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Guide to the Percy Family Papers

OSB MSS 88



by Beinecke Staff

June 1996

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: OSB MSS 88

CREATOR: Davidson, Thomas, active approximately 1800

TITLE: Percy family papers

DATES: 1760-1822

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence, covers, and other documents chiefly from members of the Percy family to members of the Davidson family, disbound from album assembled by Thomas Davidson, Jr. Includes routine business and social letters from the first three Dukes of Northumberland to Thomas Davidson and Thomas Davidson, Jr.; letters from Elizabeth Percy to Martha Davidson; one letter by Thomas Percy; and various autographs and seals.

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

Requesting Instructions

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To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased in 1969. For further information, please consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Percy Family Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Percy Family Papers. James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

This finding aid was produced from a previously existing card set in the Manuscripts Catalog, or from another inventory. All pertinent bibliographical information has been retained.

I. Hugh Percy (formerly Smithson), 1st Duke of Northumberland, 1715-1786

Hugh Smithson, fourth baronet of Stanwick in Yorkshire, married the heiress to the Percy title and estates in 1740 over the objections of her family. In 1750, shortly after her succession as Baroness Percy *suo jure*, Hugh Smithson took the surname Percy by Act of Parliament and was seated in the House of Lords as Earl of Northumberland. He was created Duke in 1766 with the support of William Pitt.

Northumberland was active in politics for over thirty years. He instituted many agricultural improvements on the Percy estates, reclaiming land and rebuilding laborers' cottages, and developed highly profitable coal mines. He renovated Alnwick Castle, hiring Robert Adam as architect and designer, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was a founding Trustee of the British Museum.

The couple had two sons and one daughter, Lady Elizabeth, who died unmarried. In addition, Northumberland had several natural children. His son James Smithson, born in France to Elizabeth Keate Macie in 1765, was trained as a scientist at Oxford and died in Genoa in 1829, leaving the estate that eventually became the founding bequest of the Smithsonian Institution.

Lady Elizabeth Percy, Duchess of Northumberland, died in 1776. Hugh Percy, Duke of Northumberland, died on June 6, 1786.

II. Hugh Percy, (sometime Smithson), 2nd Duke of Northumberland, 1742-1817

Eldest son of the first Duke, Hugh Smithson assumed the surname of Percy by Act of Parliament along with his father in 1750. He entered the Army in 1759 and in 1764 married Lady Anne Stuart, daughter of Lord Bute. He served with distinction at the Battle of Lexington and was named Lieutenant-General of the Army in America early in 1777, but was recalled from command after many disputes with General Howe. He continued his military career, however, taking command of the Percy yeomanry regiment in 1798 and a colonelcy in the horse-guards in 1806.

Northumberland was granted a divorce in Parliament from Lady Anne in 1779 on the grounds of her adultery; he immediately married Frances Julia Burrell, with whom he had three daughters and two sons. He continued his father's agricultural improvements, and when corn prices fell after 1815, he reduced his rents by twenty-five percent; his tenants built a monument to him in gratitude. He held twice-weekly gatherings at Alnwick Castle, inviting tenants and local tradespeople. The second Duke of Northumberland died suddenly "of rheumatic gout" in July 1817. His widow died in May, 1820.

III. Hugh Percy, 3rd Duke of Northumberland, 1785-1847

Hugh Percy, eldest son of the second Duke, was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge and elected M.P. for Buckingham and for Westminster in 1806. While in Parliament he proposed a bill to abolish slavery in the British colonies, but it failed. In 1807 he took his seat in the House of Lords as Baron Percy. Ten years later he succeeded his father as Duke of Northumberland. He married Lady Charlotte Florentia Clive, who was for some years Governess to the future Queen Victoria. The couple had no children.

Northumberland was Ambassador Extraordinary to France at the coronation of Charles X in 1825. In January 1829 he was appointed Governor-General of Ireland, shortly before the passage of the Catholic Relief Bill, and was recalled when the ministry of the Duke of Wellington fell in November 1830. He was elected Chancellor of Cambridge in 1840, a post he held until his death at Alnwick Castle on February 12, 1847.

Scope and Contents

The Percy Family Papers consist of letters, covers, and a few other papers, most sent to members of the Davidson family by several members of the Percy (Smithson) family, particularly the first three Dukes of Northumberland. The papers span the dates 1760-1822 and were originally assembled into an autograph album by Thomas Davidson, Jr., Esq. of Newcastle on Tyne, who held at least two patronage positions in the grant of the Dukes, including Distributor of Stamps for Northumberland. The album was disassembled in 1969 and the correspondence received its present arrangement; other papers were apparently kept in their original order. The papers have been organized into two series: I. Correspondence; and II. Other Album Pages.

[Series I, Correspondence](#), is housed in folders 1-97 and contains letters and covers, arranged alphabetically by correspondent. About half of the items in the series are unaccompanied covers addressed to various members of the Davidson family, mounted on album pages, some annotated by Davidson. The remainder are almost entirely brief business and social notes from the Dukes of Northumberland to Thomas Davidson and Thomas Davidson, Jr.

While the letters are largely routine, the correspondence as a whole sheds light on the strong and well-tended connections between the Percy family and the recipients of their patronage. Topics include payments and letters to be forwarded by Davidson for them; local committee meetings, village and manor court schedules, and appointments; social calls and invitations to public receptions at Alnwick Castle; congratulations on the birth of children and condolences on deaths; and the frequent absences of the Dukes and their family members in London.

A letter of February 6, 1781 conveys Northumberland's endorsement of Thomas Davidson, Jr.'s nomination as Distributor of Stamps. Letters by the second Duke of Northumberland also discuss Davidson's appointment as Clerk of the Lieutenancy of the County and various militia matters during the Napoleonic Wars. An 1816 letter concerns shipping arrangements for a portrait of the Duke by Thomas Phillips, which "has been much admired in London by the connoisseurs." Box 2, folder 86 contains four letters from his sister, Lady Elizabeth Percy, to Martha Davidson, containing family news and expressions of homesickness for Alnwick Castle.

[Series II, Other Album Pages](#), is located in folders 98-107 and arranged in original album order. Contents include a printed copy of the Davidson crest; locks of hair; a recipe for rheumatism medicine; and detached autographs and seals. There are two printed items: a copy of the popular facsimile of the last letter of Queen Marie Antoinette with accompanying printed translation; and a broadside "Monody on the Death" of Frances Julia, Dowager Duchess of Northumberland, attributed to "M.H." of "Ladies' Academy, Wearmouth."

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1760-1822

0.51 linear feet (1.5 boxes)

Series I, *Correspondence*, is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.

HAMILTON, EUPHEMIA HAMILTON, DUCHESS OF, 1786-1859		
b. 1, f. 1	ALS to Martha Davidson	n.d.
HEARD, ISAAC, 1730-1822		
b. 1, f. 2	ALS to the Duke of Northumberland	n.d.
LEFEVRE, ----		
b. 1, f. 3	ALS to Henry Reveley	n.d.
NORTHUMBERLAND, CHARLOTTE FLORENTIA (CLIVE) PERCY, [DUCHESS OF, 1787-1866]		
b. 1, f. 4	ALS to Martha Davidson; London	1820 Mar 23
NORTHUMBERLAND, FRANCES JULIA (BURELL) PERCY, [DUCHESS OF, 1752-1820]		
b. 1, f. 5	2 ALS to Martha Davidson; Clifton	1789 Oct 6, n.d.
b. 1, f. 6	ALS to Thomas Davidson, Jr.	n.d.
NORTHUMBERLAND, HUGH PERCY, DUKE OF, 1715-1786		
b. 1, f. 7	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Northumberland House	1760 Feb 5
b. 1, f. 8	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1765 Apr 12
b. 1, f. 9	ALS in third person to Thomas Davidson; Northumberland House	1772 Feb 14
b. 1, f. 10	LS to Thomas Davidson; Northumberland House T. Davidson, Jr., to be Distributor of Stamps. In the hand of Thomas Percy	1781 Feb 6
b. 1, f. 11	ALS in third person to Thomas Davidson	[1783?] Oct 4
b. 1, f. 12	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Bath	1783 Nov 18
b. 1, f. 13	ALS to John Lowes; Bath	1783 Dec 14
b. 1, f. 14	2 LS to William Lowes; Northumberland House Concerning a forthcoming election; in the hand of Thomas Percy	1774 May, Jun
NORTHUMBERLAND, HUGH PERCY, DUKE OF, 1742-1817		
b. 1, f. 15	ALS to John Davidson; Syon [London]	1786 Jul 8
b. 1, f. 16	Cover to John Davidson; Alnwick	1788 Jul 16

NORTHUMBERLAND, HUGH PERCY, DUKE OF, 1742-1817 (continued)

b. 1, f. 17	ALS to John Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1804 Jan 8
b. 1, f. 18	ALS to John Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1809 Oct 19
b. 1, f. 19	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Stanwick	1783 Nov 12
b. 1, f. 20	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Stanwick	1783 Dec 3
b. 1, f. 21	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Stanwick	1784 Jan 5
b. 1, f. 22	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Northumberland House	1787 Apr 7
b. 1, f. 23	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1804 Aug 21
b. 1, f. 24	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1805 Aug 19
b. 1, f. 25	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1805 Sep
b. 1, f. 26	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1805 -- 15
b. 1, f. 27	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1808 Apr 25
b. 1, f. 28	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1808 May 4
b. 1, f. 29	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1808 Aug 18
b. 1, f. 30	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1810 May 21
b. 1, f. 31	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1810 Dec 26
b. 1, f. 32	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1811 Feb 27
b. 1, f. 33	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1812 Jan 12
b. 1, f. 34	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1812 Apr 25
b. 1, f. 35	Cover to Miss Davidson; Alnwick With note, "Please remember me kindly to Bolby."	1813 Jan 28
b. 1, f. 36	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1814 Jun 24
b. 1, f. 37	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1814 Aug 10
b. 1, f. 38	ALS fragment to Thomas Davidson; London	1814 Sep 26
b. 1, f. 39	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1814 Sep 29
b. 1, f. 40	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1814 Dec 20
b. 1, f. 41	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1814 Dec 28
b. 1, f. 42	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1815 Mar 22
b. 1, f. 43	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1815 Apr 15
b. 1, f. 44	ALS (fragment) to Thomas Davidson; London	1815 Jun 12
b. 1, f. 45	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1815 Aug 30

NORTHUMBERLAND, HUGH PERCY, DUKE OF, 1742-1817 (continued)

b. 1, f. 46	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1815 Oct 20
b. 1, f. 47	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1815 Dec 13
b. 1, f. 48	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1815 Dec 16
b. 1, f. 49	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1816 Feb 28
b. 1, f. 50	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1816 Mar 12
b. 1, f. 51	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1816 Jul 27
b. 1, f. 52	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1816 Aug 14
b. 1, f. 53	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1816 Aug 29
b. 1, f. 54	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1816 Sep 11
b. 1, f. 55	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1816 -- 28
b. 1, f. 56	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1817 Jan 31
b. 1, f. 57	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1817
b. 1, f. 58	ALS and cover to Thomas Davidson; Northumberland House	1817 May, Jul
b. 1, f. 59	ALS to unidentified recipient; Northumberland House	1787 May 7
NORTHUMBERLAND, HUGH PERCY, DUKE OF, 1785-1847		
b. 1, f. 60	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1807 May 21
b. 1, f. 61	Cover to Thomas Davidson, Ferry Bridge	1807 Jul 19
b. 1, f. 62	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Ferry Bridge	1807 Jul 20
b. 1, f. 63	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Durham	[1808?]
b. 1, f. 64	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1808 Dec 31
b. 1, f. 65	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1810 Jul 9
b. 1, f. 66	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1812 Mar 26
b. 1, f. 67	Cover to Thomas Davidson; York	1816 Aug 17
b. 1, f. 68	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick With note, "If Mr. Davidson should not value the enclosed letter..."	1816 Aug 22
b. 1, f. 69	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1816 Sep 18
b. 1, f. 70	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1816 Sep 19
b. 1, f. 71	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Worcester	1817 Oct 21
b. 1, f. 72	ALS to Thomas Davidson; London	1818 Mar 10
b. 1, f. 73	Cover with ALS fragment verso to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1818 Jun 26

NORTHUMBERLAND, HUGH PERCY, DUKE OF, 1785-1847 (continued)

b. 1, f. 74	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1818 Jul 19
b. 1, f. 75	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1818 Sep 9
b. 1, f. 76	Cover with ALS fragment verso to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1818 Oct 12
b. 1, f. 77	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1818 Oct 15
b. 1, f. 78	Cover to the Duchess of Northumberland; London	1819 Nov 24
b. 1, f. 79	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1820 Sep 16
b. 1, f. 80	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1820 Nov 6
b. 1, f. 81	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1821 Dec 20
b. 1, f. 82	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1822 Feb 3
b. 1, f. 83	Cover to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick	1822 Jul 19
b. 1, f. 84	Cover to Thomas Davidson	n.d.
b. 1, f. 85	ALS in third person to Thomas Davidson; Forcett	n.d.
PERCY, ISABEL ELIZABETH, LADY, D. 1820		
b. 2, f. 86	4 ALS to Martha Davidson	1808-17
b. 2, f. 87	Office copy of her will, Little Syon, Isleworth	1820
PERCY, JULIA, LADY, 1784-1812		
b. 2, f. 88	2 ALS to Martha Davidson; Alnwick Castle and Northumberland House	1806, 1808
PERCY, THOMAS, 1729-1811		
b. 2, f. 89	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Alnwick Castle	1780 Sep 22
POWIS, HENRIETTA ANTONIA, COUNTESS OF, 1758-1830		
b. 2, f. 90	ALS to Martha Davidson	1822 Jul 10
REDESDALE, JOHN FREEMAN-MITFORD, BARON, 1748-1830		
b. 2, f. 91	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London	1819 Dec 3
b. 2, f. 92	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Batsford	1820 Jan 8
b. 2, f. 93	Cover to Thomas Davidson; London [?]	1820 Jan 8
SMITH, D.C.		
b. 2, f. 94	ALS to Thomas Davidson	1814 Oct 7
SPEARMAN, R.		
b. 2, f. 95	ALS to Thomas Davidson; Eachwick Hall	1816 Dec 10
UNIDENTIFIED		

UNIDENTIFIED (continued)

b. 2, f. 96	ALS to unidentified; Stanwick	1818 Nov 14
b. 2, f. 97	Cover to D. of Northumberland	1820 Jan 12

Series II: Other Album Pages, 1819-1820*0.13 linear feet (.5 box)*Series II, *Other Album Pages*, is arranged in original album order.

b. 2, f. 98	Davidson crest and autograph	n.d.
b. 2, f. 99	Shakespeare passage copied by Lady Agnes Percy	n.d.
b. 2, f. 100	Locks of hair of Julia Duchess of Northumberland, Lady Elizabeth Percy, and Lady Julia Percy	n.d.
b. 2, f. 101	"Fac-simile of the Letter of the late Queen of France to Madame Elizabeth...," Westley and Parrish, printers, Strand.	n.d.
b. 2, f. 102	"The Signatures in Autographs and Seals of," pasted collection with entries in Davidson's hand	n.d.
b. 2, f. 103	Recipe for medicine for rheumatism	1819 Jul 30
b. 2, f. 104	"Monody, on the death of Her Grace, Frances Julia, Dowager Duchess of Northumberland," J.K. Pollock, printer, North Shields.	1820
b. 2, f. 105	Autographs of Hugh Percy, 1st Duke of Northumberland, Hugh Percy, 2nd Duke of Northumberland, and Hugh Percy, 3rd Duke of Northumberland	n.d.
b. 2, f. 106	2 mounted covers to "Earl Percy," Alnwick and [n.p.]	[180?], n.d.
b. 2, f. 107	Printed material and genealogical notes	n.d.

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

Nobility -- Great Britain -- Autographs
Patronage, Political

Geographic Names

Northumberland (England) -- History

Names

Davidson, Martha
Davidson, Thomas, 1722-1781
Davidson, Thomas, active approximately 1800
Northumberland, Algernon Percy, Duke of,
1792-1865
Northumberland, Hugh Percy, Duke of,
1712-1786
Northumberland, Hugh Percy, Duke of,
1742-1817
Northumberland, Hugh Percy, Duke of,
1785-1847
Percy, Elizabeth, Lady
Percy, Thomas, 1729-1811

Families

Percy family