

Guide to the Roger Griswold Papers

MS 256



compiled by Bruce P. Stark

May 1982

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
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CALL NUMBER: MS 256

CREATOR: Griswold, Roger, 1762-1812

TITLE: Roger Griswold papers

DATES: 1784-1812

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.5 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Chiefly letters by Roger Griswold, of which three-fourths were written to his wife, Fanny Rogers Griswold, while he served in Congress, in Philadelphia and Washington, 1794-1805. While the letters to his wife are largely on family and practical matters relating to the family farm in Lyme, Connecticut, his letters to his father, Matthew Griswold, and to his brother, also Matthew, discuss politics briefly. A letter to Secretary of War, William Eustis, discusses the issue of placing the Connecticut militia under federal control. Also in the papers is a printed copy (1799) of the Constitution of the United States with marginalia in Griswold's hand.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0256>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0256>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of W. E. S. Griswold, 1957.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Roger Griswold Papers (MS 256). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Related Materials

Those seeking further Roger Griswold correspondence should consult the William Griswold Lane Memorial Collection, Manuscript Group 189.

Biographical / Historical

Lawyer and politician; graduated from Yale in 1780 and was admitted to the bar in 1783; elected to Congress in 1794 and served until 1805; in 1811 and 1812 he was elected governor by a popular majority in Connecticut.

Scope and Contents

The Gov. Roger Griswold Papers, consisting of letters written by Roger Griswold between 1784 and 1812, are housed in three flat boxes.

Although there are a handful of letters from the period when Griswold was a lawyer in Norwich and governor of Connecticut, the bulk of the correspondence covers his congressional years. Roger Griswold was elected to Congress in 1794, took his seat in the Fourth Congress in December 1795, and served until 1805. More than three-quarters of the letters are written by Griswold to his wife Fanny (Rogers) Griswold (1767-1863) and most of the rest to his older brother Matthew Griswold (1760-1842). The papers also contain three letters to Roger's father Governor Matthew Griswold (1714-1799), two to General Ebenezer Huntington (1754-1834) in 1812, drafts of a letter to Secretary of War William Eustis (1753-1825) concerning the placing of the Connecticut militia under federal control, one short note from Eustis to Griswold, and single letters to several other persons.

The correspondence contains a mixture of news on political and personal subjects. The letters Roger wrote to Fanny Griswold rarely contain long discussions of political matters. As a general rule, those of Roger Griswold to his brother Matthew are more substantive in nature. Griswold writes about family and friends

in Lyme and Norwich in almost every letter. Those meriting particular attention are the Woodbridges of Norwich, farm workers, and "the old Gentleman," former Governor Matthew Griswold. The Griswolds moved back to Lyme in 1796 and many letters contain advice on running the family farm. Although he was an ardent Federalist, Roger Griswold was a deist. In several letters, he writes about his lack of religious feelings, mocks his wife's piety, and tells of his Sunday activities which almost never included attendance at church. In other letters written between 1797 and 1799, Griswold, prompted by news from home, gives his views on suffering and death. To amuse his wife, he also talks about the Philadelphia theater, the weather, and in December 1800 gives good descriptions of Mount Vernon, Washington, D.C., and the poverty of slave state Maryland in comparison to free Pennsylvania.

Those interested in the views of a strict New England Federalist will find this collection of papers useful, although only occasionally is there an extended discussion of political events. One can, however, find material on the Jay Treaty, the quasi-war with France, and the election of 1800. The most notorious episode in Griswold's political career, the brawl on the floor of the House of Representatives with Congressman Matthew Lyon of Vermont, is not discussed in detail. The papers do not contain many useful character sketches. In one letter of 1796 Jan 20, however, he describes First Lady Martha Washington and in three in December 1799 eulogizes and reports on the funeral of President Washington. There are only two other descriptions of note, of Governor Samuel Huntington of Connecticut, 1796 Jan 5, and John Randolph of Roanoke, 1800 Jan 16 and 1805 Feb 7.

In addition to the correspondence, the Gov. Roger Griswold Papers contain one other item of note, a copy of the Constitution of the United States printed in 1799, containing annotations in Griswold's hand.

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1784-1812

The Roger Griswold Papers are arranged in chronological order, folders 1-51. A copy of the Constitution of the United States printed in 1799 with annotations by Roger Griswold is found in folder 52.

| Correspondence | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | 1784, 1788, 1790 | 1784, 1788, 1790 |
| b. 1, f. 2-7 | 1795 - 1796 May | 1795 - 1796 May |
| b. 1, f. 8-10 | 1796 December - 1797 February | 1796 December - 1797 February |
| b. 1, f. 11-13 | 1797 May - 1797 July | 1797 May - 1797 July |
| b. 1, f. 14-17 | 1797 November - 1798 February | 1797 November - 1798 February |
| b. 2, f. 18-25 | 1798 March 3 - July | 1798 March 3 - July |
| b. 2, f. 26-29 | 1798 December - 1799 February | 1798 December - 1799 February |
| b. 2, f. 30-34 | 1799 December - 1800 March | 1799 December - 1800 March |
| b. 3, f. 35-36 | 1800 April - May | 1800 April - May |
| b. 3, f. 37-41 | 1800 November - 1801 February | 1800 November - 1801 February |
| b. 3, f. 42-43 | 1801 December - 1802 February | 1801 December - 1802 February |
| b. 3, f. 44 | 1802 April | 1802 April |
| b. 3, f. 45-46 | 1802 December - 1803 February | 1802 December - 1803 February |
| b. 3, f. 47 | 1803 December | 1803 December |
| b. 3, f. 48-51 | 1804 - 1812 August | 1804 - 1812 August |
| b. 3, f. 52 | Constitution of the United States | 1799 |

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

Families
Federal-state controversies -- Connecticut
Law

Geographic Names

Connecticut -- Militia
Lyme (Conn.)
United States -- Politics and government
United States -- Politics and government --
1789-1809
United States -- Religion

Names

Eustis, William, 1753-1825
Griswold, Fanny Rogers, 1767-1863
Griswold, Matthew, 1714-1799
Griswold, Matthew, 1760-1842
Griswold, Roger, 1762-1812
Huntington, Ebenezer, 1754-1834
Huntington, Samuel, 1731-1796
Randolph, John, 1773-1833
Washington, George, 1732-1799

Corporate Body

Federal Party -- Connecticut