the sixteenth annual meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace
ca.1831
Box 3: 19
Rhode Island Peace Society, book distribution (Obadiah Brown)
1816-1818
Box 3: 20
Providence (R.I.) history
undated
3 folders
Index of the original Proprietors
undated
Box 3: 21
Historical essays on early Providence
undated
Box 3: 22
Historical notes on early Providence
undated
Box 3: 23
Rotch, William and Elizabeth Rodman: Record of marriage
1782
Box 3: 24
Scott, Job
1770-1808
13 folders
Scott, Job: Accounts for schooling Job Scott's children
1795-1808
Box 3: 25
Bills for teaching
1774-1784
Box 3: 26
Scott, Job: Certificate from Providence Monthly Meeting for religious visit to Connecticut
1791
Box 3: 27
Scott, Job: Certificate from Providence Monthly Meeting for religious visit to the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, and the southern states
1788
Box 3: 28
Scott, Jon: Certificate from Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting for religious visits
1792
Box 3: 29
Scott, Job: Correspondence from James Manning on Scott's youthful indiscretions, breaking windows of a meeting house
1770
Box 3: 30
Scott, Job: Minutes given to Scott on religious visits
1792
Box 3: 31
Scott, Job: Future rewards and punishments
ca.1785
Box 3: 32
Scott, Job: Journal (pages from the original manuscript left out of the printed journal)
Box 3: 33
Scott, Job. Miscellaneous material on Scott
Box 3: 34
Scott, Job: Poem to his wife and children

undated

Box 3: 35

Scott, Job: Quietness as a canopy covers my mind (poem)

ca.1795

Box 3: 36

Scott, Job: A truly conscientious scruple

ca.1780

Box 3: 37

Society of Friends

1784-1836

6 folders

Coventry Middle Monthly Meeting: Disownment of John Newit and wife for absconding

1795

Box 3: 38

Meeting for Sufferings

1787-1814

Box 3: 39

Meetinghouse support (Moses Brown)

1805-1836

Box 3: 40

Memorial to Congress on condition of the Indian natives in the Northwestern frontier

ca.1815

Box 3: 41

Memorial proposing that Friends purchase a tract of land from the Indians in Indiana to establish a Quaker settlement; the memorialists "indulge the hope that the day is not distant, when these tribes shall exchange the Tomahawk & scalping knife for the Implements of husbandry -- when we shall no longer behold in them the Savage foe, but the civilized & tranquil friends; fixed in their habitations, local in their interests, impressed with Ideas of separate property, and advancing in the mechanic arts; when schools shall be established for the education of their youth, until they become as growing monuments of the exalted Benevolence and Philanthropy, of the Government over which you preside." Apparently enclosed in letter from unidentified recipient to Obadiah M. Brown.

Miscellaneous

1784-1828

Box 3: 42

Notes on doctrine (Moses Brown)

undated

Box 3: 43

Some remarks on silent worship, or devotion. London : London Review

1791

Broadside

Box 3: 44

American Antiquarian Society copy inscribed on verso "Presented to me by a female Quaker (a speaker) after a public service of Friends at Plainfield (Con.) Sept. 1811." Probably printed locally, in 1811, for distribution at the service in Plainfield. However, use of the long "s" suggests possibility of earlier date of publication.

Support of public Friends, Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting

1785

Box 3: 45

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Part of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends Records, April 2016.

Rhode Island Historical Society note on provenance:

This collection apparently came from many disparate sources in the early part of the twentieth century. The bulk consisted of the personal collection of prominent Quaker activist Moses Brown (1738-1836) and his family. Brown was somewhat of a collector, and he also inherited the papers of his son, Obadiah M. Brown, who predeceased him. He was the official agent for a wide variety

of activities, including various Friends meetings, charitable organizations, and the New England Yearly Meeting School (later renamed the Moses Brown School). He also possessed a large library.

In about 1851, most of his papers were donated to the Rhode Island Historical Society by his heirs. Some remained in the family with the descendants of Brown's granddaughter, some went to the family of his stepdaughter, Sarah (Lockwood) Harris, and some later came into the hands of Samuel Austin (1816-1897). Austin had attended the New England Yearly Meeting School in 1828 and was later a teacher at the school. He apparently decided to undertake a biography of Moses Brown and was probably given some of the papers by the family. It does not appear that Austin ever published anything on Moses Brown, or even compiled a draft, but he added his own research notes to the collection he had acquired.

After Samuel Austin's death in 1897, his heirs divided his portion of the collection roughly along secular and Quaker lines and donated the secular half to the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1898 and 1899. This consisted of mostly colonial manuscripts collected by Brown rather than his personal papers. It was probably around the same time that the Austin family donated the portion relating to the Society of Friends to the Moses Brown School. The school was already in the business of storing archival material, as it then housed the archives of New England Yearly Meeting and its constituent parts.

In 1919, Katherine Austin (Samuel's daughter) donated papers of her maternal grandfather, John Osborne, relating to Moses Brown, including original letters received from Brown. Other material continued to be integrated into the Austin Collection, including some records of the school and the 1913 research notes of headmaster Rayner Kelsey, and the collection grew to be the miscellaneous manuscripts collection of the Moses Brown School. The collection continued to grow through 1963, as donations of relevant material were added and interfiled, including original letters addressed from Brown to other parties. The Society of Friends generally remained the focus of this collection, however. An indeterminate number of Moses Brown's account books found among the Austin Collection were donated to the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1914.

Some of the additions to the collection that have been identified include:

"Remedy for Injuries" photostat, donated by Asa D. Wing on August 23, 1922; September 19, 1791, letter, donated by Rudolf F. Haffenreffer on May 12, 1939;

Three 1818-1819 letters to Sophronia Foster, donated by Ralph A. Bullock on October 24, 1946;

October 27, 1835, letter, donated from Robert D. Wilson on February 1, 1947;

March 13, 1787, letter added from unknown source on July 17, 1956;

September 25, 1814, letter, donated by Mrs. Sessions Cole in spring of 1962; and Poem by Job Scott, donated by Louisa White, date unknown.

Letters or notes relating to these donations can be found in Folder D.

At one point, the items were sorted by subject and most items were placed in individual rice paper folders. The folders were stored in twenty-one custom-made orange boxes (really slipcases tied with ribbon). This probably took place about 1940, when "Robert Morton Hazleton was selected to catalogue the Austin Collection of Moses Brown papers and letters," according to a 1954 report. Hazleton created a card catalog for the collection, arranged by box number.

In 1963, the entire New England Yearly Meeting Archives, including the Austin Collection, were transferred from the Moses Brown School vault to the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, where they remained on deposit for seven years. In 1970 the New England Yearly Meeting Archives were transferred to deposit status at the Rhode Island Historical Society, with a New England Yearly Meeting archivist being appointed by the meeting.

In about 1986, a well-informed volunteer "indexed" the collection, meaning only that notes on each item were written on the outside of the paper folders. These notes were generally extensive and accurate but were in handwriting considerably worse than the originals. As no unified guide was prepared, the notes only slightly lessened the task of hunting through the collection.

In 1996, University Publications of America was granted permission to microfilm these Moses Brown Papers, along with other collections at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library, for a series on the slave trade. It became necessary to provide a more coherent organization for the collection and to remove printed material and other material generated after Brown's death.

An item-by-item database was prepared of the material in all twenty-one boxes of the Austin Collection. Disposition was made to six different locations. The largest amount was retained as a smaller collection of Moses Brown Papers. Papers directly relating to the operation of the Moses Brown School, especially after 1838, were placed with the records of that institution. A small amount went to create the Rayner Kelsey Papers, which will probably be filed subordinate to the Moses Brown School Records. Official records of Friends meetings generated by Brown and his wife, especially Smithfield Monthly Meeting, were placed with the meeting's other records. Austin's notes, as well as any other odd material that did not seem to pertain to the Browns, were placed with the already-existing collection of Austin Papers. Printed works (books, pamphlets, and epistles) not directly relating to Brown or the school were removed to be interfiled with the archive's own considerable collection of printed Quakeriana.

The collection has been completely rehoused in acid-free boxes and folders. The notes on each folder have to some extent been incorporated into the following calendar, and the original acidic folders have been discarded. Various lists have been prepared to

assist anyone looking for a specific item; there is a box-by-box inventory available at the archives, showing the disposition of each item.

N.B. See Mss313, Moses Brown (1738-1836) Papers, ca. 1648-1836, included in this edition.

Note from *A guide to the microfilm edition of papers of the American slave trade: Series A: Selections from the Rhode Island Historical Society, Part 1: Brown Family Collections*, Jay Coughtry, ed. University Publications of America.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Aug. 2016.

Related Material

The Rhode Island Historical Society have a significant collection of **Moses Brown Papers** (MSS 313)

Note that Moses Brown of this collection is not the same as the merchant Moses Brown of Newburyport, whose papers are located at **The Baker Library at Harvard** and elsewhere.

Other formats available

Microfilm

Digitized content

Selected materials have been digitized and are available online through **Credo**.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

Cite as: Moses Brown Papers (MS 930). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Antislavery movements--Rhode Island

Peace movements--Rhode Island

Quakers--Rhode Island

Rhode Island--History--18th century

Society of Friends--History

Contributors

Brown, Moses, 1738-1836 **[main entry]**

Benson, George W., 1808-1879

Brown, Obadiah, 1771-1822

Scott, Job, 1751-1793

Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave-Trade

Providence Society for the Abolition of Slavery

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